EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose: The Gerontological Society of America (GSA), collaborated with the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG) to present the 2017 World Congress in San Francisco, California. GSA’s Humanities and Arts Workgroup was formed to create the Age Stage, an innovative venue for the World Congress. The purpose of the Age Stage was to present intergenerational performances featuring older adults’ creativity as a contribution to Reframing Aging project. The goal within IAGG was to present a venue focused on creativity and aging to expand international perspectives of aging among gerontologists and geriatricians from a wide array of disciplines. The vision was that this expanded view would contribute to improving the global quality of life of older people. The Archstone Foundation with GSA had joined with the FrameWorks Institute in a commitment to change communication about aging. AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) recognized the importance of reaching the fastest growing HIV population: persons over the age of 55 years, through arts and humanities performances. To accomplish the following objectives, the Workgroup wrote two grant proposals to secure $65,000 from Archstone Foundation and AHF to support the Age Stage.

Objectives and Outcomes:

1. To create, for the first time, a distinct and highly visible program, The Age Stage, featuring humanities and arts-related performances at the IAGG conference.

During the IAGG World Congress July 23 to 27, 2017, the Age Stage was held from July 23 to 26 at the Moscone Center. The Age Stage project was:

- designed as an open venue with curtains, seating (100) and a stage located on a major hallway of the conference in view of the more than 6000 global attendees
- marketed in multiple ways by GSA alerting IAGG registrants to the calendar of events
✓ promoted on social media with the IAGG hashtag that amplified the conference message to more than 31 million users.
✓ posted on Twitter (23,844), Facebook (2,498) and Instagram to an international audience
✓ reached by a broader audience beyond the convention center through videos, photos and other content shared
✓ attended by an estimated 2,000 IAGG registrants
✓ outnumbered by the capacity of seating and often of the performance space itself
✓ requested by the audience to expand and replicate at future conferences

2. To invite, review and accept proposals for performances by persons aged 60 and older, as well as presentations by persons of all ages whose work had age or older persons as muse or subject matter.
✓ 42 reviewed applications were considered
✓ 37 were accepted and 30 appeared on the Age Stage
✓ 145 persons of diverse backgrounds performed
✓ Visual arts, song/choir, dance, theater, fashion, storytelling and film were presented (Appendix A: Age Stage Program)
✓ Audience members expressed their experience of the Age Stage through nearly 200 written statements including: This is the human face of this conference; Wonderful presenters. Lively, exciting, engaging. Loved the stories! Very Creative; This is one of the most beautiful experiences I have had. Thank you for having this Humanities of Aging experience; Engaging in Life, Not Just Science; The Pleasure of the Persons we serve. Excellent!; Very interesting lessons for all practice (Qualitative Data, page 27)
✓ 398 persons completed evaluations on a 5-point scale. All but one performance was rated from 3.25 to 4.0 with most of the responses about the value of the presentations rated as “excellent.”

3. To promote awareness of and participation by World Congress attendees from all disciplines to attend humanities and arts track scientific presentations.
✓ 313 humanities and arts abstracts were submitted
✓ countries represented in submissions were Hong Kong, Singapore, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Canada, Belgium, and the United States
✓ 20 abstracts were accepted for the targeted track (15 symposia, 4 posters and 1 paper)
✓ subject matter included the arts and dementia, music, meaningful aging, old age wisdom, social justice and age-friendly communities
✓ attendance figures in 13 sessions ranged from 13 to 76, with a total of 573 participants (Appendix B: Humanities and Arts Programming Flyer)

4. To utilize the Age Stage and arts and humanities performances to increase knowledge and awareness among World Congress attendees about the extent and impact of HIV/AIDS among those age 55+.
✓ 13 HIV/AIDS scientific sessions: 3 symposia; 3 papers and 7 posters (Appendix C: HIV/AIDS Flyer)
✓ GSA HIV, AIDS, and Older Adult Interest Group met
✓ promote greater awareness of HIV/AIDS within the aging network an invitation only reception hosted by AHF for international researchers with a focus on HIV/AIDS research (approximately 30 attendees)
✓ linking the worldwide researchers to a network of other scholars in the field as well as the resources of AHF.

5. To engage older adult and intergenerational community organizations in attending and presenting during the 2017 World Congress.
✓ The Workgroup’s Local Community Representative actively recruited from the San Francisco aging and arts network for performances including choirs and dance performances from diverse communities
✓ Art in Action provided an opportunity to view the works of the more than 175 artists at the Aquatic Park Center, the oldest non-profit senior center in the nation
  o Attendees from the U.S. and other countries, met with a well-known Civil Rights photographer.
✓ At the Contemporary Jewish Museum, docent tours for IAGG participants of the work of Roz Chast, New Yorker cartoonist and author of Can’t We Talk About Something Pleasant?
✓ Art Saves Lives (studio and gallery) Reception, an offsite event in the Castro District (approximately 100 attendees)
  o Participants viewed dolls created by the local LGBT community and artwork by local artists
  o The individuals featured in the films Wilhemina’s War and Still Standing were in attendance as well.
✓ The San Francisco Legacy Film Festival, created by Sheila Malkind, became an active partner with the Age Stage and presented a day of film for more than 50 attendees (Appendix D: Film Festival Flyer)

6. To evaluate the Age Stage impact on World Congress attendees and community participants
  • On site evaluation completed by 398 audience members and performers representing 18 disciplines and 23 countries
  • Approximately 20% of audience members completed the evaluation
  • Respondents rated most of the performances in highest value category of excellent
  • 90% of the performances were rated excellent or significant value
  • 91% of presenters rated the experience as an excellent value and 100% would recommend Age Stage to other performers
  • Age Stage attendees reported they would apply the experience to: curriculum development, advocacy and program development as well as relate it to their own personal aging
  • 94% of the audience respondents reported the Age Stage contributed (77% excellent value) and (17% significant value) to their appreciation of older adult’s creativity
• 95% of the audience respondents perceived the importance of older adults in presentations at conferences as of excellent value (82% and significant value as 12%)

• 1,332 IAGG registrants completed a brief online evaluation survey; 438 respondents or 35% had attended the Age Stage
  o 97% responded some satisfaction (32%) to very satisfied (65%)
  o 42 persons added comments including: this is what aging is all about--not just negative decline--what we are trying to accomplish; perhaps the most valuable and cutting-edge part of IAGG, and the highlight--centered on different ways to approach aging; conveyed the interdisciplinary nature of gerontology
  o 12 audience members commented online on lack of arts-based pedagogy; needed vigorous humanities research

• Both onsite and online evaluations commented on enlarging the venue and suggested replication at other aging scientific conferences
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The Gerontological Society of America

Age Stage