

November 2009 Newsletter 4th CECD Conference 2009 in Adelaide

Arts, Aging and Creativity: Unlocking the Potential

By Hilary Lee and Dalia Gottlieb-Tanaka

The 2009 CECD conference has just concluded in Adelaide, South Australia and from the responses we collected, participants found the sessions exciting, informative and educational. This year's conference featured four themes: working towards best practices in arts and aging, evaluating creative expression programs, expressing culture and spirituality through the arts, and unlocking the potential within an organization; these themes attracted most interesting speakers.

Experts from the arts, academia, practice and politics made thoughtful and inspiring presentations. Among the notable speakers were: Colin Bahn, CEO of Maurice Zeffert Home in Perth; Dr. Pat Baines, Art Therapist from Tasmania; Chris Faissandier, Musica Viva Australia; Sally Francis, Art Co-ordinator, Flinders Medical Centre in Adelaide; Dr. Dalia Gottlieb-Tanaka, Chair of The Society for the Arts in Dementia Care from Vancouver, Canada; Allan Graham, CEO of Aged and Community Services SA & NT Inc.; Hilary Lee, Chair of The Society for the Arts in Dementia Care in Western Australia; Joanna Jaaniste, Dramatherapist from Sydney; Kristin Robertson-Gillam, Music Therapist from Sydney; Greg Mackie, Arts South Australia; Dr. Peter Spitzer (Dr. Fruit Loop), Co-Founder of the Humour Foundation; Dr. Yukimi Uchide, Social Welfare Foundation in Japan and Kesen Boke Ichiza Theatre Group; Jane Verity, Founder and President of Dementia Care Australia, and Gareth Wreford, CEO Arts Access Australia.



The Kesen Boke Ichiza Japanese theatre group was a highlight at the conference. The group provided cultural vignettes depicting dementia care and the efforts to educate the Japanese community when interacting with people with dementia. The actors who are professional health providers performed in English and not in their native language. The theatre group made us laugh and brought tears to



our eyes with their moving short stories. It was enlightening to be given access to another culture and see the similarities as well as the differences in approaching dementia care.

The group recruited a surprise guest actor, Dr. Richard Fleming, who

graciously volunteered to dress up as a chicken and take on a responsible role in the play. In particular, the conference participants appreciated the art exhibition. Katherine Tumes and the exhibition committee presented works of arts with compassion and expertise. The art was produced by people with dementia at the Aldersgate Residential Care Centre and organized with Katherine's supervision.



The final presentation at the conference was led by Hilary Lee, Dr. Peter Spitzer and Dr. Dalia Gottlieb-Tanaka. Although the presentation was a light-hearted spoof, commenting on the profession's situation, the messages were of major significance:



- Love, compassion and caring are crucial to dementia care
- We need to promote the rights of people with dementia
- We need to encourage researchers to validate feelings
- The arts rejuvenate the energy levels of all involved in care
- The creative spirit can be present even at the end of life
- There is freedom and safety in the world of art
- Administrators and management are willing to try out new approaches that raise the bar
- People with dementia can reaffirm who they are when we value and respect them
- There is an increased awareness of the role of the arts in dementia care
- We can tap into the joyfulness of life by bringing the performing arts to the bedside

- This conference is creating a forum for all the arts, academics and practitioners to share their ideas, to be heard and to be valued
- There is political awareness of the value of the arts in aging and in dementia care
- We saw how props could be used to help people express unmet emotional needs

Some comments quoted from participants included:

- "Great choices, stimulating, very good selection of speakers"
- "Wonderful content and presentations"
- "Quality of speakers, their passion, particularly those with artistic background, presenting and not holding back on their quirksiness"
- "Art exhibition nicely arranged and well presented"
- "The getting together of various creative arts representatives and to hear what other people are doing in the world"
- "Inspirational and very helpful"
- "How positive and heart warming. What a privilege to meet and learn from such wonderful people"
- "The great ideas to take away and implement as life style programs"
- "Please have another soon"
- "Please maintain an Adelaide conference/workshop at least once a year"
- "I found this inspiring and motivational. Giving me a new lease on my life and profession"

At the end of the conference, Dr. Dalia Gottlieb-Tanaka announced the next conference will take place in Penticton, British Columbia, Canada, September 30 – October 2, 2010.

Special Thanks

We would like to take this opportunity and express our appreciation all those who were involved in the conference, including all the Conference Committee members from Aged and Community Services, the Society and local aged care organizations in Adelaide, the events managers, and sponsors whose generous donations enabled the conference to become a reality. We would like to thank all of the committee members involved in the arts exhibition and the evening social program which were both a huge success. We would like to thank the Society Board members Jeni Winslow and Norma Hatchett and members who travelled from Perth to be at the conference, and in particular Maree Maclachlan who worked closely with Hilary in Perth over the 12 months leading up to the conference and played a special role in supporting the theatre group during their rehearsals and performances in Adelaide. We look forward to continue working with all of you in the future.

Warmest wishes,

Hilary and Dalia