MERCER

The Art of Staying Healthy and Creative

The secret is art – and you can take part!

By Eileen Doremus, *Director, Mercer County Office on Aging*

Creativity and aging… the more they get together the happier we'll be. That's right! And it has been proven again and again both anecdotally as well as scientifically. In 2006 the National Endowment for the Arts partnered with George Washington University in their release of a study entitled *The Creativity and Aging Study*. The study looked at the impact of professionally run art programs in local senior centers and community centers compared to similar sites that did not have similar programming. The results "point to powerful positive intervention effects of these community-based art programs run by professional artists. They point to true health promotion and disease prevention effects.

They also show stabilization and actual increase in community-based activities in general among those in the cultural programs, they reveal a positive impact on maintaining independence and on reducing dependency." Understandably, creativity can be expressed in many ways but these outcomes of this study make one take notice of the powerful combination of creativity and aging.

Creativity knows no boundaries, and the New Jersey Senior Art Show provides artists the opportunity to have their work showcased. Springpoint Senior Living's Meadow Lakes Retirement Community, located in Hightstown, Mercer County, is host to this annual event.

Participants spend all year awaiting the arrival of this event and for good reason.

In 1966 the New Jersey Division on Aging sponsored first Senior Citizen Juried Art Contest and Exhibition. In the program from the most recent show, the 43rd Annual, one learns "the purpose of the art contest is to showcase the abilities of artists 60 years or older, demonstrating to the general public that creativity does not diminish with age."

By the time one's artwork is shown at the State Art Show it has already been shown at the local level through the County aging and cultural agencies. Entry into the New Jersey Senior Citizens Art Show is limited only to first place winners selected by judges at each county site.

There were 230 entries in the latest contest by professional and non-professional artists from 17 counties in New Jersey. A reception is held on the last day of the show and awards are handed out after all are celebrated for their participation.

Meadow Lakes' residents take great pride in hosting the event and boasting several of their own residents' masterpieces.

This year's show will happen again at Meadow Lakes in late September, early October with the reception at the end of October. Stay tuned! If you are an artist or want to attend the art show, please contact your County Office on Aging to find out about the art show in your area.

Highlights from the 2009 New Jersey State Senor Art Show. The New Jersey Foundation on Aging has been a proud sponsor of this annual event since 1998.

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