



7th Annual Creative Aging Symposium

Move & Be Moved

Friday, May 6th, 2016

Southminster, 8919 Park Road, Charlotte, NC 28210

Presenters in Order of Appearance



Heather Burkhardt, MSW, is the Assistant Director of the North Carolina Division of Aging and Adult Services. She has over 20 years of experience working in the area of home and community-based services for older adults and their caregivers. Prior to working for the state, Heather worked at the Pitt County Council on Aging and Resources for Seniors in Wake County. Heather earned her Master’s Degree in Social Work with a certificate in Gerontology from East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina.



Michelle Pearson is a choreographer, dancer, and master teacher actively working in many communities throughout her home state of North Carolina and abroad. She makes dances with people of all ages and abilities including veterans, inmates, retired clowns, preschoolers, politicians, and professional dancers. She was a core member of Liz Lerman Dance Exchange from 93-97 before moving into the position of Artistic Associate with the troupe. She is the current Artistic Curator of Black Box Dance Theatre leading cARTwheels residencies in NC communities. She has been a guest artist and adjunct faculty at numerous schools including Meredith College, Catholic University, American University, The American Dance Festival, Harvard Medical School, and Arts Together. She is honored to be a judge of the NC Senior Games Silver Follies state competition since 2010. She

was recognized by the NC Arts Council with a Choreographic Fellowship in 2002-2004 and was selected by the US Department of State to lead Cultural Diplomacy missions to Sierra Leone and China in 2011, 2014, and 2016. Michelle is a William Friday Fellow committed to improving human relations in the state of North Carolina.



Gwendolyn Poole has enjoyed many aspects of the theatre for years. She holds degrees in theatre and sociology and enjoys engaging in theatre projects that deal with social issues. As founder of the DayStar Liturgical Dance Ministry and the FirstFruits Drama Ministry at Saint Matthews United Methodist Church, Gwen spends much of her time writing, directing, and teaching choreography. As a member of the Greensboro Playwright's Forum, she has directed for the Evening of Shorts at City Arts Drama Center in Greensboro and has had one of her plays produced there and also by the Plaid Players Company in Burlington, NC. Gwen performed several seasons in Snow Camp Outdoor Theatre's "Pathway to Freedom", Inner Village Arts-South, We Are One, and Montage Showcase Ensemble. Gwen was most recently seen (2015) as Lena "Mama" Younger in "A Raisin in the Sun" produced by the Community Theatre of Greensboro. One of her greatest accomplishments was being commissioned to write an historical drama for a theatre company in Kentucky. She is currently developing her Drama for Living business which includes one-woman presentations, drama coaching, workshops, directing services, and more. Gwen has provided services for the Black Child Development Institute, Salvation Army Boys and Girls Club, the Adult Center for Enrichment, the Shepherd's Center and Laughlin Memorial UMC.



Christina Soriano, an associate professor of dance at Wake Forest University, has been developing an improvisational movement class curriculum for people living with neurodegenerative diseases, as well as their carepartners. More information about this work can be found at www.improvement.us.



Christina Hugenschmidt, PhD is an assistant professor of gerontology and geriatric Medicine at Wake Forest School of Medicine. She is a neuroscientist who investigates how changes in movement and metabolism in aging interact with the brain and cognition, and the potential of behavioral interventions to support healthy brain and body function in aging. She has partnered with Prof. Soriano for the past two years to begin understanding how dance and improvisational movement might benefit emotional and physical well-being in older adults.



Sheila Kerrigan is the mime who can't find a box she fits inside. In her performance, "Mime Explains String Theory," for older audiences, she starts before birth and ends after death, and toddles through thirteen stages of Woman. She stumbles on the meaning of life and struggles to communicate it. In her show for younger audiences, "The Mime Who Talks!", she juggles and drops while telling stories about how being willing to fail, and to set a positive mental attitude, helps us succeed. Author of "The Performer's Guide to the Collaborative Process," she uses drama to teach communication, creativity, conflict resolution, and

collaboration. She works with groups to create performances about issues important to them. She served on the Alternate ROOTS Resources for Social Change training team, helping to develop a curriculum on spurring progressive change through the arts, including anti-racism work. With the Southeast Center for Arts Integration, she leads professional development workshops for teachers and artists on integrating the arts with subjects across the curriculum. She taught “Community-Based Performance” at Duke and “Creating Original Performance” at Bennington College’s July Program. She co-founded, co-directed, and performed with TOUCH Mime Theater for seventeen years, and directed and performed with Jelly Educational Theater for four. She has performed and taught in over 20 states, in schools, prisons, juvenile detention centers, senior centers, hospitals, festivals, and on TV. She holds a BA in English with a minor in mime.



Jessica Ruhle is the Manager of Public Programs at the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University. Jessica established and directs Reflections: The Nasher Museum’s Alzheimer’s Project. Started in 2014, this program provides engaging and interactive museum tours to visitors with memory loss and their care partners. Jessica presented the Reflections program internationally in Belfast at IdeasLab 2015 on the topic “Dementia, Arts and Culture.” She was also named “North Carolina Art Museum Educator of the Year, 2014-2015” by the NC Art Education Association. This annual award recognizes museum educators who creatively engage all museum visitors. Jessica has worked at the Nasher Museum of Art since 2010. In the Education department, she has been responsible for K-12 tours, teacher workshops, and Family Day events. She now leads the Reflections program and directs the gallery guides. Prior to being at the Nasher Museum, she worked in Museum Education across the Triangle at the NC Museum of History, the NC Museum of Art, and Marbles Kids Museum. Before arriving in NC, Jessica worked at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in DC. Jessica has a MAT in Museum Education from The George Washington University, as well as a degree in Art History from Davidson College.



Kali Ferguson is a bilingual storyteller, performance poet, and cultural educator based in her hometown of Charlotte, NC, after much travel. She loves sharing poetic, musical, and storytelling traditions of Africa and the African Diaspora, including Latin America. Kali is excited to once again lead an interactive workshop that empowers older adults to orally share stories from their favorite books and films. She loves to facilitate fictional and true-to-life storytelling skills for adults, which she does privately and for the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Her creation story as a performing artist began at the tender age of four when she started acting in the Afro-American Children’s Theater, founded by her mother in 1981. That was also the year her dad’s co-worker kindled her passion for Spanish. Kali went on to receive her B.A. in Spanish Education with a minor in African American Studies from UNC-Greensboro. She taught high school Spanish before eventually becoming a storyteller in 2004. Dubbed “the Swiss-Army-Knife of Culture” (thanks to her nimble use of myriad creative expressions), Kali has performed and taught for adults at Charlotte’s Mint Museum, the Levine

Museum of the New South, Washington D.C.'s America Speaks, and numerous other venues. She has created programs for the Charlotte Symphony, UNC-Charlotte, Johnson & Wales University, Johnson C. Smith University. Kali has studied and traveled in South Africa, Panama, Costa Rica, Spain and other countries. Creative Loafing Charlotte gave her a "Women Who Rock" Award. Kali is a 2015 Regional Artist Project grantee of the NC Arts Council, but is just as proud of the hugs she gets after her shows! When she's not infusing communities with creativity, you'll find Kali scatting while creating original music and defending her informal title of "freestyle salsa queen."



S. Sudha is Associate Professor in the Dept. of Human Development and Family Studies at UNCG. She conducts research and teaches on aging related issues. She is partnering with Lia Miller on a study funded by the National Endowment for the Arts examining whether participating in structured arts programs improves key neuropsychiatric symptoms of seniors with dementia. She herself is rapidly growing older every day, and is enjoying it.



Lia Miller, Co-founder and Executive Director of Creative Aging Network-NC, received a Bachelor of Fine Arts with a concentration in Video from Savannah College of Art & Design in 1990, where she also studied in England and Italy. Miller worked for TV news and ad agencies for 7 years before switching careers to find more fulfilling work as a recreation assistant at a nursing home. Seeing the need for more meaningful engagement, Miller co-founded the Evergreens Renaissance Program in 2003 to provide creative classes and continuing education for the nursing home residents. This led to the establishment of the Creative Aging Network-NC (CAN-NC). As co-founder, Miller worked with various aging service providers in Greensboro while simultaneously launching CAN-NC. In 2012, Miller began working full-time with CAN-NC and enjoys developing visual arts programs such as ARTmail for older adults. She serves on panels and facilitates sessions on creativity and aging at conferences throughout the state. Miller also provides training, consultation, educational presentations and workshops in the field of creative aging for healthcare staff, artists, older adults and those closest to them. She is a Master TimeSlips Trainer and has received training in national programs such as Memories in the Making, Alzheimer's Poetry Project, Poetry for Life and Meet Me at Moma.

Pa Lor graduated from the University of North Carolina Greensboro with Bachelor of Art in psychology and a minor in sociology. She describes herself as someone who is compassionate, hard-working and creative. She likes to read and go to the parks during her free time.



Christina Peoples is a native of Greensboro, North Carolina. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Gerontology from Winston-Salem State University. Currently Christina is in the Gerontology program with a concentration in aging and business at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Christina enjoys older adults and her ultimate goal is to open up a program center one day.

Katherine Skinner is currently an undergraduate seeking a B.S. in Human Development and Family Studies. Katherine has a passionate drive to help family members understand each other, therefore her goal is to receive her masters in Couple and Family Therapy or Clinical and Mental Health Counseling. After receiving her masters, she wants to begin her career as a therapist and work toward further certifications.