

## Seniors Making Art

**Issue Area:** Recreational Opportunities

**Contact:** Caryn Roth  
Program Director  
16040 Christensen Road, Suite 316  
Seattle, WA 98188  
(206) 433-6900 x.308 (Phone)  
(206) 433-2855 (Fax)  
croth@seniorsmakingart.org

**Date Published:** July 2004



Seniors Making Art has accessed the untapped resource of senior creativity since 1991. The program was founded by world-known glass artist Dale Chihuly who took inspiration from his mother to enhance the lives of older adults through learning art. The program is based out of Bellevue, Washington, but the program is easily applied to any facility interested in creating a Seniors Making Art program in their community. Recent studies have also concluded that learning and creating art does not only maintain the lives of older adults but also improves their lives. Initially the program had only three individual programs but now offers its 24,000 participants two hundred and five programs.

The program was created to tap the potential of older adults. The programs are eight or ten week courses that enable older adults to learn a variety of art methods. The programs and supplies are provided free of charge to all seniors in the class. Art classes have been taught in assisted living communities, senior centers, art museums, and community centers to name a few. Any organization with access to a facility can purchase a class program. The cost is \$2,200 for an initial class and \$1,500 for each class on top of that. Through this purchase, Seniors Making Art will supply a program, access to art materials, and a local artist to teach the class. Seniors Making Art find artists from the local community who are skilled in building enthusiasm and confidence through art to older adults. By purchasing a class, an organization can provide a free means for seniors to learn about art and have a social outlet. The classes provided are diverse and numerous:



*Acrylic painting by senior artist,  
Bette Stasny*

- Drawing
- Watercolors
- Sculpture
- Creative Writing
- Sumi-E Brush
- Collage
- Glass Mosaic
- Acrylic Painting

- Mural Painting
- Pastels
- Memoir Writing
- Calligraphy
- Photography
- Music
- Printmaking
- Chinese Watercolor
- Clay

These are only the classes offered thus far; Seniors Making Art is available in any art form that a local artist can be contracted to teach. In 2000 the Senior Making Art program offered sixteen hundred classes in one hundred and thirty facilities through fifty-five local artists. Seniors Making Art is funded through donations, thirty corporate sponsorships, and fifteen foundations.

The program has expanded from three to two hundred and five programs since its inception. Seniors praise it as a cheap and convenient way to increase both their creativity and wellness. Ruth Matthews, a student of Senior Making Art classes, depicts the overall impact of the classes, “Most rewarding were the friendships, pulsing creativity, and the knowledge that indeed art, sharing, and healing are inevitably entwined.”

### **Related Resources:**

Seniors Making Art. <<http://www.seniormakingart.org>>.

“It Can Be Simple and Beautiful.” The Issaquah Press.  
<[http://www.seniormakingart.org/press\\_issaquah.html](http://www.seniormakingart.org/press_issaquah.html)>.

“Inner Vision” Mercer Island Reporter.  
<[http://www.seniormakingart.org/press\\_mercerisland.html](http://www.seniormakingart.org/press_mercerisland.html)>.

“Art Therapy Engages the Mind and May Help Heal the Body.” The Seattle Times.  
<[http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/alternativecare/2001908168\\_healtharts21m.html](http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/alternativecare/2001908168_healtharts21m.html)>.

### **Additional Contacts:** Julielyn Lakey

Executive Director  
16040 Christensen Road, #316  
Seattle, WA 98188  
(206) 433-6900 x. 306  
contact@seniormakingart.org