

POWER TO CHANGE
CREATIVE AGING SYMPOSIUM 2019
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Welcome

>> KATIE WADE: Hi, everyone, welcome to the Creative Aging Symposium for 2019. I will first introduce Amber Carroll, the director of Well Connected to start us off.

>> Hi, everybody, welcome to the second annual Creative Aging Symposium, Power to Change. We're here today hosted by Covia's Well Connected in partnership with Creative Aging San Francisco. My name is Amber Carroll, I'm the director of Well Connected. Before we move forward with the inspiring program that lies ahead, I would like to share gratitude. This is something we do a lot of in Well Connected, and my gratitude is really for everybody joining us here today. We have our regular Well Connected community who informs everything we do with this program, so we're so happy to have you here.

Some of you are joining for the first time, so I would like to share my gratitude with all of you for being here with us. We do programs like this every single day, 365 days a year, so it is with great hopes that you enjoy the programming today and you come back for more.

So we will have contact information at the end, but we do hope that you will join us.

Without further ado, I'm going to pass it back to Katie, our Associate Director, and the inspiration for today's programming.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you, Amber. As Amber mentioned, I'm Katie Wade, the Associate Director FOR Well Connected and Social Call, Covia's service programs. I'll share a little inspiration behind the program and introduce Covia's CEO, Kevin Gerber. This is our second year hosting the Creative Aging Symposium, Power to Change. This online symposium is a place for us to gather around a really profound notion that aging is a journey ripe with opportunities for creative exploration. This may seem radical, it's contrary to society's story that aging is all about loss, but this view of aging as creative growth has been an emerging thread for quite some time, and I'm so appreciative that it's now reaching our collective conscious. I've never been so excited to become an older adult myself. I recently read this quote in the Creative Age by Gene Cohen, whose work laid the foundation for the current movement that we call creative aging. When we talk about creativity, the quote is, when we talk about creativity, I'm not referring simply to the paint on Canvas

type of artistic creativity, nor do I mean those visionary thinkers whose imaginative ideas and inventions have shaped or shaken civilizations.

Creativity is built into our species, innate in every one of us, whether we are plumbers, professors, short order cooks or investment bankers, it is ours, whether we are career oriented or home centered, it is the flame that heats the human spirit and Kindles our desires for inner growth and self-expression. Our creativity may emerge in many different ways, from the realm of art, science, politics, to the pursuit of an advanced college degree, a new hobby, or a public spirited community activism.

So today, for the symposium, I invite you to think about your own creativity and how it relates to growing older. What is it about being older that puts you in a unique position for creative growth?

A little housekeeping before we jump in. We will have a Q & A with each speaker. If you would like to submit questions for the speakers, use the chat function in your toolbar, or if you're on the phone, you can call our office to submit a question, the main Well Connected office, 877-797-7299. If you would like to use closed captioning,

click "more" at the bottom of the screen and closed caption. Our schedule for today includes three speakers, two program highlights, and a poetry reading. I'll start our day by introducing Kevin Gerber, the CEO of our organization, Covia, since 2005. Kevin has a few words for us.

>> KEVIN GERBER: Good morning, thank you. I'm very excited about our second Creative Aging Symposium. We're gathered across many cities and states, in our homes and community rooms to celebrate aging as a time for our creativity to expand and transform our lives and the lives of others. At Covia we believe in the power of older adults to create the best version of themselves and their communities. Today we gather inspiration and tools to do just that, use our imaginations to promote living well and aging well, anywhere you call home. We've got a number of partners to thank, and this wouldn't happen without their support. First of all, we want a special thanks for our partner Creative Aging San Francisco for their passion, creativity and power to foster healthy aging. We also have some different levels of supporters, our advocates, Kaiser Permanente, our Dreamers, Meals on Wheels San Francisco,

Creators Engage, Innovators San Francisco tech council, common bond communities and MatherLifeWays and finally we're very thankful for the privilege of closed captioning. Lori AZ Captions. So with that, I will turn it back to Katie.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you, Kevin. All right. So first up, we'll be introducing, let's test our sound, first up. All right. Just a moment. All right. Sound seems to be working. Let's test again. All right. Good. Just making sure our technical ducks are in a row.

First Speaker: Anne Basting

So first up, I'm going to introduce Anne Basting as our first speaker. Anne, I'm going to go ahead and unmute your line.

So I have the pleasure of introducing Dr. Anne Basting, and I will tell you it is truly a pleasure. Dr. Basting is a Trailblazer in the world of creative aging programming and research. She's an educator, a scholar, an artist whose work focuses on the potential for arts and humanities to improve our quality of life as communities and individuals.

For over 15 years, Anne has developed and researched

methods for embedding the arts into long-term care. She's the author of numerous articles and two books: *Forget Memory*, *creating better lives for people with dementia and the stages of age*, *performing age in contemporary American culture* and was named in 2016 a MacArthur fellow. Anne is founder and president of the award-winning nonprofit *TimeSlips*, creative storytelling, which brings meaning back into the lives of elders with dementia wherever they live. She's currently working toward a moment where the arts are an integral element of our care systems. If you have questions for Anne during her talk, please do submit those via chat or phone to Well Connected, and we'll have time for Q & A at the end.

Anne, are you with us?

>> ANNE BASTING: I am here. Can you hear me okay?

>> KATIE WADE: Yes, welcome.

>> ANNE BASTING: Hi.

>> KATIE WADE: Take it away.

>> ANNE BASTING: It's a treat to be here. Thank you so much, Katie, and the whole Well Connected community. It's of course a topic that is near and dear to my heart. It's been a thrill and a privilege to have known Dr. Cohen and

to really have been at the beginnings of this movement and to watch it open and blossom and really become part of people's daily lives. We still have a long way to go, and my work now I feel like is really encouraging people to find the creative moments in the sinews of the day, the in-between times and places. So that's a little bit of my talk today.

I'm going to start just by telling you a little story about when I was young.

I grew up in Wisconsin, and when I was a kid, maybe ten years old or so, I would play outside as long as I possibly could. And I remember that there was a row of bushes that went down the hill along the side of our house, and one of my favorite games was to burst through two of those bushes and into the field next-door, an open field next-door, and each time I did it, I imagined that I would be at a different location in the world and that on the other side of the bushes there was a different sick animal that needed my help and attention. So I would go bursting through the bush, and boom, I was on the Savannah in Africa tending on a sick giraffe, or boom, I was in Alaska and there was a wounded otter, or boom, I was in the northwoods of

Wisconsin and a porcupine desperately needed my help. And when I came inside at the end of the day, my mom would ask me simply which animals did you help today?

The imagination can transport us and transform us as individuals, as families, in relationship, and as larger communities. So much talk about creative aging can intimidate. People back away with an apologetic "I can't draw" or "I can't sing anymore" or "I never could sing" or "I can't paint" or "I can't dance" or "I certainly can't remember my lines". There's just too many can'ts. But at its heart what I have come to call creative care is just an agreements between people to imagine their worlds on and each other just a little differently.

It's built on beautiful questions, questions that open a shared path of discovery between you, with no wrong answers, and answered with whatever mode of expression that you can or want to use, whether it's words, sounds, movements, or images. For phone purposes today, I know a lot of you are just on the phone, I thought I would use words.

I'll start off with just a couple of beautiful questions for you to think about yourself, and I'll share a few

stories of how we've used those exact beautiful questions.

If you could open your eyes right now and be anywhere in the world, where would you want to be?

When you open your eyes, what do you see in that place? What colors? What sounds do you hear? What are you feeling in that place? And who would you invite to join you there?

That was a question that was asked by Sammy Goodrich, one of our master trainers, who did a pilot with what we call TimeSlips by phone or telestories with people, it ended up being a lot of older people with low vision, and she would make about three phone calls with them, and she started out just with a beautiful question, then they transformed that beautiful question into a poem and then layered sound and music underneath it to come up with an audio recording that they could share with others. Really a beautiful, very tiny piece of collaborative creativity.

So here is another beautiful question.

What do you treasure in your home and why?

I'll just give you a second.

(Pause).

We ask that question as part of what was called the

Islands of Milwaukee project, which was a collaboration between Meals on Wheels in Milwaukee, a home care agency and a nonprofit that provided both telephone reassurance and in-person senior companion volunteers. And we gave them a whole series of these beautiful questions to ask, and that question went out.

One of my favorites, we made audio recordings, people could call in their responses, and we made audio recordings of those responses and then did 21 radio segments out of them that were really lovely.

But probably my favorite that came out of this was with some students who were working with a nonprofit in one of my classes, and it was also Sammy. Sammy and her student partner Cu Nguyen, they went to visit June, and typical college students, they asked, what do you treasure in your home and why? And June said, my oven. And the college students were baffled, they had no idea that someone could treasure an oven. Why would that be? And they came to learn that June was a baker and loved -- not professionally, but just in her family, that was the role she played, and that she loved baking. And that opened up a whole slew of things for them to do together, exploring

favorite recipes and then how they could, if her oven worked, they got the ingredients, they ended up baking her favorite recipe and then sharing it with neighbors. And I'll talk about that in a little bit.

Another beautiful question is: What is your Safe Harbor?

(Pause).

What do you think you would say is your Safe Harbor?

(Pause) we used that question also with the Islands of Milwaukee, and on the voicemail line where people would return the calls, we heard from Ernest, and Ernest told us that his telephone reassurance volunteer had been asking him these questions for months now, and he thought all of them were stupid, until this one.

He said, you know what? This is not a stupid question. The answer to this one is my church, and my volunteer said, it's mine too. And then we proceeded to have a really incredible conversation, he said, and now I would like to answer all of the previous beautiful questions that you had in your project, and his message went on for, you know, half an hour. It was incredible. So Ernest was a good example of if you just stick with the questions, you'll

hypothetical the right poetically phrased one eventually. We also had another beautiful question on the TimeSlips website, you'll see in our story center that there's a whole section called Just Called Beautiful Questions, and you can answer them all on the site now, and one of them is: If your feet could talk, what would they say? And I wanted to share with you a little story about one of my favorite responses that came from that.

So one of my favorite responses from that question comes from a nursing home in Texas. Jamie Ward is a certified TimeSlips facilitator with Unity Theater there, and they offer 14 weeks of TimeSlips sessions as part of a senior adult outreach program, and Jamie was starting sessions with a new group at the Brenam Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Texas. Jamie thought she would try one of the beautiful questions: If your feet could talk, what would they say? Just as she was preparing to start, a woman rolled into the room with a big black brace on her left foot and Jamie wrote the to me "she appeared to be uncomfortable, solemn, and extremely quiet the." Ward wrote me in an e-mail describing that day, she said she almost changed the question because of the woman's

situation but decided to push on, and she was so glad she did. The woman began to open to the process and realized her thoughts were safe and accepted by the group. Asked, what would your feet say, the woman answered, my nerves hurt deep down. And asked where would your feet take you, she said home, home to my husband.

And Ward wrote that the minute she voiced this, she started to tear up, and she knelt by her and held her hand, and the entire group paused to honor her emotions.

And then they went right on adding their own thoughts. The next woman responded to Temple, Texas, to the cemetery where my parents and husband are buried and I would stay a little while. Again, Ward wrote that the group honored her with a pause to hold the weight of her emotion. And then to balance the tone, another woman said, these feet can take me anywhere, it really was quite beautiful.

And here is the full poem that they put together.

If your feet could talk, what would they say?

I'm tired.

I'm hurt.

I want to skip.

Take my shoes off.

My nerves hurt deep down.

Hot dogs!

If my feet could thank me, they would say good shoes, tennis shoes, air conditioning, thank you, put me in some warm water, relax and splash, I'm going swimming, paddle and kick. That's what helps us swim, paddle, moving our arms.

And then they sang these shoes were made for walking and that's just what they'll do, one of these days these shoes are going to walk all over you!

I think that just about does it, walking, too tight shoes, ow, shoes don't fit, help.

That just gives you a little glimpse of the poem. It goes on.

I also wanted to talk a little bit in TimeSlips what we call How to Make it Meaningful, so we really see meaning as connecting to the larger world. It has four elements. The first component of meaningfulness is that it is somehow connected to you personally. It's a personal expression of some sort.

The second is that it's fun, gives you pleasure, the third is that it has rigor and challenge, and the fourth is

that it is connected to something larger than you. So in a lot of what we do with TimeSlips is finding a way to share it, share that creativity and connect it to another person or your larger community.

A way that you might simply do that is just printing out a story, e-mailing it to someone, writing a little poem on a postcard and leaving it on your grocery store bulletin board, just a little almost like an anonymous gift to the world.

One of my favorite stories about a way that you can see this in action is with an activity that was done around storytelling just around coupons and clipping coupons, and the woman who led this one invited people to tell stories about the coupons, about the products that people were featured in them, and they wrote little stories on beautiful pieces of paper, they took the coupon, and then they went to a nearby grocery store with some tape and they found the product and they taped the story and the coupon to the product and then left an anonymous gift for the next shopper who came by.

You can do a sharing and a meaning-making just on your own. You don't need anybody else to help you. But you can

also collaborate with artists to interpret a story or amplify your creativity in some way.

That is some of the really exciting work we're doing at TimeSlips now. We're in the midst of a project that will culminate in the spring, reimagining the story of Peter Pan, a well-known myth and story that's circulated through lots of different productions and plays and novels and movies through the years. What we're up to right now is collaborating with 12 rural nursing homes across the state of Kentucky, and we've been for the last year taking apart the story into a million questions, a million beautiful questions.

What is it like to fly?

If you could fly anywhere, where would you go?

Who would you bring with you?

What do you see?

What does it feel like to fly?

What is home to people?

There is a sense that Wendy longs to go back home.

What is unconditional love?

They have a beautiful, there's a beautiful story of belonging of Mrs. Darling for her children, and what does

it mean to feel that, and what does it mean to give that? There's so many incredible questions at the core of that story, and together with staff and residents and their families in these tiny communities across Kentucky, we're together creating three original plays that are going to be staged this spring. Also with regional artists and with national artists who are helping the project.

We've been doing creative storytelling with, let's see, we're working with 25 more and we've trained 50 nursing homes across the state of Wisconsin last year. Now we'll be doing 25 more, and those will culminate in five creative festivals across the state of Wisconsin in two years from now as well.

The beautiful question cards that we distributed through our Meals on Wheels program, it's so great that you guys are sponsored by the Meals on Wheels in San Francisco, we circulated them with a little added piece of nutrition with the meals is a beautiful question with each delivery, and the answers that came back to us on little handwritten cards or came in through the audio voicemail, we exhibited in a huge exhibit in city hall, in what we call little interactive question stations where you could see the cards

that were the responses and you could also take a new card and write your own response and put it up and add it to the exhibit with a little clothes pin. And some of these were stationed right next to the Mayor's office, which adds another component, which is these don't just have to be flights of fancy and imagination, they can also be generative toward changing the world and making it a better world that we're living in.

One of the questions we asked was: If there's an intersection that you would like to cross on foot but feel it's too dangerous. And we got flooded with hundreds and hundreds of responses to that question. So we put them on a map and put that station right in front of the Mayor's office so he can see where people have stopped trying because the traffic is just too overwhelming. And that really is incredible data for the Mayor's office to have.

I wanted to share a couple little pieces in closing here that also just gives you a sense of very simple ways that you could transform your creativity into something quite lovely. The first example is from the Islands of Milwaukee project. I met a gentleman as part of that by doing a home visit with home care staff, and his name was Bill, and Bill

had extreme difficulty talking. We would try to exchange stories, but it would take a very long time.

It took enormous patience to listen to each other and for him to stick with it to try to get the story out. But then one day, I asked him about music, and he started singing so beautifully and without any trouble at all. And you really could feel the power of what music meant to him.

So we just recorded a couple of songs with Bill, and you'll hear those.

And then we layered in, invited a volunteer who worked with the home visit nonprofit to listen to Bill's voice and then to layer some harmony in with it, and then we worked with a sound artist who created a beautiful kind of thought-provoking lyrical bed of sound for it.

So I will -- I think I need to share my screen, if I can go back to that. Let me see. I might just have to -- because I'm not sure if I see share screen. I'll just play it.

>> So the Lord took a rib from Adam's side, he made a woman and the woman, she died (Singing). The army got challenged, oh, may Joshua weep. Of the oh, made Joshua weep round the cornerstone. The army got grounded. Oh,

me, don't weep.

That's the end of the first one.

>> Okay. What's the other one?

>> I get to put two on?

>> Yeah, you get to put two on.

>> Then we're going to go... (Singing).

If you miss the train I'm on, you will know that I am gone, you can hear the whistle blow 100 miles. 100 miles, 100 miles, 100 miles, 100 miles, you can hear the whistle blow 100 miles.

(Pause).

(music).

(singing, with accompaniment) oh, the Lord took a rib from Adam's side, he made a woman and the woman died. Oh, babe don't weep. Oh, babe, don't you weep, don't you know. Don't weep round the cornerstone.

Oh, me, don't weep.

(Piano).

(Pause).

(music).

(Singing).

If you miss the train I'm on, you will know that I am

gone, you can hear the whistle blow 100 miles. 100 miles, 100 miles, 100 miles, 100 miles, you can hear the whistle blow 100 miles.

(Pause).

(music).

(Pause).

>> ANNE BASTING: There you have it. And I think you can hear the beauty of who Bill is, I think, captured in that quite well.

I did have one other thing I wanted to share with you, and let me try to bring it up right here. One second. Right here. I've got it. And this is a story that came out of the 50 nursing home training that we did last year.

>> Let's start at the top. Start at the top. This story was created on January 12, 1917, by Betty, Dale, Darlene, Dorothy, Ed, Janet, Judy, Mill, Milwood and Vy.

>> ANNE BASTING: I'll stop for one second there and tell you that these were all done in nursing homes across the state, and people took just an image prompt. You'll see hundreds of image prompts on the TimeSlips website. This one was an image that had just a little bit of, it looked like music was being made, a saxophone player and a

drummer performing on the street, and just with a series of beautiful open-ended questions, the elders told us a story about that. Then we asked one of them to read the story aloud and that is what you see here. What you can't see without the screen share is that it's also created into an animation that we collaborated with some art students here at the university who turned it into an animation. But you can hear her voice, which is just lovely, telling the story.

>> Start them up again, Joe.

(Saxophone playing.

>> Let's start at the top. This story was created on January 12, 1917, by Betty, Dale, Darlene, Dorothy, Ed, Janet, Judy, Mill, Milwood and Vy, at Mulder Healthcare Center. It is fall in downtown Milwaukee. Two men are entertaining a group (Piano), bar group at night. One guy is on the drums, one guy is on the saxophone.

(Music).

They are inside a tavern with glass behind them.

(Saxophone playing).

The drummer has a symbol and a hitting bill. He is wearing beads and has long hair.

>> Keep going. Are you tired?

>> No.

>> Okay.

>> The guy on the sax is really enjoying playing. He sure looks good. Drunkards are making noise.

People dancing around the music.

Hands clapping.

(music).

The guy says to the bartender, set them up again, Joe! The drummer's name is Harry, and the sax player's name is Johnny. Harry and Johnny are sweethearts or just good friends.

Their wives are always at home with the kids while they're playing. They are just about done before they need to go home. They don't know how long they have been playing because they have been in the tavern too long.

(music).

The song playing is "Goodnight, Irene", soon to be followed by "Show Me The Way Home", then they'll say everybody on the way out.

(Pause).

>> ANNE BASTING: I'll stop it there. The animation is

quite lovely because there's parts for us to dance with the drums and the saxophone, so in person sometime you'll get a chance to see that. In closing, I just want to say back to the concept of creative care, it invites us really to rethink how we even understand creativity, which we tend to associate with the brilliant individual working in the studio, really the ultimate act of individualism, and care which we have tended to see as the ultimate act of self-sacrifice or selflessness, and instead we re-invent both those terms by bringing them together into a concept of collaborative creation and reciprocal care when we invite each other to imagine the world that we want to live in, to imagine ourselves anew and imagine the world we want to leave behind.

I will also say that all of these prompts, two exciting things, you can find a lot of them right now on the TimeSlips website where you can engage, the creativity center is free, but we are also launching a brand new one which will be all souped up in March, so if you visit us now, come back and visit in March, there will be hundreds of prompts that you can respond to by writing up, you know, with words, you could draw, take a picture, upload the

picture, you can leave an audio response, allowing for a lot more different ways to respond, because really we should never be more than a click away from inspiration to make meaning and experience wonder in our lives.

So thank you very much, and if you do have any questions, let me know.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you, Anne. Thank you so much. I wanted to highlight something you said that really speaks to me, which was, you know, imagining each other in the world a little bit differently. That's the essence of creativity. And I love how accessible you make creativity. Not only in that definition, but through the TimeSlips storytelling prompts, those have been so meaningful for me, and I have pointed people there often. So I wanted to see if I can share my screen and show folks the website. So TimeSlips.org, there's a lot to explore here, as Anne was saying, and even more to come in February with an update. But you can check out some stories and resources and prompts, and I would encourage you to do so. I love what you have here, Anne.

>> ANNE BASTING: I'm really excited. Thank you so much. I'm really excited to share a brand-new branding,

all new look, all new creativity center, it's just incredible what we're going to share, and the creativity center is free. We do offer training, and that's usually discounted for students or that's fee for service usually, but the creativity center is all open and free for everyone to use, so just enjoy.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you, Anne. And I'll mention, you can look up local TimeSlips facilitators in your area, they're all over the country, if you want to find some things in person as well.

>> ANNE BASTING: Yes, 47 states now and 18 countries. The new website will also show a map so you can see everybody really easily.

>> KATIE WADE: Perfect. I will just end with, let's see, one question coming in through chat that a hospice visitor is working with someone with advanced Parkinson's and you can seldom understand what she's saying. Alert and attentive. Any ideas on helping her express herself?

>> ANNE BASTING: I will say that is exactly -- if you haven't invited song, try it, or sounds, that they operate on a different -- in Parkinson's, they're particularly are powerful. In fact, I don't know diagnoses, but I'm

assuming that's probably what was happening in the example that I just gave earlier.

The other is to echo movement, if there is movement, if you echo that movement and transform it into something that is patterned, movement can be very, very powerful with people with Parkinson's.

So I think it's inviting facilitators to figure out why the strengths are of the person, if you're inviting someone into creativity. You can do this on your own and just be creative on your own, or if you're inviting someone into it, figure out where those strengths remain and then go and invite the expression of those. You might just have to experiment a little bit.

>> KATIE WADE: Yeah. Thank you, Anne. Experimentation is key. I'm glad we're ending on that note with permission to experiment.

Well, thank you, Anne, so much. I think we'll move on to our next speakers, and I appreciate you sharing your time with us.

>> ANNE BASTING: Bye, everybody, thank you.

Program Spotlight: Art with Elders

>> KATIE WADE: All right. So next up I'm going to

introduce Darcie and Mark, I'm unmuting your line, and let's see. Let me tell you guys a little bit about our next speakers, Darcie and Mark. They are from Art with Elders, this is Mark Campbell, the Executive Director of Art with Elders, and Darcie O'Brien, the exhibits manager with Art with Elders, and they're one of our two program spotlights today. So I wanted to be sure to include people who are doing really creative programming in their communities, so I'm happy to welcome Art with Elders with us. They were founded in 1991 in the Bay Area in northern California, and they provide 2000 art classes each year to more than 400 seniors and long-term care communities throughout San Francisco Bay area. So welcome, Darcie and Mark, I will see here, let's unmute. Are you with us? Let's see. There we go. How about now?

>> MARK CAMPBELL: Can you hear us?

>> KATIE WADE: Yes, perfect.

>> MARK CAMPBELL: Excellent.

>> DARCIE O'BRIEN: Good morning.

>> MARK CAMPBELL: Well, thank you so much, Katie. I want to just first express my incredible honor to be able to share with the Well Connected community and be a part of

this really prestigious panel of aging experts and talk a little bit about Art with Elders. Before I begin, just so I don't forget this, if there are any further information desired, please I would invite everyone to visit our website at www.artwithelders.org, no spaces or anything, that would be a good way for you to learn a little bit more about our program once I'm finished.

So I will take a little time this morning to talk about Art with Elders and what we do and why we think creativity is vitally important to healthy aging, then I'll pass the mic onto Darcie here who can share some thoughts on our really impactful exhibitions component of Art with Elders.

Our mission is a simple one. Art with Elders uses the power of art, creativity, and community to enrich the journey of aging, and our long-term vision anticipates a society in which every older adult engages in the creative arts as part of a healthy and vibrant aging process.

As Katie said, we were founded in 1991, and we provide around 2,000 art classes each year to more than 450 elders in long-term care communities and senior centers throughout the San Francisco Bay area. We employ a team of 14 really dedicated professional artist instructors, many of whom are

practicing their art and doing quite well in their own right as artists. They're selected based on their art making skills as well as, in our eyes perhaps even more importantly, their emotional intelligence and their capacity for empathy. Our elder students gather in groups numbering from six to twelve for two hours each week to learn new skills, create art, and build relationships. These weekly classes are really at the core of what we do, and Art with Elders is distinctive in its program quality. These are not really craft activities, which I think are fine in their own right, but we believe lack sort of the higher aesthetic and personal growth components that we really encourage within our classrooms.

There's a clear focus on skills building. We range emphasis on color and composition to perspective and background, and the acquisition of these new skills, the pursuit of artistic academic achievement, and the promotion of aesthetic and intellectual discourse within the classes, these are all important factors, I think, that make Art with Elders really special.

I think it's easy to forget just how important being engaged and learning is to healthy living at really any

age, and elders are certainly no exception.

Adding new skills to your arsenal, it manifests a tangible arguments that you're not in general decline, as I think is far too often thought, again on any age level. Another hallmark of Art with Elders is our exhibition program, and as I mentioned before, Darcie will elaborate on that in just a minute. Each year our artists submit from their work to our annual exhibition program. After an opening reception for artist's family, friends and caregivers, the exhibit then travels to a wide variety of locations throughout the Bay Area where it's viewed annually by an estimated 30,000 people. Creativity as I have come to know it through Art with Elders is really an incredibly helpful tool for reacting to the challenges of aging. It encourages folks to entertain possibilities rather than get hung up on challenges. Creativity enables nimble and improvisational reactions to what are undeniably ever-more challenging events associated with aging, like limits on physical mobility, memory issues and changes in lifestyle. So if you don't have regular opportunities to explore your creative and improvisational skills, when you're confronted by the unexpected, plain and simply, I

think you're just caught a little bit more flat-footed, and the results can be anxiety provoking. The beauty of regular creative exploration is that mistakes can be made within controlled environments and the consequences of those mistakes are really inherently quite a great deal less dramatic. The questions are, darn, that color looks kind of terrible, but maybe if I add another color over here, does that improve things? You see, you're already anticipating trying something else instead of losing hope and throwing in the towel. You may try that, it may not work, but hey, you know, you realize it's only a painting. No great loss. And because you're used to reacting to such minor challenges, nimbly and without prevailing anxiety, you think hey, I'll try something else, no big deal. This challenge shows true in my life and in the face of the uncertain and steers us toward better and more confident living.

You might compare that to somebody who says, well, now the doctor says my memory issues or my vision make it unsafe to drive. If you haven't sharpened your improvisational skills, you feel less courageous and possibilities are much harder to find. You might think,

well, that's it, it's all downhill from here, I can't get from point A to point B, rather than thinking, hey, I can begin a friendship with my fellow community member just down the hall whom I haven't really had the courage to reach out to, but notice she enjoys driving other people around. You know, it's funny, but this exact scenario is something that I personally witnessed with my own mother-in-law who is part of the program and I hope it's cool to be talking about her. I see our weekly art projects as mockettes for future real life experiences, that's sort of the nut of it. The more we feel comfortable facing challenges as we work to perfect these little art projects, the sharper our improvisational skills become and I think the better we can handle what comes at us. There's a great focus now, I think this is a good analogy, on yoga in senior living communities and it's really the case within our fuller society at large. In full disclosure, I've been a fan and practitioner for 30 years now. The underlying idea with yoga is that by engaging daily and easing one's body up to and just slightly beyond the parameters of its daily routine, you prepare the body for unforeseen challenges to prevent injury. You sort of allow

the body to be ready to move beyond ordinary expectations to more thoroughly enjoy life.

I think the same thing is true with the brain, the mind and the spirit as we develop them through art. Exercising the mind by challenging it with creative problems within our controlled environments of the classes, it gives us a chance to be ready to mentally move beyond ordinary expectations to more thoroughly enjoy life with less fear and more anticipation. What makes Art with Elders special in comparison to all the other arts and crafts programs that I'm aware of is fundamentally our focus on encouraging and nurturing deep meaningful relationships. As I mentioned, our classes meet once a week for two hours, and we have been in constant partnerships with many of our communities for over a decade. The program we've directed here where we're transmitting from has been in effect for 20 years. In that time I've worked with and formed deep and really meaningful relationships with well over 1,000 elders in those two decades. I mean, there's a good chance that I've had more close relationships with seniors over my short lifetime than with any other age group. What's so powerful about Art With Elders is that we build an

unprecedented level of mutual trust, precisely because, as I referred to before, we're learning how to deal with life problems together and in creative ways. I mean, it's really amazing how once trust is achieved, our students, our volunteers and instructors alike, they feel so compelled to share deeply personal uplifting thoughts and feelings. Some very challenging. I've had countless and really unexpectedly candid and remarkably uplifting conversations about really super-heavy things like loss of mobility, loss of family members, fear of death and severe physical or mental pain. But interestingly, troubleshooting these intense issues within our classes doesn't feel like a burden at all, but it's really a source of true personal growth and wisdom.

I'm so much more well prepared and willing to embrace aging because of these really precious interactions. This is exactly the sacred transfer of wisdom among old and young that I think is so important and so often ignored in our day to day. Here at Laguna Honda we celebrate our flagship program. That's based on both the number and the size of our classes, as well as a long partnership that we foster. We run six two-hour classes, some with as many as

24 students per week. They're actually going on just beyond this door right now. We're provided an office space right here, beautiful theater for our annual reception, and we're treated really as an integral part of Laguna Honda community. I have a team of 12 volunteers who week-in and week-out come to share our classroom experience seeking, among other things, the enhancement of skills, wisdom and community. Some of these folks have been returning to our nurturing classes devotedly for well over a decade.

Another thing that makes Laguna Honda special is not only the length and the depth of our partnership, but the unique and diverse makeup of the constituency here. Our students are often long-time area natives, many of whom have fallen on hard times or have fallen through the standard social safety nets for long periods within their lives. Dire poverty, homelessness, emotional or physical neglect or abuse and drug addiction, they're all not uncommon in the life stories of many of our students.

What these conditions serve to do, though, is put into stark contrast just exactly what I was referring to earlier about creatively and skillfully handling adversity. You see, the average patient in general physical decline

typical within our senior communities can be truly more fast paced and fast tracked at a place like Laguna Honda, while the skilled and really devoted administration, the care professionals and remarkable activity therapy staff provide the very most up to date care in a truly compassionate manner. Many within the community here are swimming against a really strong current of tough situations. Certainly getting older carries with it a litany of new challenges. You add to those challenges some of the tough conditions our Laguna Honda students have endured in their lives, and you really come up with a perfect laboratory within which to witness the power of creativity to contradict these challenges.

It's in that light that I see the enhanced effects on the emotional and spiritual acuity of our students through the creativity encouraged in our classes. It's truly impossible to miss. And you know, there's a ton of joy and laughter accompanying these hugely important life lessons. It's kind of a party. I mean, we really have a great time. So I've spoken mostly about the positive effect of Art with Elders on the individual elder, but there's really so much more seen through a wider community lens. Art with Elders

is all about community, and we deeply recognize that a society in which elders are not fully integrated is a broken society. As is far too often the case, when seniors are isolated and cut off from the wider community, not only do they suffer, but the general health of the entire community is in jeopardy. Art with Elders great anecdote to this societal shortcoming is giving seniors voice when not available and an amplifier when possible to those quieted voices by sharing their art and their stories widely within our communities. We do that through our exhibitions program managed by my friend Darcie here, who will take the floor and run with it.

>> DARCIÉ O'BRIEN: Good morning. Hi, everybody. Can you hear me okay?

>> KATIE WADE: We can hear you, if you could lean a little closer, yeah.

>> DARCIÉ O'BRIEN: All right. Thank you. Hi, everybody. I'm honored and excited to be part of this conversation today. I feel that our program is very special and I love to share it with others. I started with Art with Elders as an artist instructor in 2012 and for the last couple of years I've also been managing our exhibits

program, which I'll talk about in a moment. As for being an instructor, I love getting to know the artists and facilitating their work process. In the classroom, we help students develop skills for self-expression and encourage them as they explore their own vision and voice. I find it fascinating to watch artwork emerge from an empty page and so often I see people's self-confidence grow as they begin to trust themselves through the art-making process. I mentioned a voice but I wanted to note that some of our program participants work with are impairments to their eyesight or cannot communicate verbally. We can share their are inner -- they can share their inner wisdom and vision with us. I know of two paintings in our annual show last year that were created by artists without eyesight, working as a team with an instructor and in one case also a caregiver.

So our program begins in the classroom, where all students can start to use their creativity, right from where they are. With or without previous artistic experience, where we take time to develop friendships and community naturally evolves around our shared interests in creative expression. But our work does not stop there.

Art created in class then gets prepared to reach the larger community through our exhibits program. The exhibits program provides a way for the artist's presence to be seen, felt and appreciated not only by friends and family but also by a larger public audience. Our aim in exhibiting the work is to honor the journeys of our elder artists by sharing their artistic vision and their stories, to on forge a relationship between the artist and art viewer.

The exhibit cycle starts with our annual show. Each year program artists are invited to submit work for the annual show. We receive about 400 submissions from which we select about 100 works that go on to represent our program in a series of exhibits around the San Francisco Bay area. We kick off each new season with an opening event celebrating accomplishments of our program artists. The exhibit hall is filled with families, friends and caregivers and of course Art With Elders instructors, staff and board are present to cheer the artists on as well. Students are often visibly moved when they see their work framed and formally presented for exhibition.

For each yearly exhibit cycle, we photograph an

interview -- and interview all the selected artists and present their picture and a brief life story with their artwork, which we feel enriches the artist's experience and ultimately the viewer's understanding of the work. After the initial exhibit and opening event, which is usually held in October, the works go on tour for the season. When we go out on location to install an exhibit, the work invariably creates a stir. Many people stop and take a moment to have a closer look at the art and then get drawn in by the artist's story and photo as well. Sometimes we receive calls or e-mails from exhibit viewers who are captivated by an artist work and want to find out more about it or inquire about purchasing the work. Some works are for sale depending on the preference of the artists. In individual communities, our exhibits have been displayed in a variety of public spaces. From small scale shows at locations such as UCSF memory and aging center and international gallery Caddis SF to large scale shows at venues such as at the San Francisco International Airport and memorial center -- War Memorial Center for the Performing Arts, we also collaborate with other groups to offer community engagement events which seek to connect the

generations, such as our joint venture with the San Francisco culinary arts program or upcoming exhibit and online meeting with the SF Friends school, we are always looking for new ways to engage with the community to share the wisdom and creativity of our elders so they may continue to inform and inspire people of all ages. These are some of the ways that Art with Elders fulfills its mission to use the power of art, creativity, and community to enrich the journey of aging. Our vision is a society in which every older adult engages in the creative arts as part of a healthy and vibrant aging process. For more information, please visit our website, artwithelders.org.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you, Darcie, and thank you Mark. We do have a couple of questions coming in. So I will start with one. Mark, in your mission statement which you mentioned in the beginning, there's a distinction between art and creativity. It mentions both of those. How do you see that distinction in the work, the programming of Art with Elders?

>> MARK CAMPBELL: Let me make sure I exactly understand the question. Art is a product of creativity, energy of creativity that the action to the ordinary is the process I

think at which you arrive at art. And certainly for us, encouraging a team that includes spontaneity and improvisation not only makes better art but I think makes better humans. It's easy to become hung up on challenges if you're not used to fluidly engaging with that. So I hope that answers that question. If there's a need for clarification, let me know.

>> KATIE WADE: No, I love sort of creativity is this umbrella, right, and art programming can exist within that in many other things that Anne mentioned and that we'll hear about today. So thank you. And Mark, I'll ask you to sit a little closer to the microphone if you might.

>> MARK CAMPBELL: My apologies.

>> KATIE WADE: No worries. So we have kind of some technical questions from a teaching artist about best practices. I know we have other folks on the line with similar questions, so I want to wrap those up into might you point someone to resources for best practices around teaching artists?

>> MARK CAMPBELL: Around teaching artists. Well, the one golden rule for me and my instructors, especially with the demographic and the type of teaching that we do, you

know, empathy and understanding and trust are so important. They're so vitally important. I think up get that in an academic environment sometimes, but trying to really understand what the artist wants out of the program is so important. We don't go in in our classes with an objective curriculum. In other words, we're not starting the day by saying today, class, we're going to study color or study perspective or study composition. We go in every day opening lines of communication with our students to find out what are their creative objectives. So I think it's unusual in an academic environment to approach learning that way, but it opens up a lot of really unique possibilities because you don't find people sitting there learning things that they may not be interested in, and I think, again, you formulate this trust where there's a back and forth. I always tell my instructors to be prepared to learn as much as you are to teach. It's always been a two-way street with us and our instructors, I think.

I hope that answers your question.

>> KATIE WADE: Yeah, thank you. Another great question about outreach. So are students self-selecting, or do you outreach to elders who may not see themselves as artists or

as creatives?

>> MARK CAMPBELL: Great question. Yes. Our door is always open. One of the great joys about being here at Laguna Honda and getting the respect that we do from the administration and staff, they've actually put us on the first floor at the exit of the main elevator for the hospital. So oftentimes visitors from the hospital, it's the first thing you see when you get off the elevator. The doors are open, we have a big garage door that opens up and this class literally spills occupant into the hallway. If that's not a testimonial to the effectiveness of the class and to its impact on the community here, I can't imagine what is a better testimonial. But we're always looking for new students, one of our greatest challenges and deepest rewards is turning someone who is absolutely adamantly convinced that they're not an artist into someone who celebrates creativity on any level.

>> KATIE WADE: Wonderful. One thing I wanted to be sure to include today is I'm imagining all the folks that are joining us right now, individuals in their homes, throughout the country, folks gathered around a screen in a community room, so for people out there that may not be

near an Art with Elders program, what is a take-away, what is something someone could do to stretch their creativity a little at home?

>> MARK CAMPBELL: Good question. You know, I think as Anne so beautifully put it, you know, creativity begins in mysterious and ubiquitous ways. It's always around, you know, every time I think we communicate with someone else, we are activating a creative muscle. We are responding to something that's coming at us that is unique. I think beginning at that level, you know, people who are musically inclined, you know, tapping on a desk with your fingers can begin a life of incredible creative discovery. Stories are incredible. You know, talking about your life and your experiences. Especially as an elder, you have so much to share to the rest of the community. So I would encourage recognizing creativity where it happens in your day to day and amplifying that and channeling that, that would be a good way to start.

>> KATIE WADE: I also have a question for Darcie. Sorry, I'm going to make you lean in, Darcie.

>> DARCIÉ O'BRIEN: Okay.

>> KATIE WADE: But in thinking about the exhibits and

the special way that Art With Elders does exhibits and captures the story of the artist, which I love, I know you spoke a little bit about how that can affect the communities that are seeing those exhibits, and there's also the element of the artists themselves. What's it like for someone who has never had their artwork exhibited, you know, is that a transformational experience, or what do you hear from the artist?

>> DARCIÉ O'BRIEN: Yeah, absolutely. It's always a profound experience for me to watch somebody start out a new maybe avocation of using art, maybe people haven't done drawing since they were a child or they're reticent to get started, or sometimes there's fear like if their picture will look good or not, and then we build a friendship and kind of work with the trust and learn about the students, and eventually I think it gives them the courage to get started. Some people start very quickly and readily. It gives me courage to watch them. But I've seen immediate results sometimes. People can surprise themselves so quickly and so easily like wow, I didn't know I could do that, that I had that in me, almost across the board. So I've seen people find success and joy in what they create

even at the beginning. Then as they come week by week and then they feel more sturdy and strong about it and they get confidence, and it just builds. And yes, I've seen many students just overjoyed and surprised to see, wow, is that mine? Did I make that? And they have to step closer to see the image and see their picture and story and say that is my work, my goodness, I'm impressing myself, you know. And to have the family and friends when we have our openings, it brings a lot of support and it allows a point of conversation and communication between the families as well.

We've tried to make opportunities where the artists are able to get to our exhibitions, particularly at the annual exhibit, but we do have farther, we have a lot of exhibits all over in many locations, and sometimes the artists are not able to travel to those, but we try to do a lot of photography, and we're trying to work with new ways to engage the audiences that are out there. We do get phone calls and people are excited by the work. I personally take it out there to hang to shows, and we're flocked by interested people.

So I would like to be able to share some more of that

experience with the students, but certainly there is quite a transformation from somebody who is maybe new in a community that's maybe moved from an independent home situation or may be experiencing difficulty physically or maybe some loss, and they find some solace in a community of art, art makers, a place where we can work together and focus on something powerful to bring their message out and to have them be seen in our communities out farther, out in the larger public.

>> KATIE WADE: Great. Thank you. There are two sort of gratitudes I have, or many maybe, but for Art With Elders, your work is so impactful. I love hearing stories of artists who are finding themselves or a new aspect of themselves through your work and within your work within Covia residences as well, so I feel very appreciative of what you're doing. I also wanted to say, I love your background, for those that are on the phone, we're seeing some paint jugs behind Darcie, some mosaic tiles, it's an artist moment there behind Darcie, as well as, yeah, some of the work from exhibits, an Art with Elders image, so it's a really great scene. I loved picking things out around you.

Then I also just want to pull out a little thread to follow up on something that Anne said and that, Mark, you also mentioned was Anne talked a little bit about experimenting, right? It takes a little bit of experimentation, this creativity thing. And you talked about making mistakes. And when you're in a space that is created for that, right, it's part of the process to make mistakes, you anticipate trying something new rather than kind of shutting down at that point. So I love that thread of just giving ourselves permission to try something new and not be good at it, right? To make mistakes along the way. I appreciate you sharing that.

So thank you, Darcie and Mark, I'll let you be on your way. I'm super-appreciative of your time, and we'll move on to our poetry reading.

>> MARK CAMPBELL: Thank you. Take care.

>> DARCIÉ O'BRIEN: Thank you.

Poetry Reading: Greg Pond

>> KATIE WADE: Next up we have a little art break, a little art moment in our day with Greg Pond, who is our poet today. And Greg, let's see, you're unmuted and I'll see if you can share your video for us. Then I'll tell you

all a little bit about Greg while he's getting geared up. Greg Pond is back by popular demand from last year's symposium, and I am thrilled to introduce him. He's a personal inspiration of mine. Greg was born in Brooklyn, New York no, been writing since he's been able to hold a pen. Greg is a long-time volunteer with Well Connected, our program, and you are certainly invited to hear him read his works and other pieces of poetry every Wednesday through Well Connected.

I will tell you, it's a moment of zen for me to be able to join Greg's call on Wednesdays. He's also the author of two books "Blackened Blue" and "after Moon" which are available on Amazon. So welcome, Greg. Let's see, are you with us?

>> GREG POND: Yes, I think so.

>> KATIE WADE: We can hear you but not see you. There you are.

>> GREG POND: Good morning, everybody.

>> KATIE WADE: Take it away.

>> GREG POND: All right. It's a pleasure to be here this morning, and thank all the people connected with Well Connected, Katie, Amber, and the staff. And thank you all

for joining in this morning. As Katie mentioned, I'm a local poet, a spoken word artist, and I form around the bay -- and I perform around the Bay Area at libraries and coffee houses. I also, as she mentioned, conduct a weekly poetry reading called Four Degree Speaking, which will be this afternoon at 2:00, if you would like to join in, and poetry for me, it serves many purposes, but one of the things I really enjoy about reading to particularly the seniors, of which I am one myself, is that it inspires, it reminds, it rereassures, it challenges, and it gives a good perspective of life. It can conjure images of the past, it gives understanding to the present, but it also gives insight into the future. So that being said, I would like to get right into some poems, and hopefully you'll enjoy them. This is from my first book, After Moon, which I will hold up here, and you can see this. It's a picture, it's a peach-colored background with a tag of keys, and there's a moon, crescent moon on it.

Anyway, this is entitled Anonymous.

He is me, without an I, a third person. He comes from out of the rain, covers my shame, then runs away. He is a gold stud in my ear lobe, in my bathrobe, who knows my

secret code. He trades his He for Me, for what was, for what will be, boredom for on obscurity. He stays to spend some dreams, satisfies some needs and tell me what I mean. He only comes, it seems, from out of the rain, without an I, he is a third person, and he doesn't have a name.

(Pause).

I just gave birth to two more books. They're twins. They're entitled 4:00 a.m. Light and 4:00 a.m. Dark. I just have preview copies of them at this time, so I really won't show them, but they will be available on Amazon, so I would like to share a poem from 4:00 a.m. Dark. This is entitled Day Laborers.

All day laborers, waiting through sun and rain, maybe no work today, laborers, struggling to maintain a roof at home that doesn't leak and food to fill their children's plates, men lined along the street, available for the day. Eyes alert scouting for work, the hours of endless waiting. Then, descending in droves, hoping they're needed by the next car that slows, are so the driver can inspect, circle once more to decide, then select. So many to choose, but only need a few, as long as they will work for little and are willing to sweat. Cards are dealt but stacked against

those not plucked from the daily deck. The scenario is repeated day in, day out, all week. Men lined along the street again and again, wading through monotony, wind and rain. Men who won't get paid if there are no requests today. Rent is due and options are few for these jacks of all trade. Baby needs food, gonna have to move. No way to make sense or explain the financial inconsistency for the amount of time they waste. Though they show up consistently almost every day, after day, laborers, settling for casual hire and less than minimum wage, watching and waiting for the immigration raid, risking deportation for overstayed vacation. But more often than not, there's no work to be got, so it's standing around in fog, mist and hot, day after day, to be lucky enough to get the same spot, the scene is replayed, laborers lined along the way, early at dawn until dusk before late. Ready to work but destined to wait.

(Pause).

In the other twin, 4:00 a.m. Light, this is a short poem that I entitle Dive, D-I-V-E.

I know I can't swim, but I'm willing to dive, head long into the pools of your mystifying eyes. There's no life

saver there to help quell any fears that I might dip too low or get caught in ebbside. Don't know where I'm going, not sure where I'm bound, but if I should try to dive into the pools of your eyes, I know I'm going to drown.

(Pause).

One more from 4:00 a.m. Light. This one is entitled Too Much Social Media.

Too much of social media leaves me in the dust. I can't Skype to save my life, it takes me longer than an instant to gram, plus I text when I should tweet, and the thought of being quoted leaves me totally Facebook-phobic. Technology has left me in the rain to rust, but I'm so old schooled and completely out of touch that I don't even seem to know it. Got separate online passwords for almost every site, but my biggest challenge nowadays is to remember to enter them right. I've accepted many invitations, though I still can't get LinkedIn. I'd be checking my balance more frequently if I could only remember my PIN. If browsing down record aisles is now passé and downloading MP3 files the easier way, then what to do with all these cassettes, 8 tracks, vinyl LP's, laser discs and VHS tapes? The future has come, now what will be done, as CD's, mini DV's and

DVD's are replaced? The latest changes in technology and the growth of computer industry has left my mind cluttered with a bunch of symbols and numbers. My mind is mired in misery, standing still at the starting gate, with both hands and pockets full it overflowing and holding last century's electronic waste.

(Pause).

The next poem I would like to share with you is a poem about a civil rights activist. And this, we just celebrated the birthday of Martin Luther King, and we often hear about Martin Luther King, we hear about Rosa Parks, we hear about Frederick Douglass, but there are many, many other people who have played very great roles in the civil rights struggle and I wrote about one of those, particularly a hero of mine, and her name is Fannie Lou Hamer, and this is a poem entitled Ms. Fannie Lou Hamer, and I would just put a little disclaimer, there's a little strong language at the end, not too bad, but it's actually the name of a song. So anyway, Ms. Fannie Lou Hamer. And I would also mention that I have used some of her quotes and infused them in this poem. I've embellished a little bit on some of her quotes, but I think the sentiment is

still there.

When is it time to become inspired? When is it time to stand for truth? When will you be finally sick and tired of being sick and tired like Ms. Fannie Lou? She mobilized, sacrificed, fought the fight for civil rights, she used to say you can pray until you faint, you can cry until you're blue, but if you don't get up and try to do something, God won't put it in your lap for you. She helped poor folks to register, even while the law threatened her, despite the guns, clubs and dogs, she would always proclaim "I'm not backing off, didn't come all this way for just two seats on the train, when we're all sick and tired of the being sick and tired refrain." An activist for women, pioneer to end the voting ban, jailed, mistreated, severely beaten by a white authority's hand. I recall her saying whether you have a Ph.D. or no D at all, we're in this bag together, we will stand, divided we will fall. But if I do go down, let me stretch my five foot four inch frame forward so I'll be that much closer to freedom by the time I hit the ground. Ms. Fannie Lou, a fighter, a champion, a Maverick who took a stand for those who couldn't speak for themselves in the deep of the '60s

South, against the Ku Klux Klan with the burning crosses and the twisted mouth, as Nina Simone sang the blues about bodies hanging while Black is still the color of America's hate and fear, state to state across this land and everywhere, and everybody knows about Mississippi, goddamn.

(Pause).

I would like to end with a short poem from my second book, *Blackened Blue*, and it's a blue cover of an African mask, different shades of blue. And this particular poem is called *Home Cooking*.

Back burner glows, slow simmer on Crock-Pot watch, heated up, then turned down low to slightly bubbling, babbling brook in a sauce pan. Bring back to go a boil after adding one can. Sizzling skillet laughs, cookbook recipe asks for half a cup, add one heaping spoon, gently stir and let cool. Rich, thick steam rising and mixing above with the good home aroma of spices and love.

Thank you.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you, Greg. As always, I'm very zen. I sure appreciate it. I think we'll take time, if you have a minute for one question for you.

>> GREG POND: Sure.

>> KATIE WADE: Linda asked, how did you get started with poetry, and what motivates you to tell these wonderful stories through poetry?

>> GREG POND: Well, I got started back in junior high I guess is where I first got the bug, and high school with a creative writing teacher, it really took full blossom then. I was introduced to Lexit Hughes, E. Cummings, and I just flew from there.

I get my inspiration from many sources, from just life, from the newspaper, from talking to people and learning about their experiences and trying to put that on paper and push those ideas forward the best I can.

>> KATIE WADE: Perfect. Thank you. Thank you so much for sharing your time and talents with us, and I'll just direct folks to Amazon to find your books, right, under Gregory Pond?

>> GREG POND: Yes. You may have to dig a little bit, but they're all there, all four of them are listed there.

>> KATIE WADE: Excellent. All right. Well, thank you so much. We'll move on. So next up is a break. We have a 15-minute break for everyone to stretch their legs and then rejoin us about 10:45 Pacific time for our next speaker,

David Goff. So take a moment. We'll see you soon.

(Break until 10:45 Pacific time)

>> Hi, everybody, this is Amber. Thanks for your patience.

(Feedback).

Sorry about that feedback. Thank you for your patience. We are just dealing with a couple of technical challenges, and we'll be with you momentarily, so please hold tight.

(Pause).

(Please stand by for the symposium to resume).

Speaker: David Lucky Goff

>> KATIE WADE: Welcome back, everyone, to Creative Aging Symposium 2019 Power to Change, ask thank you for your patience. It looks like our speaker, Lucky Goff, is not going to be able to join us today, unfortunately, so I wanted to share a few things that I've prepared for you around the idea of creative aging and where you can learn more, and then in about ten minutes we'll move forward in our schedule with St. Mary's Center, our program spotlight.

So first up I will tell you one thing we've been doing here, our team, Social Wall within Well Connected at Covia, we've been exploring the concepts of creative aging and how

they might apply to our work, how they might challenge the way we think about aging and the type of programming we deliver, and there have been several resources along the way that have helped influence and shape the way we think about creative aging and thus programming and our lives as people who are aging. So I wanted to share this with you, questions I often get about where can I learn more. One of those things is through Lucky Goff's, who was supposed to be with us today, has a really wonderful book that has impacted the way I think about aging. It's called The Evolving Elder, and I'm going to hold it up to the screen now so you can see a green book with a shell on the front. So Lucky has planned to mention some of the concepts from this book today, and in fact, he might be able to join us. Just a moment. Let's see. All right. Lucky, I'm going to unmute your line. Are you with us?

(Pause) can you hear us? Oh, goodness. Lucky, let us know if you're able to hear us.

Alrighty. Well, I'll talk a bit more about the inspiration I have received from Lucky and his work. So I was mentioning, Lucky, your book, The Evolving Elder and directing folks to this, which you can purchase on Amazon,

and there are a couple of concepts in here that have been really influential for me, and just talking to Lucky about these concepts has been really inspirational. So let's see, the first one I wanted to share, if you were to look in the book, there's a chapter on grand lessons. So you can think about -- on grandolence, so you can think about adolescence and the concept for grandolence. I want to read to you, the part of grandolence or the transition from adulthood to elderhood are fraught are with elements that make the shift anything but straightforward, it is like stepping through a looking glass. The nonobvious challenge along with significant benefit is that the looking glass is within. Another element that makes this transition nonintuitive and difficult is that it involves loss of control. Nature is driving the shift. It is involuntary.

And he goes on to talk more about the shifting into grandolence and elderhood and what that might mean. I think Lucky himself might be able to speak about that. Are you with us, Lucky?

>> DAVID "LUCKY" GOFF: Yeah, I'm here. Do you hear me?

>> KATIE WADE: Just a little bit. If you could

project, that would be great.

>> DAVID "LUCKY" GOFF: I'll try to speak up.

>> KATIE WADE: Perfect. So you may have heard, I was sharing some of how you've inspired me through your book, *The Evolving Elder*, and for folks at home, I'll just talk a little bit about what Lucky does, from my perception, and then let him share as well. Lucky, Dr. David Goff, who I know as Lucky, he's an author, a community organizer. Lucky had a brain aneurysm in 2003 which led to the onset of a rare brain syndrome, the brink of death, permanent disability, and so that experience has transformative effect, and he's spent these past years approaching aging in a really innovative way using techniques from a host of oral traditions to discover what moments, heals and binds together a culture where elders are seen, and they see themselves as valuable and essential contributors. Lucky does some of this work on a weekly conversation group through Well Connected, so on Monday mornings he grows Growing and Elder Community, you're invited to join us, through his book *The Evolving Elder* and through establishing elder salons in northern California. So Lucky, welcome, I'm glad you were able to join us. I'll

let you take it away.

>> DAVID "LUCKY" GOFF: Well, thanks, Katie, and I assume I should be talking to (?)

>> KATIE WADE: That's right.

>> DAVID "LUCKY" GOFF: Okay. Thank you, Katie, for having the creative vision and the audacity to actually unleash me and put me on the air with people who are attending this conference, so thank you for that. That was a creative risk in itself, as you'll soon see. I'm pausing because the weirdness of this situation is really hitting me hard right now. Sitting in my living room in California and talking with my computer, talking with all of you, it's kind of amazing to me. I've been doing Zoom things for a while now, but still I haven't done much of this kind of thing where actually I get to talk to a whole bunch of people that I never, ever interact with otherwise. So that's pretty weird, and being in the condition I'm in, which I'll talk about here briefly, some of you know me, most of you don't, and I'm a very disabled person. I'm sitting here in a chair with my feet up on my wheelchair, which I'm happy to be able to get out of occasionally. I have brain damage. I have an eye patch. I have no motor

coordination. I have brain damage. So it's amazing for me to even entertain the notion that I get to talk to some people about what really matters to me about this life we share. So I'm pleased about that, and since I cannot write, I have no idea what's going to come out of my mouth in the time we have, so that's part of Katie's courage. She's unleashing someone who knows where of he wants to speak but doesn't know what he's going to say. So to sort of control me a little bit, I have a quote that I wrote down on my computer to share with you. The quote goes like this.

Youth is a gift of nature, but age is a work of art.

This is from a Polish philosopher named Stan Slovlick. And the reason I mention it to you is because I want you all to know, pat yourself on the back for already having a very creative bent, for already being a work of art. As we go along in this life, we humans, we're confronted almost daily by having to make choices, all kinds of choices about how to be, how to respond to what's demanding our attention. And in the process, through choosing, we're already creating ourselves, creating the very entity that life has put us in this place to be. So I just wanted to

underscore in the little bit of time I had that each of us is inherently a work of art. We're a part of life, already trying to expand creation through us and through our attempts to figure out how to live in this very complex and interesting existence we share. So again, while the quote says youth is a gift of nature but age is a work of art, I think it's fair to say that age also is a work of nature and youth is a gift of art. Through play, through creative interaction with whatever confronts us, we begin to shape ourselves and our own lives, and through shaping ourselves and our own lives, the creative process gets to be vital. And we get to share whatever gifts we are with each other. So the creative process always involves an interchange with reality, an interchange with existence, an interchange with what confronts us. My best image of this, the one I use in my writing all the time, is dancing. It seems like we have a partner, and that partner, Life, seems to lead, and we have the freedom, and here I'm going to stop just to paraphrase a quote I found in Victor Frankle's book *Man's Search for Meaning*. Victor says: The last freedom we have which cannot be taken away from us is how we play the cards dealt to us. The last freedom we have which cannot be

taken away from us is how we play the cards dealt to us.

So using my metaphor of dancing, it's how we respond to the move of the primary dancer, Life. So all of us have the opportunity to dance in response to our partner, and through dancing our own way in response to the lead of our partner, we create a life of our own in our very unique expression what it is to exist. So by virtue of aging and the way nature seems to have worked out the aging process for we humans, there is more and more an awareness that we actually have an opportunity to create ourselves, to be ourselves, to come into what is natural for each of us.

So again, all I want to say and what I really want to convey is that the more creative we are about who we are and how we exist and as we engage with life, the happier we are. The research seems to show that starting about age 50, people as they age tend to get happier and happier, and there are a bunch of different research projects that show that and an equally bunch of explanations for how it happens for why we get happier and happier, but from my perspective, we get happier and happier because we realize organically, so to speak, no one can tell us, it comes from within, the realization that how we uniquely respond to

whatever life confronts us with is exactly how we are creating ourselves and creating the life we have and of course the life we can share with others. So again, I want to reassert that each one of us is participating in the very act of creation that is happening at any given moment, and thus, each one of us is a creator, is an artist, and is giving shape to what's unfolding collectively for all of us. So I want to say thank you to each of you for having the will, the desire, the wherewithal to come to this kind of event to do this kind of weird thing to affirm the real value of who you are and who each of us is. So as we age, a word I commonly use is as we ripen, we become more and more juicy, more and more of who we really are. And that becoming is a collective endeavor meaning -- a cooperative endeavor, I should say, meaning that life and our own unique energy collaborate to create something that has never been seen before and something that will never be seen again. Each of us is a particularly human form of snowflake, and thus, each of us is both worth respecting and worth seeing because the miracle of life gets expressed through each of our lives. So I want to thank all of you for the opportunity to speak with you and to address you

and to affirm the opportunity we share to have a chance to influence the way creation unfolds.

So Katie, I see you, and I want to address you. Okay? I want to just say thanks for providing me with this opportunity to rub shoulders with all of these people to celebrate what we have in common, our humanity, the great gift of being able to create a response to what is addressing us. So thank you for that, Katie.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you, Lucky. Thank you for joining. Might we take a couple of minutes for questions?

>> DAVID "LUCKY" GOFF: Sure.

>> KATIE WADE: Gosh, I have so many follow-up questions, but there are some coming in through chat, so I'll defer to the audience. Folks are really resonating with what you're sharing. One person made a good point about possibly bringing your book, *Evolving Elder*, to a church group where there may be opportunity for teens and elders to talk about the similarity of the moments they're at in life. Might you speak about that similarity or how you see that?

>> DAVID "LUCKY" GOFF: Well, the thing we have in common no matter what age we are is that we are confronted

and pressured by life to be as creative as we can about who we are. So everybody, no matter what age they are, has the opportunity, if they want to take it, to bring their own personal repertoire, which may not be as large for a teenager as it is for someone older, maybe larger, who knows, but in any case, there is equal opportunity to be creative to respond uniquely to add to the flavor of what's going on.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you. Yes. Someone else asked, might you talk a bit about your community organizing, perhaps the salons or other organizing work you've done?

>> DAVID "LUCKY" GOFF: You know, I think that's a really good question. I like that question not so much because of what I've done personally but because what I've found is a form of aging play, of elder play, is actually rubbing shoulders with other people. So for me it came fairly naturally to try to collect a group of older people together to interact with each other, especially about being older because almost there is almost no place where old people can actually congregate with themselves and focus upon the very process of aging, the gift of aging that nature has prepared for us, the opportunity to become

ourselves, it is so rich and inviting. And I'm finding that by congregating amongst elders, old people do a really good job if they're able to focus not upon their ailments but upon their possibilities. They do a really good job of internally uprooting ageism and of being creative in response to what confronts them. So it's like we all seem to thrive when we're noticed, supported, and challenged. And who better can do those things for us than someone who is going through something similar, that is, other aged people?

>> KATIE WADE: Yes. I just want to say amen, absolutely! That's a really beautiful description of what an elder salon is like. Thank you, Lucky.

I want to just point out, I know we're moving onto our next speaker, but you can find Lucky's book *Evolving Elder* on Amazon, it is definitely, definitely worth the read. He talks more about this idea of play as an elder and grandolence that I started touching on and lots of good nuggets in there, as well as you can join a weekly over the phone conversation group that Lucky leads that functions like an elder salon.

Lucky, thank you for sharing these thoughts and gifts

with us today. More to come, I'm sure.

>> DAVID "LUCKY" GOFF: Thank you, Katie. You know, having the technical problems that are happening is right up my alley because my life is constantly interrupted by things I didn't expect. So this is just situation normal for me.

(laughter).

>> KATIE WADE: It's an opportunity to be creative. I appreciate it. Yeah. Thanks, Lucky.

All right. Well, we'll move on in our schedule. Thank you, Lucky. And here we go.

Program Spotlight: St. Mary's Center

Next up, we have a program spotlight, so we have Susan Werner. St. Mary's Center with us. I'll just tell you a bit about St. Mary's. It's located in Oakland, California, and it's a community of hope, of justice and healing that serves at-risk seniors and preschoolers in the heart of Oakland, California. Susan works within this organization teaching art with older adult community members, and Susan has an artist with her today, Tanya, so they'll be talking a bit about St. Mary's and what that work is like. All right. Susan, take it away.

>> SUSAN WERNER: Okay. Are we good to go?

>> KATIE WADE: We're ready.

>> SUSAN WERNER: Great. I'm Susan Werner, I'm honored to take part in this Creative Aging Symposium that recognizes that engaging in the arts improves the quality of our lives. Today I will speak about facilitating an art class for seniors in the shelter at St. Mary's Center and will invite Tanya Williams to share her experiences creating art in this class.

>> TANYA: Hello, I hope you enjoy this presentation.

>> SUSAN WERNER: I have worked at St. Mary's since 1989. I'm a licensed clinical social worker, and I have a master's in psychology with an emphasis in art therapy. St. Mary's Center is a nonprofit agency that serves extremely low-income and homeless seniors as well as low-income preschoolers. We offer comprehensive services to care for the immediate needs of food and shelter as well as counseling, money management and assistance to find housing. We provide addiction recovery treatment, mental health treatment, and have a vibrant community center where we celebrate our cultural diversity and offer classes related to health, injury prevention, and fitness. We are

committed to the need to ensure that all people can live in dignity with affordable housing, medical care, living wages, and good nutrition. St. Mary's is a beacon of hope where impoverished seniors find assistance in a world that largely overlooks them. Our center values a holistic approach that includes engaging in life creatively. The center supports art classes through which seniors work with different art mediums to connect with themselves, their experiences, and wisdom. I facilitate a creative arts class for our winter shelter that is open December through April and includes a wellness class every weekday. This class assists seniors to connect with and work with the pressing issues they face. Given our society's current lack of adequate and affordable services and housing for low-income people, many seniors arrive at St. Mary's Center feeling hopeless about getting their basic needs met. At St. Mary's, seniors feel less isolated and more hopeful in a community where they connect with others who care and advocate for everyone's basic needs. With when I facilitate the class, I recognize that seniors are ready to engage in a transformative life process. They want something different in their life, and the creative process

is significant to that journey. I create a learning environment based on inclusion. Each person is free to express themselves and is supported to be heard and understood. I care that participants see the intrinsic value in one another which, sadly, is often missed by society's view of people in poverty. I approach the creative process by inviting artists to explore and discover. It is not an approach that teaches an art technique or focuses on a product. The emphasis is about becoming self-aware and accepting, accessing and sharing one's knowledge and strengths and making meaning of one's life. I encourage the expression of adversity the seniors have faced as part of the hope and process of creating a better life. As seniors share their art and stories, they feel seen, heard, and acknowledged for their innate wisdom. This sharing develops a sense of connection, compassion and camaraderie among the artists. People who learn to hide their suffering and despair amidst conditions of poverty and discrimination feel that they matter and that their needs are important. The elders discover their value, voice and connection to a caring community and engage unique and meaningful ways to create change, both

individually and in the collective work of transforming and creating a more just society. So I will now describe some of the approaches to art making in the class and invite Tanya to share her experiences.

>> TANYA: I came to St. Mary's Center in 2017 when I was homeless and a resident of the winter session. When I first attend understand the art class, I did not want to make art. I wondered, how does this connect with me being homeless?

>> SUSAN WERNER: In the first creative arts class, I invite seniors to be just where they are and to draw what's important to share about themselves.

>> TANYA: In the first creative arts class -- sorry. I drew myself as a blue stick figure laying on a cot, clouds above my head, and I wrote "sick, fevers, chill", and I wondered how did I ever end up here. As we progressed through the art class, I began to enjoy using colors and creating textures. I allowed my imagination to flow and began to express things that I've locked up in myself long ago.

>> SUSAN WERNER: Homelessness is an experience people don't want to go through and keep pent up within

themselves. One of the most powerful art directives involves asking the elders to express their experiences of homelessness to begin to unburden themselves and to connect with others, bringing to light societal injustices that the seniors experience is extremely important to counter the individual's despair. Our agency deeply respects the knowledge and experiences of the seniors which becomes the basis of our social justice advocacy.

>> TANYA: In my collage about feelings of homelessness, placed a picture of a man in despair, hunched forward sitting on a curb. Another image of a man on the sidewalk in the fetal position with a crutch, and another a homeless person on the sidewalk being ordered to get up and leave. I wrote "every day I sit and watch people who no longer are considered human or worthwhile. My heart is heavy, secretly hoping to find a way to ease the pain. We are not beautiful in the eyes of mainstream. We are swept away from city streets to become sightless. We lay on streets in hope of equal healthcare. Are we no longer human?"

>> SUSAN WERNER: After seniors shared their truths about homelessness, I acknowledged that people were opening to accept and feel new and compassionate connections with

themselves he and one another. I invited seniors to express appreciation for themselves in creating a heart.

>> TANYA: Once I had shared my feelings about homelessness and heard others, I felt more connected to my heart. Part of my heart felt guarded. Part felt at ease, and part felt love for people no longer loved. I began creating a heart on paper by drawing a small heart with pastels at the center. I placed a gold mesh around the heart to represent barbwire. I wanted to protect the essence of my heart. On one side of the heart is smooth velvet material showing openness. The other side has lumpy textures to show turbulence. I became aware that it's okay to feel guarded and to know that my heart as a whole is loved. At this point I felt more open, grounded, and in touch with my feelings and being. I was becoming brave again, able to walk in a world and do the things that mattered to me. Sues sue in the next art experience, I invited seniors to continue to appreciate themselves through growth and learning to create their life (Correction, this is by Susan Werner), I asked them to connect to tan animal and its qualities useful for living life, they chose an animal card or their own spirit animal

to draw on black paper.

>> TANYA: I drew an eagle's head using white and brown pastels for the feather, yellow for the beak, and gold for the eye. I cut out white triangle-shaped paper for a three-dimensional collar. Seriousness came through the eye of the eagle. That connected with my fierceness, love of life and feeling able to trust in life as I came through the experience of being homeless.

>> SUSAN WERNER: The final project was to decorate a paper pulp mask. I invited the seniors to connect with Spirit to further nurture and empower their life journey beyond the shelter.

>> TANYA: I painted one side of the mask gold and the other side purple, rows of people in colorful clothes. This mask represents my inner growth through the art experiences. I felt in touch with my ancestors and able to express who I am. My heart felt courageous. I could stand strong in love for community and family. I felt renewed, with free will for life itself. Through the art class, I became enlightened in my capacity to see beyond myself and engage in community. During the shelter, I also engaged in a class of color and design, write stories and collaborate

with others. Art gave new meaning to my life so strongly that I initiated leading a coloring class for other seniors. I enjoy people relaxing and connecting themselves with the art making, becoming friends, and the love of art. Art has helped me to free up and being who I am. I continue to learn about myself and express what I have held back without apology. I can stand in my truth.

>> SUSAN WERNER: Thank you, Tanya.

>> TANYA: You're welcome, Susan.

>> SUSAN WERNER: So in closing, homelessness touches us all, is so very difficult to see, in its pervasiveness, the depths of suffering in our San Francisco and east bay communities. We invite you to turn towards however you are touched by the presence of so many people who are homeless and allow yourself to create art to express both how you are impacted and the change you wish to see. The headline on Tanya's collage about homelessness reads: Find the moral beauty in the homeless. We invite you to find that beauty in yourself, in whatever truth you express about your basic human connection and care for our human family. To contact St. Mary's Center, please go to our website, www.stmaryscenter.org or call 510-923-9600. And I can be

reached at 510-923-9600, extension 231. We welcome hearing any questions now and any contact you may wish to make in the future.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you, Susan and Tanya. There are a lot of comments coming in about how moved folks are feeling. So thank you for sharing, Tanya, your artwork and your story. One thing I wanted to ask, something that Susan and I have talked a little bit about before, but Tanya, I'm interested in your perspective, is sometimes when I think people are facing crisis, or experiencing homelessness, are services first think about housing and food, right, what we consider sort of essential survival needs, but St. Mary's is approaching this in a unique way of adding art as this essential part of the story. And certainly you've talked about how that was meaningful for you. I would love to hear about your thoughts about, you know, art alongside these other essential things you're considering.

>> TANYA: Art has given me a place to have a voice again. Becoming homeless, you lose your voice. You pretty much lose who you are. Art gave me that ability to speak again, to unlock things that were kind of bottled down

because everyday life, you know, you're just moving through what you have to move through to get to the next phase, and you kind of like layer upon layer repress, but through the art it gave me time to allow those layers to have a voice and to speak and to be present in my life and to help me move through the situation that I was involved in and to have a greater outlook that this is only a temporary situation and that I am more than what my present standing is now, I am a person who has the ability to move forward in life and to contribute and have a contribution towards seniors who are facing the same thing that I faced last year and to also remind them that they have a voice and that through art it's a great way to release the feelings and the inadequacies that you are feeling at the present time.

>> KATIE WADE: Wow, thank you. Thank you. So one thing I wanted to be sure for each speaker I'm asking we think about folks that might not be in Oakland or might not have access to St. Mary's, you know, there are people joining us right now in their homes across the country, or around a TV in a community room. For either of you, any thoughts of what someone might do at home, some take-away,

to gather some of this inspiration you're talking about that happens at St. Mary's?

>> SUSAN WERNER: One of the most profound experiences I find through facilitating an art class is that most seniors are very resistant to participating in the class in the very beginning, and the connection that develops between people really encourages people to take risks and do art which they would not ordinarily do. And speaking to people about what are ways to approach art making, I've actually seen that having a buddy or, you know, if they can have like some online class, I'm really getting the power of the group in encouraging people to do things they wouldn't ordinarily do. And it is amazing to meet people in the shelter who I have no clue how they would ever participate, are but it can be up here, or they can see something that starts to appeal to them that opens up their inner motivation. So I have come to have a lot of trust in the exchange that happens in a group process. And it doesn't need to be a big group, but just a few people can help build that energy and that excitement for exploration.

>> KATIE WADE: I love that. Every single speaker that we've had today has mentioned community as an essential

part of the creative process, so I love that idea of in our homes wherever we are, ask someone to join us, right? Maybe just thinking about something differently or doing an art project. So that is such a practical way to think about community around art. And I wonder how you see community developing in the art classes themselves, connections being made, or did those connections go on past the class? How does that work?

>> SUSAN WERNER: It's a very real process. Once people create art, I often create a class that just focuses on the opportunity to share the art because I really want to give sufficient time for people to speak and give voice to their experience but also to be reflected and received by their peers, and over time people come to feel that sense of openness and nonjudgmental acceptance by other people in the shelter. And often many people have very fixed views and ideas about each other. That's kind of natural. But when people share art, it comes from a very alive and connected and often a very vulnerable place or a very loving place in oneself and art can be deceptively deep and opening in that way. So the art is a way that the language of what really moves us as human beings is communicated,

and that opens up connections that we don't ordinarily perceive. And as seniors share just more about their life experiences, you never know who is going to get excited to see that there's some shared experience, and that also creates bonds.

And the other thing I've noticed is that many seniors who come here, they know it's not safe to share who they are, but at St. Mary's, that becomes more of our culture, and then seniors, as they stay in the shelter, and they can stay for up to five months, they can start to invite their friends or invite their case managers to come and see more of who they are because you were the art can access things nonverbally that creates more of the whole person communication. And in that way, there's a more fully enriched experience for the individual, but in creating our community that has a greater regard for the totality of our humanity.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you. And what a great idea to bring along a case manager or someone you might be working with to see that fuller picture. I love that. We have a question for Tanya that came in. Tanya, you talked a bit about this particular art class. How much does art

continue to play a role in your life?

>> TANYA: It continues to play a great role in my life. I am now leading a coloring art and writing class at St. Mary's Center on Tuesdays, and I invite the seniors of the community to come in, share a little bit of art, share a little bit of themselves, relax and have fun with creating the art and creating the writing, and this has been going on for about three months now, and I have a steady flow of students and we have a good time, we relax, we get a chance to know a little bit about each other, we get a chance to collaborate what we feel in life because we've had a little bit of life under our belts now, and we're able to express this in the art, and it has really been a great thing. It continues to help me heal, it continues to give me the ability to go out and speak in the community with the other seniors around. And the fact that it's art, I think that's what initiates openness and gives me a way to have open dialogue, you know, with other seniors. And people don't really look at coloring as an adult thing to do, but now to I think it's becoming the new way for us to be able to express ourselves, so I'm getting great feedback with the coloring art class, and it's been a beautiful experience,

and I hope it will continue.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you. You know, I'm thinking of this sort of thread from Lucky who just spoke right before you saying to the audience, you're already a work of art. And Tanya, what you were saying is art gave me a way to show who I am, you know. So there's this element that we're already there, we're already this work of art that we can show others and that we can do so much transformational work through art. So I hear both of those things in your message, and it just related really well to what Lucky was saying, so I wanted to pull that out a bit.

So anything else you guys would want to share, you ladies would want to share about art or St. Mary's that we didn't already ask?

>> SUSAN WERNER: The project?

>> TANYA: You're reading my mind. Through the art class, we had a chance to be involved in a mural, and the mural is called Senior Citizens Superhero, and we were invited to create these Superheros, to give them life, and also the ability to work with some of the urban artists around the Oakland area in actual painting of the mural, and the mural, it came out beautiful and it's still

standing to this day. And every day that I pass by and I see it, it gives me such pride to know that it's there, for one thing, and another thing, that the people in the community are enjoying it as well.

>> SUSAN WERNER: This project was also in collaboration with another nonprofit named Attitudinal Healing Connection, and they have created, at least four, they'll do a total of six, very large murals with local youth that are under the overpasses throughout Oakland. But the point I want to make is that in working with the seniors, the seniors had a particular perspective of sharing their love, their generosity of care for the community and that they really rose to their highest to the ways that they could most express their strengths, their radiance, their loving kindness, the importance of passing on and nurturing each other through these superheroes, there are 11 of them that they created. Some of the names were Radiant Man, Super Nanna, the Music Uplifter, the Tree of Life, yours was --

>> TANYA: Heart Songs.

>> SUSAN WERNER: Heart Songs. So it was very important, since we live in an area that's very impoverished, that the seniors wanted to show the community

through their colorfulness, through their own just characters that they want to infuse our community with something that reminds everybody of our goodness and brings people out of a lot of strife and into connections in which they feel much more hopeful and able to live in connections that really nurture one another.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you. Beautifully stated. And last question for you all, where is the superhero mural located?

>> SUSAN WERNER: The superhero mural is on 32nd Street right at the intersection with San Pablo, so it's right across the street from our main center.

>> KATIE WADE: So in Oakland, 32nd Street and San Pablo.

>> SUSAN WERNER: Probably a picture on our website.

>> KATIE WADE: Again, stmaryscenter.org. The thank you so much Tanya and Susan for being with us today. We really appreciate it.

>> SUSAN WERNER: Thank you.

>> TANYA: Thank you. Have a great day.

>> KATIE WADE: We'll move on to our next speaker today. All right. Susan, just a second. Okay. Got it. All

right.

Third Speaker: Wendy Miller

Next up, we have Wendy Miller with us, and welcome, Wendy. I'll say a bit about Wendy before she jumps in. So Wendy Miller, Dr. Wendy Miller, is a sculptor, a writer, an expressive arts therapist, and an educator. She is the co-founder of Create Therapy Institute and the founding member and first elected executive co-chair of the International Expressive Arts Therapy Association. So Wendy's skills have taken her into a variety of worlds, fine art, writing, psychology, expressive arts therapy and mind-body medicine. She has published on medical illness and the arts as complementary medicine, the use of sand tray therapy, experiential approaches to supervision in expressive arts therapy, and on the cultural responsibility of the arts in therapy. She continues to research the relationships among the arts, creativity and health, and recently published a book that she and her late husband Gene Cohen wrote together, and the book is entitled Sky Above Clouds, Finding our Way through Creativity, Aging and Illness. And I am reading that myself, Wendy, and I am so delighted that we're going to be able to share some of your

work from that book. So I will let you take it away.

>> WENDY MILLER: Thank you. Thank you so much, Katie.

>> KATIE WADE: I don't think we can hear you. Might you move a little closer to the mic maybe?

>> WENDY MILLER: How is that?

>> KATIE WADE: A little better.

>> WENDY MILLER: Should I hit the thing called mute?

>> KATIE WADE: No, you might have to project. It's just you might be a little bit far from the microphone on your computer.

>> WENDY MILLER: At the bottom of the computer? How is that?

>> KATIE WADE: I will tell you, we're hearing your papers, so that might indicate where the mic is.

>> WENDY MILLER: Okay. Oh, I see. Yes. I see where the mic is. How is that? Is that better?

>> KATIE WADE: Yeah, that's a little bit better. Project as much as you can. That would be great.

>> WENDY MILLER: All right. Do you want me to turn the volume up? Does that help in any way?

>> KATIE WADE: Okay, I think we're good.

>> WENDY MILLER: Really? Maybe I should just sit

closer. Maybe that's better.

>> KATIE WADE: Yeah. Excellent.

>> WENDY MILLER: Thank you so much. This has been very exciting. I'm filled with gratitude and gratefulness. I was introduced to Katie through Jessica McCracken, who did a wonderful, wonderful job of helping to bring my book *Sky Above Clouds* to San Francisco, and Anne Basting is a colleague from the National Center for Creative Aging and did a lot of work with my late husband Gene Cohen, so it was just lovely to hear her today as the start of this. And Mark I only have met, but it turns out that I did a film when I had you worked at Laguna Honda in my years of being in the Bay Area, so it was really delightful to have him with Darcie. And Lucky and I have been in communication. He also had me on his radio podcast called *Growing an Elder Culture*, where I spoke on creativity and also on widowhood. I'm new to Gregory and also to Susan, but I'm very familiar with writing and I'm very familiar with art therapy and that that's been my career for, oh, over 35 years now, and working with elders. So I guess I'm saying that it feels kind of like coming home in a strange way, even though like Lucky, I think it's kind of weird to

be looking at myself on a computer, even though I realize I am talking to other people.

Katie, you and I talked about kind of ending this symposium with looking at the principles and the history of creative aging and really Gene Cohen's role in that and then moving that into sort of a more personal use of that, and somehow through the course of the day, I realized that I definitely want to do both of those things, but I want to flip that around. I'm going to start with the personal, I'm going to start with my book, *Sky Above Clouds*, and I'm going to move that into looking at the history and principles of creative aging so that we can end the symposium with kind of looking at the future of the field and discussing these principles of creative aging. So I hope that's okay. And if we have time, I would love to read a little bit from the fairytale that Gene wrote.

So *Sky Above Clouds*, actually I loved what Tanya said when she was talking about -- using the word heart song, Gene asked me to call it the Phoenix and the Fairy, because many people don't know that though he is the founder of the field of geriatric psychiatry and he had been working on the field of aging ever since he was in his 20s when he was

at NIMH and he worked and began the first aging institute that we had nationally in this country and ended his career at NIH as the acting director of the national institute of aging, many people don't know that for 14 years of much of his work and the work that people know of his was done living under the sort of are Damocles, if you want, of a metastatic cancer condition. I'll show you these, I don't know, for people who -- I'll just do this, for people who may or may not know his books, he wrote the Creative Age and he wrote the Mature Mind.

And then together, we -- oh, what I wanted to say, so it was called that, and then when he passed away, the working title that we had for the book was Heart Song. So it was lovely for me to hear that, and then it became Sky Above Clouds. So I would like to tell you a little bit about that because I feel like it's a really good entry into the level of creative aging that I want to talk about.

So the book Sky Above Clouds, and I'll show you that one now, since I'm sitting here and I have a poster behind me and you can kind of see what it looks like, it's called you Sky Above Clouds, finding our way through creativity, aging and illness, and I think it really poses the question, how

can creativity being a catalyst for hope, for love, for healing under any circumstances and under any and every single age, enabling individuals to grow beyond the limitations imposed by both ailments and aging. And certainly all of the presentations that we've heard today are really looking at that.

I experienced the process of working on this book as a series of metaphors, and so I would like to just kind of list some of those in the beginning of this talk. One is the existential crack, and I think Lucky really addressed that very well in his presentation, but I feel like this book is looking at the existential crack through which not only light but also the darkness of vulnerability enters human lives. And I'll just read you a tiny bit from the book here. I say: A crack that reveals the thin veil of another world you may or may not have a desire to enter or even to know. Sometimes this crack appears through a new opportunity. More often we face it by way of loss or grief, illness, injury, accident, age, or even death. At other times we are thrown into this shifting awareness by the pressures of developmental growth or healing, courage or resilience. It's as if a crack has opened in the

landscape, exposing strata that have always been there but have never been part of life's landscape.

So that crack really entered in our lives through Gene's diagnosis of a metastatic cancer condition in 1996, and for the next 13 years he lived an enormous time of creativity for both of us but also for the field that he forged, he published the two books that I mentioned and he conducted a very well-known creativity and aging study which I will talk about through the National Endowment for the Arts. Essentially what he's most known for is ask what we can do because of age, not in spite of age. Ask what we can do because of age, not in spite of age.

So as I said, few people really understood that so much of that work that he was doing, he did between the ages of 51 and 65 when he was living with this metastatic condition. So Sky Above Clouds became the title after he died, although it was a metaphor that he used over and over and over again in his talks, and I'll share a little bit about that. But it's about the challenge of both cancer and creativity, how they fight one another, how they grow, intertwine and ultimately how they change us and change our relationships to how we see ourselves.

The title comes from Georgia O'Keefe, she did a series of paintings, wouldn't you know that while I was sitting here listening to everyone, I spilled tea on my picture of her painting, but if you don't know it, she did a series of very, very large paintings Sky Above Clouds and they come 286 inches, they come during a time during her life when she was very afraid of flying, and in the course of that, she saw out the window of the plane at some point that, yes, you are above the clouds, and somehow that gave her strength to both fly but also the knowledge that there's always sky above clouds, and it gave her courage to live creatively with aging and illness and for Gene he felt that was really the metaphor for aging and that we have to move away from these images that do not match the data. He was a scientist and a researcher, and all of these things about the winter of your life and the leaves falling off your tree, yes, there is decline and there's loss, but he felt it was not the image that really matched the brain research and the data in terms of what really goes on with aging.

So he adopted this metaphor, and he often spoke about it in public, and for any of you who knew him and got to hear him, you probably would have seen him with his favorite

umbrella, which someone gave him from Pamona based on Sky Above Clouds, and he said there will always be clouds, plus there will always be sky above clouds. So that metaphor not only was the metaphor that we lived by, but it was the metaphor in which we wrote the book and really the metaphor that gave me the strength through grief to pull out all of his journals and my journals and to really find the sky above clouds and to lift myself out of the huge mud of grief to be able to bring his work to the world.

Gene really was absolutely passionate about creative aging. My purpose in the book is really a multilayered tale of the lived experience of this new story about aging that obviously many contemporary gerontologists and artists and clinicians all are trying to convey, and it's the story about both the light and the dark through that existential crack that opens in later life, when people wrestle with reconciling despair and hope, loss and gain, frailty and strength, and I think those concepts have really been well shown today with all of our speakers.

Let's see. You were right, I have all these papers in front of me, but nothing that I want to use. So let me speak just a tiny bit about -- well, let me speak just a

tiny bit about the whole concept of creative aging because really as you said when you opened, Katie, he talked about in his first book, creativity is built into the human species, and he defined it as bringing something new into existence, ask Gene added that is value. It doesn't have to be big C creativity, it can be little c creativity. It doesn't have to be the arts. It has to be exactly how you opened the symposium, any arena that you're in. It's not just about surviving, but it's about growing meaning in the face of adversity. It encourages the development of our evolving strengths. Creativity optimizes our problem-solving, our interpersonal and community connections, our artistry, and as I've found since he passed away, really legacy building. I have done a great deal of work to move his intellectual property to a public arena. It's all going to be at the University of Massachusetts, which has a very large research library, and rather than putting him under the field of aging, which in many ways is where he belongs, they're putting him under social change agent, which makes me really happy because that is really what he did. He is best known for his seminal research which really shapes aging rather than

responds to aging. Lucky really talked about that whole concept of creativity shaping. He looked at creative potential and psychological growth with aging, what are the positive changes, as I said, because of aging, not in spite of it, and so as a scientist, he was very involved with neuroscience, and he saw that the brain is continually resculpting itself in response to experience and in response to learning, that our new brain cells do form throughout our life, that the brain's emotional circuitry matures and becomes more balanced with age, and the biggest one is that the brain's two hemispheres are equally used by older adults, not just equally, but it's a very big change that happens as we age. And at first when he presented this research, people thought that it was compensatory, like oh, yeah, well, you're older, you need to use two halves of your brain. No. It's a whole other level that goes into gear as we age. Lucky was saying we get happier. And from Gene's research, it's really looking at what happens when the two sides of the brain work together. And again, many of you who have either read his books or have heard him speak, he used to love to say the aging brain isn't running out of gas, it's shifting into all-wheel

drive, so it's shifting into using four-wheel-drive, both sides of our brain.

So he also did a lot of work on the emotional circuitry, it's called brain plasticity, human potential phases, that's in the mature mind, he took Erik Erikson's work, and Erik Erikson had only written a little bit about old age, and Gene fleshed that out into the four phases of liberation -- no, re-evaluation, liberation, summing up, and encore, and it fills the whole book, so it really fleshes out what's going on for us between the ages of 50 and 100.

And then the most important thing that he's known for, and it's been referenced so much today in just all the things that people have said, but that's the National Endowment for the Arts, Creativity and Aging Study, and the results of that study, which happened in three cities, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and New York, he had a control group and an intervention group, and older adults ages 80 and upward were either in the control group or they just were at the center doing whatever they were doing, or they were given community-based art classes taught by professional artists. And the results showed the positive

impact of mental and social stimulation by challenging our mind enhances the brain, how we develop a sense of control, a sense of mastery that promotes our overall health. As an art therapist, we've known this forever, but to actually have scientific research showing it has radicalized the field. And the last is something that has also been mentioned by everyone, which is interpersonal engagement, social engagement, promotes overall health. And what Gene talked about was that -- and I wish he had lived, for many reasons, but one of the things that he really wanted was for people to understand that if the sciences had this kind of data from a biochemical pill, we would be given -- Medicare would be paying for this, and interestingly enough, in Canada and in Britain, I have seen research on, and I'll show it to you, seen research on the medical system prescribing arts engagements for patients' health. There were two articles that were in the New York Times this year, one in Canada and one in Britain. One is British doctors prescribe music, art and singing lessons for lonely, and the other is Canadian doctors are about to start prescribing art for patients' health. So I mean, that is exactly what this study was about, and I'm sorry he

didn't live long enough to see it because we definitely know that that's needed.

The other thing I want to talk about are just sort of benefits of creative aging.

How am I doing, Katy? I still have a few more minutes?

>> KATIE WADE: Oh, yeah, go for it.

>> WENDY MILLER: The principles and benefits of creative aging are that really it's important to know that it's not just a concept, it's a paradigm shift where a lot of theories about continuity that happen as we age, about the activities that you do, whether you're successful, whether it's positive aging, but creative aging was an innovative theory whereby the developmental focus of aging tons operate even when other functions may be at rest. I will tell you there was one night that I was doing a talk about Sky Above Clouds and there was a man in the audience during the question and answer period, and he had had a stroke and he was a linguistic anthropologist, and he talked about how incredible it was to lose his speech and the process that went on for him during that time, the rehab center where he and his wife were, where he was and his wife was there helping him daily, they told him that he

had 18 months, that anything that he regained would happen in 18 months. And he literally said this, he said, but I have lived and I knew that neuroplasticity goes on all the way through life, all the way through the life cycle, and he says, don't I sound like I'm talking beautifully? Which of course he did. It was really inspirational. Creative aging can dispel myths about the limitations of aging and through our inner push, that's what he called it, it can release our motivation and our ability to activate our true potential as we age, setting a developmental agenda for our later life goals.

And as we've seen today, there are many aging folks who really are becoming our frontier watchers as they live longer and longer. They may have few role models, but they're defining aging for themselves and of course for the future generations, which is, you know, very important.

The other thing is that it's really important that we know that we debunk some myths, that creativity is not just for artists. People will say that all the time. But it's not. It emphasizes, you know, it's about our dynamic role in relationships, where we have new starts, new directions, we have mid-course directions, how we respond to adversity,

that's really what my book is about, how problems become a catalyst to developing potential, and also intergenerational and community interactions. It's really an opportunity to do something for the common good. It strengthens our morale in later life, allows us to view life with fresh perspectives. As we know from his research, it contributes to physical health and creativity seems to be triggering our immune system, which is also really good for our health, it enriches our relationships, and it has distinguished elders as keepers of the culture, those who pass on the values and story of family and community for the next generation. So there's really so much to say, but I would like to read a tiny bit. Is that okay, Katie?

>> KATIE WADE: Yes.

>> WENDY MILLER: I would like to read two things from Sky Above Clouds and end with that. Oh, before I do that, though, the most important thing to remember, with aging, art is like chocolate to the brain. That was one of the things about Gene's capacity as a scientist is that many scientists find data and they complicate it and it becomes hard for the rest of us to understand, but he really wanted

us to know that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, and when we use these two sides of our brain, we really have the capacity very different than we have when we were younger. So he wanted to find a way to really make that metaphor stick, are so he created this little picture of the chocolate cake and a little picture of the brain and he went with aging and creative aging, art is like chocolate to the brain.

So on that note, I was thinking that it would be important to just end with two short things. One, thinking about the future of our field. I know, Katie, you mentioned that it is important to address that. The so I just want to read one line that is in both the introduction and the epilogue of my book. We need to bring forth our challenges, our opportunities, and our next steps so that we can both navigate and claim the new edges of our thinking. That is what potential means, and that's what Sky Above Clouds refers to in terms of creativity. The edges. The new edges of our thinking. And when we work in fields, you know, there are people in very different fields, and the reason that these ideas are people on the edges of their fields is that they're willing to try out

new concepts and new ways and they're influenced by concepts and ideas and such core commonalities, and I think anyone who is here today listening to this, that's who you are.

Should I stop, or should I read my little fairytale? You tell me.

>> KATIE WADE: I would love for you to read. I think everyone would.

>> WENDY MILLER: All right. Well, as I said, and Tanya, as you spoke about Heart Song, I thought that's really the moment I need to read from sort of the history of this book. So it started when Gene, you know, when you're diagnosed with a metastatic condition and given a very short time to live, two years, and you make it to 14 years, along the way you go through a lot of different things. So there was a point where he was really worried that there's no way that he was going to make it past the two years, so the original purpose of writing the Phoenix and the Fairy was not to write a book. That goal grew out of the importance of the imagery as it began to speak to Gene, the Phoenix. The symbol began to grow through the years and meaning and significance not just for Gene but

also for me. Originally he started writing a fairytale to tell our beloved daughter, Eliana, who was a toddler because he feared that he wasn't going to live long enough for her to remember him. He became frightened at the thought of what could happen and therefore what could happen to everyone he loved, but particularly because she was so young, he feared that she would have or not have a way to hold onto who he was, his love or his guidance. So at the end of writing Sky Above Clouds, Eliana, was now 21 years old. She lost her dad when she was 15. So I read to her the entire fairytale mostly to see if she would remember it, and I wanted to sort of know what she thought of it, and that's the part I would like to end with. I wanted to find out if she remembered any parts that Gene had read to her. I wanted to know what she thought it was about. In his moments of feeling he would be disappeared from his daughter's life, he had sat down to write her a fairytale, motivated by love and fear of the deepest kind. He had desired to be there for her when he wasn't there otherwise. Now 20 years old, she had come through her own tunnel of darkness, learning to live into her life with the loss of her father. I had my own expectations as to what

she would think or feel. Of course, I was wrong. Because our narratives are not only our own stories, they are the stories of our relationships within ourself and between one another. Her response becomes her narrative of what he told, regardless of the meaning he intended. He intended it to speak to her and therefore that intention was true. He intended it to speak to us, our readers, and here we are. Eliana told me, and I quote, verbatim: Dad wrote about our life. He was saying that even if you have a short amount of time, you should make it worthwhile, like spend as much time as you can with family. Do what you want to do. Don't stress over dumb stuff. Even if you have too short a time to actually live, you shouldn't be stuck in that moment of worries. You should celebrate life with family that makes you happy. That's who he is. That's what I imagine he would say, accept what happened and don't let it hold you down or stop you from what you want to do.

It has been a great interest for me to hear her perspective. I thought the tale was about hope and challenge, but for her, it is about learning to accept what it is in life, acceptance. Of course, that is exactly what

we have had to do, what we all have to do all the time, learn to accept our situation whatever we may be facing and discover the story that is speaking to us within it. I already have four grandchildren through Gene's son, three great-nieces and one great-nephew to read this fairytale to. Whatever version it grows into, the Phoenix and the Fairy moved into Heart Song, became Sky Above Clouds and will continue to fly through time and space through a blue sky above clouds. Thank you.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you, Wendy. Thank you so much for sharing that. If you have about a minute, I would like to ask a question.

>> WENDY MILLER: Perfect.

>> KATIE WADE: In Sky Above Clouds, there's so many points along the way that I'm making notes and things I want to revisit, and one of those that I thought might be useful today is that you use the term "creative capacities" and I wrote just down a sentence that you said about creative capacities, they our strategies, our propensities, our temperaments, our skills, we each have such a creative trunk filled with surprising materials and tools, something that is uniquely our way of seeing and interpreting the

world, and we use it to make intricacy tangible. I love this concept and I was thinking for folks although home listening in, in their homes, in community rooms, what is a way someone might nurture their own creative capacity, if you were to give a little nugget of advice about that?

>> WENDY MILLER: That's a great question, Katie, and I really appreciate that you've asked that because I think really the gist here from not just my talk but everyone's is that our creative capacity exists and it accompanies us and in that an accompaniment we're connected to some type of larger capacity. Maybe if you're psychological, you think it's an unconscious authority. If you're this, you call it potential, but whatever it is, it's there to guide us in uncharted territories. So my advice to people is, you know, really look at the tiny little, tiny -- they're always tiny, little whisperings that might show up in you. If not now, when? What are they going to do to me? What if I add something different to the recipe? What's going to happen? It can be just, as Gene called them, the small c's, but it's the edges of your thinking where like you just have the guts to go for something a tiny bit different. And I just think it's so important to know. He

had this equation, it was called C equals MB squared. He loved it. He was a scientist, so it was like a pun sort of off E equals MC squared from Einstein and our daughter's name is Eliana Miller Cohen, so it's EMC -- Eliana, and it came in a dream, he's a psychiatrist, but the bottom line, what we're really saying is that you can't dismiss yourself as a candidate for creative potential, that no matter who you are, no matter what your age, no matter what's going on, and especially as you grow older, you have the capacity for creative expression. The challenge is to recognize it and use it. What I'm saying is that it shows up in tiny little whispers, it shows up in little tiny, that's how I feel is it shows up as just a little idea, well, what if I flip that picture over? What if I made copies of it and I flipped it over? You know, that's just an idea. You might do nothing with it. But if you actually do it, suddenly it leads you and you follow it.

And for me, I do think in art materials because I have a studio and I like to play in there, but many people, it's in their garden, it's this way that they play games with their children, it's this way that they cook, and the question is, how do you listen to those edges of thinking

and attend to them? And when you do, they speak back to you.

>> KATIE WADE: Thank you, Wendy. Oh, my gosh, I feel like you just gave me such a gift in that moment to listen to the edges of my thinking.

Well, thank you, Wendy, for sharing your time and energy today. Folks can find Sky Above Clouds and Gene's book, the Mature Mind and the Creative Age on Amazon. Anywhere else you would like to direct people to?

>> WENDY MILLER: Well, actually, I have a -- I forget who was saying that they hate technology. I think it was Greg and Lucky was talking about the complications of it. So I have a young person who works on my website which I think of as a closet because anyone who has written a review, anytime anybody filmed me or recorded me, she put them all on this site, and it's called Sky-Above-Clouds.com. Sky Above Clouds but with dashes between the words. And I think it's a really helpful site because it has my blogs and it has events that are going on, but it also has a collection of everything that other people have said about this book, and for me, I guess I was always against all of that because I thought it was all

about self-promoting, but what it really is is an opportunity, it's a gift because it's a way that other people can access information without having gone there, and like Anne Basting was talking about what she was doing, it feels to me like it's a gift because it's all there. So I send people there.

>> KATIE WADE: Exactly. Thank you so much. So that's sky-above-clouds, thank you.

>> WENDY MILLER: Dot com.

> KATIE WADE: Dot com. Thank you. I appreciate it.

Wrap Up

To finish up our day here, just hang in for a few more minutes as we reflect and think about next steps. This is April pretty crucial part of kind of wrapping up the day and moving forward together. So I want to thank also Kaiser Permanente for sponsoring and other lovely sponsors for making today possible and to you, the audience, for joining us, and being willing to think on the edges of your mind. So we have two brief parts to the wrap-up. First, a personal anecdote, if you'll allow me, I'm not sure for how many of you Albert Einstein is a regular household topic, but in my home, it comes up often. And my husband and I

were recently talking about how Einstein was so unique, you know, one in a billion or one in many billions because he did so much of his creative work in isolation. But then I was thinking, you know, that's not really the whole story, is it? Part of tapping into our imagination is internal, as our speakers have shared today, and certainly, though, creativity doesn't happen in isolation, and that has been a thread that I didn't even ask for that came out today through every speaker is creativity in community and how creativity failure issues with others. Our creativity is triggered by circumstances, other people, exposing ourselves to new thoughts, our situations, we activate creative responses in other people through those same mechanisms, so without community, creativity doesn't have the life force it needs to flourish. So for me personally, my personal challenge is that next time life or someone presents a challenge for me, maybe a technical glitch, I plan to show some gratitude and thank it for allowing a moment of creative response. Right? So those are the triggers.

The second part of wrapping up that I want to share is thinking about next steps for each of us. So imaging each

of you sitting at a screen somewhere or on a phone and just listening in. I'm going to invite us all just to sit up a little straighter and just take a moment to straighten our shoulders, maybe even poke our chest out a little, and take a deep breath as we do a little reflection, and I want to emphasize an important thread in today's message. The we all have creativity within us. But boy, have I seen the magic of older age birthing creative thinking. When I began working with older adults at age 20, I had no idea how revolutionary it was going to be for me. I've been given a gift of seeing a behind the scenes look at aging and older age as a young person. Certainly as Wendy mentioned and Lucky, there's this loss that can come with age or with disability or illness, and alongside that, this incredibly profound creative opportunity that comes not in spite of age or loss, but because of it.

So I invite us all to take a little moment to reflect in the coming hours and days about what it is about older age that presents special opportunities for growth. And Wendy talked about this. So how can I leverage my age and creativity into something new? Maybe for myself or those around me. So as we take this journey of reflection about

what is it about older age that presents special opportunity for creative growth, I invite you to ask someone to join you in something new. Tell your story a little differently or dream a little bigger, as Wendy said, at the edges of our thinking, spend some time you there exploring and stretching boundaries. And I have two specific invitations for you to do these things in community with us. One is you've heard Well Connected has many virtual opportunities to create community. You can hear Greg Pond's poetry and readings on Wednesday afternoons just by tuning in on a phone conference. You can join Lucky every Monday morning by phone also for an elder salon. There are many groups to inspire creative growth. So you can learn more about Well Connected at Covia.org, so Well Connected is a Covia community service, C-O-V-I-A.org. Or certainly call our main line, which I mentioned before, 877-797-7299.

Our host, co-host, creative aging San Francisco, will be hosting a virtual gathering next month, that's February 28th about technology and creative aging, so you can join that by phone or computer. And there will be a panel of speakers, including myself, and it's no cost to

join. So there's more information at the website for creative aging San Francisco, which is creativeagingsf.org, so wherever you are, feel free to join us for February 28th technology and creative aging talk. That, and I will also be putting the closed captioning up on our symposium website as soon as possible so you can have a transcript of today and links to all the speakers' websites and their books are at creativeagingsymposium.org. Thank you all for making this event possible, and I can't wait to hear how today's celebration of creative aging sparks change for you. So have a great day. Thanks, everyone.

(The meeting concluded at 12:27 p.m. PST)

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