



The Arts, Health and Seniors Project gives participants a new lease on life

A picture of health

Gayle Roberts, a retired high school physics teacher, with her piece "Transitions."

Gayle Roberts' life changed in a way she never thought possible.

A retired high school physics teacher, she now has a new identity: "I am a writer now and I never realized that was a part of me," she says. "It opened up a world I never imagined before."

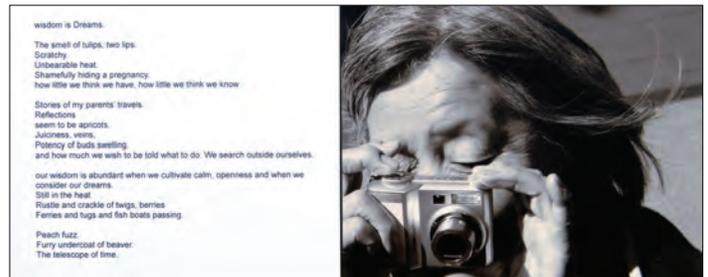
Gayle is one of many seniors taking part in the Arts, Health and Seniors Project, which recently held an open house at the Roundhouse Community Centre. This three year pilot study looks at the impact of participating in arts programs on physical health, mental health and social connectedness of the seniors participating in the project.

"Even though we're a third of the way into the project, we've already seen an improvement in the health of participants," says **Juan Solorzano**, project coordinator. "Participants have told us they have less pain in their hands and wrists and have better coordination and balance." It's also good for their mental health too as it improves social ties and is creative and fun. The University of British Columbia's School of Nursing is doing the external evaluation based on both quantitative and qualitative measures.

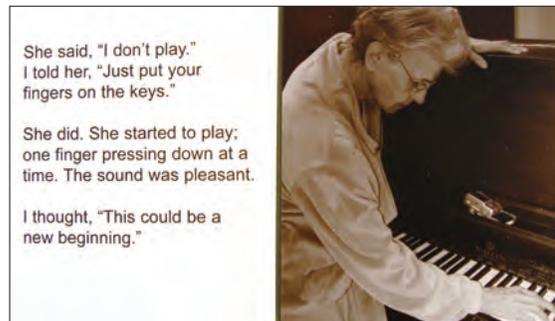
The participant groups include seniors who have cultural and language barriers, low-income seniors, isolated seniors, those with chronic health conditions and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender seniors. Participants worked with professional artists in a variety of areas including puppetry, visual arts, theatre, new media, and literary arts.

The arts affect many parts of a person's life says Solorzano and for many participants, it has opened door for more opportunities to be active in the community. Solorzano says, "They see themselves as emerging artists."

For more information, contact Juan Solorzano at 604-713-1861 or email jugasolo@gmail.com.



"Wisdom is dreams"



"This could be a new beginning"

About the Arts Health and Seniors Project

Funding for the projects comes from Vancouver Coastal Health's SMART Fund, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, BC Arts Council, Society for the Arts in Healthcare, and the United Way of Lower Mainland, North Shore Community Foundation, New Horizons Program for Seniors and Vancouver Foundation.

Programs are held at community centres in Vancouver, North Vancouver and West Vancouver.