

The Pabst Charitable Foundation for the Arts is very proud to sponsor a groundbreaking new program that fulfills and advances its vision of creating “a set of innovative and interdisciplinary models that demonstrate the fundamental need for art and the inspiration and sustainability it creates”. The Foundation is collaborating with the National Center for Creative Aging and the University of Central Florida.

The campus of the Atlantic Center for the Arts was the site on May 3 for the beginning phase of an exciting new training and research project focused on incorporating the arts into the caregiving of the aging population, specifically Alzheimer’s and dementia patients.

From doctors to caregivers, workers in the field of an increasingly large aging population have been voicing the need for more creative ways to improve the quality of life for their patients and for themselves. Grantmakers and government agencies are trying to answer the call. The Pabst Foundation is in the forefront of this effort to devise an innovative, interdisciplinary model that can be replicated, and is supported by solid scientific research.

Together with Dr. Gay Hanna from the National Center for Creative Aging in Washington, D.C., the Pabst Foundation brought professionals in the fields of the arts of dance, poetry, music, storytelling and visual arts for a three day working seminar at ACA to design the “tool kit” of training techniques to be used to train caregivers across the country, starting with in-home caregivers, then moving on to institutional caregivers. Caregivers will learn how to engage their charges in revitalizing and expressive activities to improve the quality of their lives and of those in their care. The results of the training on the caregivers’ and patients’ engagement in the arts will be provided at the end of the three year program. The goal is to complete the project in time to present it at the White House Conference on Aging in 2015.

Each of the artists invited to design the tool kit has many years of experience in bringing their arts programs to Alzheimer’s and dementia patients. Interestingly, they have already designed training for their volunteers to use in their respective fields. Their methods, by and large, focus on creating a safe space by using eye and hand contact, eliciting responses from the patients and encouraging spontaneity. Their work for the tool kit is to hone the training techniques to those that can be used for all the arts and can easily be taught to untrained caregivers.

The artists have also incorporated sociological and psychological rating scales to assess the impact of their engagement with the patients and their caregivers. It is no coincidence that they all report identical findings from these questionnaires and rating scales; the patients and caregivers report more affect, more social interaction, less depression, improved cognitive function, and even a spillover effect to other patients in the same facilities.

One of the artists helping to craft the tool kit is Gary Glazner of the Alzheimer's Poetry Project whom Margery brought to Orlando in 2009. Gary trained staff at four agencies in Central Florida in his technique for engaging patients in reciting and creating poetry.

Building on her dynamic relationships with UCF Medical City administration and staff, and with the UCF Dean of Humanities, Jose Fernandez, Margery invited them to the May 3 meeting with the artists during their stay at ACA to discuss the program's goals and the contributions UCF can make to reach them. Both the Humanities Departments and the Medical City were delighted to send representatives.

UCF is ideally suited to participate in the training and research phases of the program. Volunteer community involvement for credit is an important part of the curriculum at UCF as it is in many colleges and universities around the country, and this project will offer an opportunity to fulfill this obligation. The Dean brought representatives from the Theater, English and Music Departments. Besides offering students a great opportunity, they are anticipating enrichment of their own current programs and possibly creating a separate discipline incorporating gerontological studies with the humanities.

The UCF Medical City comprises a medical college and cutting edge research facilities. The focus of the entire program is to treat the whole patient, an idea gaining ground in medical colleges around the country. The various disciplines in medicine are realizing that science, the arts and the psycho-social environment of the patient should be incorporated in a comprehensive treatment program for the whole person; that physiological events, or states, affect and are affected by emotional, social and cognitive states.

The program begun is a revolutionary approach to caregiving, and is on the cutting edge of gerontological studies. Dr. Gay Hanna, Executive Director of the National Center for Creative Aging, reported the NIH will institute a call for plans in palliative care in the near future. The challenge and the opportunity for this group are to answer that call with this groundbreaking program. The goal is not only to devise the tool kit for caregivers, but to disseminate it across the country to at-home caregivers and institutions in rural and urban settings. A variety of methods will be used, to disseminate e.g., Skype, U-Tube and/or phone apps that will supplement or replace one-on-one training.

Research on results will employ both hard (quantifiable) data, comprising physiological and chemical changes, with psycho-social results derived from observation, rating scales and questionnaires of the caregivers, researchers and possibly the patients themselves. The research arm of the program is headed by Kate de Medeiros of Miami University in Ohio. Medical researchers from universities across the country, with UCF as the lead University, will participate in the research for development and testing, as well as experts in gerontology and dementia, through the auspices of a pending grant from the NIH.

The Pabst Charitable Foundation has been supportive of this work since the beginning stages, beginning with conversations with Dr. Gay Hanna at NCCA beginning in 2012. The Foundation will be proud to continue its support as the program moves forward to translating the tool kit into other languages and exporting it to other countries. The Pabst Charitable Foundation anticipates multiple opportunities to contribute to this rich field as the project becomes more widely known in the medical, gerontology and arts fields

SPONSOR: The Pabst Charitable Foundation for the Arts ([www. Pabstfoundation.org](http://www.Pabstfoundation.org))

ARTIST PARTICIPANTS:

Gary Glazner, Alzheimer's Poetry Project (www.alzpoetry.com)

Maria Genne, Kairos Alive (www.kairosdance.org)

Francesca Rosenberg, MoMA Alzheimer's Project (www.moma.org/meetme)

Judith-Kate Friedman, Songwriting Works (www.songwritingworks.org)

Anne Basting, *TimeSlips* (www.timeslips.org)

CAREGIVERS:

Sue Odena

Mary Fleick

Harriett Gooden

UCF PARTICIPANTS:

Adam Golden, MD, Associate Chief of Staff of Geriatrics and Extended Care - VA Hospital

Jose Fernandez, Dean of Humanities

Terry Thaxton, Associate Professor, English

Alice Spicer, UCF student, English

Laura Pooser, Director of Development

Jeff Moore, Chair, Music Department

Christopher Niess, Chair, Theater Department

Jean Leuner, Dean, College of Nursing

Manette Monroe, MD, Assistant Dean for Students, College of Medicine

Kristina Grabnickas, Nurse Practitioner, College of Medicine and Health Services

Michael Metzner, Student, Medical School

ALSO:

Gay Hannah, Executive Director, National Center for Creative Aging (ghanna@creativeaging.org)

Kate de Medeiros, Miami University Department of Sociology and Gerontology, Scripps Gerontology Center (www.scripps.muohio.edu) researcher for the project

HOSTS:

Nancy Lowden-Norman, Co-Director, Atlantic Center for the Arts

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