NEW STUDY FINDS ARTISTS HIGHER FUNCTIONING THAN GENERAL POPULATION

WASHINGTON, DC, September 15, 2014. A new study by the Research Center for Arts and Culture (RCAC) at the National Center for Creative Aging (NCCA) shows that artists are highly functioning members of society who experience less loneliness and depression than the general population.

ART CART: SAVING THE LEGACY: A Feasibility Study for a National Model of Health Promotion and Wellness Among Older Adults administered eight measurements in social inclusion, morale, productivity, and safe functioning in a studio setting in New York City and Washington, DC. Research participants were 62 years old or over with a mean age of 78. Nineteen older artists participated in the ART CART: SAVING THE LEGACY project documenting their work, while the control group consisted of 16 older adult artists who did not participate in the ART CART program. Results comparing ART CART participants to general population surveys (National Long Term Care Survey) showed that at baseline, ART CART participants reported statistically significant better physical capacity compared to older respondents. Sixty percent do volunteer work (twice the percentage of general population). None presented symptoms of depression, compared to 11% to 16% range of people with clinically relevant depressive symptoms reported in the 2008 Health Retirement Study.

Results of the depression, morale and loneliness measurements were also compared to Dr. Gene Cohen’s Creativity and Aging study of choristers 65 and over and were almost identical to the RCAC’s findings, suggesting that both professional and avocational art making and participation may contribute to higher functioning.

ART CART: SAVING THE LEGACY is an inter-generational, interdisciplinary project that matches aging professional artists with teams of advanced students in the arts, health and aging to help document their work and save our national legacy. In addition to the health findings, a program evaluation revealed the importance of the core issues of identity and self-esteem, life review, the ability to learn new tasks, and the fact that the artists are now in a better position to produce their art, market it, donate and sell it, apply for grants and protect their legacies by arranging for wills and estate plans.

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For the full study please go to www.creativeaging.org/rcac or the NEA webpage, http://arts.gov/artistic-fields/research-analysis/research-art-works-grants-final-papers.