2015 Programs of Excellence Awards

The National Institute of Senior Centers (NISC) Programs of Excellence Awards are designed to honor and promote outstanding efforts made by senior centers throughout the nation to offer innovative, creative, and replicable programs for older adults.

A NISC Committee selected the award winners from 69 nominations. Six award winners, along with six honorable mentions, were chosen. The top 12 programs are included in this booklet. Each program is proof of the important work that happens at senior centers. A complete listing of the 69 submitted programs is available as a NISC member benefit.

Entries were accepted in the following six categories:

1. **Educational**: Programs designed to educate seniors. Examples may include new and unique classes, technology, legislative, or literary programs.

2. **Expressive & Creative Arts**: Programs related to visual or performing arts.

3. **Fundraising**: Programs designed to generate revenue for the senior center.

4. **Leadership, Civic Engagement, & Community Development**: Programs to increase community involvement and develop strong leaders and volunteers.

5. **Nutrition, Fitness, & Health Promotion**: Programs designed to improve the health of seniors through health-related programs, lectures, and screenings.

6. **Special Events**: Social Programs designed as one-time events, may be inter-generational, musical, artistic, thematic, seasonal, or patriotic events.

This year’s award-winning programming includes:

- Ideas for Intergenerational Programming, with teens interviewing Veterans, and a breakfast career day where older adults share their life experiences with high school seniors.
- Two breakfast focused events; one center found it to be a great way to thank sponsors while planning for next year and another hosted a community conversation breakfast to envision an age-friendly community.
- Ideas to celebrate Senior Center Month by playing the Game of Life or hosting Spirit Week.
- Programming to spark the imagination through glass fusing, a professionally led art class, a hands on exercise and diet workshop, a Brain Fitness Fair, and an auto club partnership.
- An event that raised over $64,0000 by showcasing regional wines and local cuisines.

This September during National Senior Center Month, look for your opportunity to be part of the next NISC Programs of Excellence Awards competition and share your best programming idea to inspire others.
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This program provided an opportunity for students to interact and learn from Veterans. We worked with students from local high schools by partnering with History and English teachers to pair students with Veterans. The teachers found the students and the senior center found the Veterans.

After students were paired with veterans, the students were assigned the task of interviewing and writing up their story. During the interview, students came prepared with questions and a recorder to make sure that nothing was missed.

After the interview process, students wrote the Veteran’s stories and presented their stories at a special community event. At the community event the Veteran joined the student on stage while the student read aloud the Veteran’s story to friends, family, and other guests.

Many of the Veterans displayed their uniforms and pictures from their service during the event and refreshments were served after the stories were all told. There was no time limit or page limit to the stories. Students learned firsthand about Boot Camp, K Rations, Tsunamis in Alaska and the crazy pranks only men serving together 24 hours a day pull.

But more importantly, they learned what it meant to these men to serve and the stories they will never read about in the history books; stories of bravery, heroism and true grit, told from the men who lived them. The Veterans told of experiences many had never recounted before, bringing up emotions long buried.

**Number of Staff/Volunteers required to run program:** 1 staff, 7 students, 7 veterans, 1 volunteer to help with refreshments  
**Revenue:** 0  
**Expense:** $20  
**Net:** -$20  
**Contact:** Maureen Gallagher, Murray Heritage Center,  
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In celebration of National Senior Center Month's theme of "Celebrate LIFE at Your Senior Center", the Colchester Senior Center designed a month-long game, inspired by "The Game of LIFE."

In the beginning of September 2015, senior center members were given a "game board" with 16 opportunities to advance a space by participating in a program which corresponded with one aspect of the LIFE theme (Learning, Independence, Friends and Energy.) We intentionally left the options wide open so that whenever a senior center member attended a program or utilized a service, they could get a stamp on their game board, provided they made the argument to staff that the senior center helped them 1. Learn, 2. Be more Independent, 3. Encouraged Friendship/socialization or 4. Increased their Energy.

Participants were on the lookout for ways that they could utilize the senior center in new and different ways and it inspired them to fill their game board by the end of the month. For one individual "Independence" may have conjured up the exercise class which keeps them fit and active in the community; to yet another, a simple trip to the grocery store, using the senior bus may mean that they are able to remain "independent" and not have to wait for their daughter to take them shopping on the weekend. Those who were able to successfully fill their game board were entered into a raffle for prizes, but we believe everyone who played the game was a winner.

**Number of Staff/Volunteers required to run program:** 2  
**Revenue:** $455.00 in ticket sales  
**Expense:** $402.59 for catered Celebrate LIFE Lunch, decor & prizes  
**Net:** $52.41  
**Contact:** Patty Watts, Colchester Senior Center  
95 Norwich Ave., Colchester CT  
pwatts@colchesterct.gov
Expressive 
and Creative Arts 
Award Winner

Warm Glass Studio

Parkville Senior Center,
Baltimore, Maryland

The Warm Glass Studio was developed through a process of evaluating options to expand our Art offerings with a unique class that could also utilize the in-place equipment infrastructure of other art classes to keep costs manageable. A staff member saw glass fusing & sculpting at an art show one weekend and recognized the possibilities for bringing this to our seniors for a manageable investment. Staff researched the technical requirements of heating and forming types glass and what the capabilities and required settings of our kilns were.

Opening under the title of the “Warm Glass Studio” staff led initial instruction and sought donations of wine bottles for early projects. Rather than requiring students to register for full semesters of classes, we designed the programs as workshops running shorter sessions at less cost to the students. Initial workshops focused on bottle slumping and decorating which provided an accessible introduction to warm glass. The works from these early bottle projects were then used as a marketing and fundraising tool with bottles being sold to supplement purchase of more costly supplies for intricate future workshops.

As the program grew in popularity, we expanded the project offerings and trained a college intern to lead workshops that included partial and full glass fusing, use of frit, COE heat range and glass types, draping, casting, coldworking, glass weaving, color wheel theory, grit and textures, jewelry & pendants, landscapes, purposeful art, making molds with poured ceramics & more.

Number of Staff/Volunteers required to run program: 1 staff/intern
Revenue: $3,076.50   Expense: $2,594.73   Net: $481.77
Contact: James Slone
Parkville Senior Center
8601 Harford Rd., Baltimore MD
jslone@baltimorecountymd.gov
Expressive and Creative Arts
Honorable Mention

St. Charles Senior Community Center
Drawing Class

St. Charles Senior Community Center,
Philadelphia PA

The Beginners Drawing Class started in August 2013 and continues as a scheduled activity at St. Charles Senior Community Center, located in South Philadelphia. The class is taught by a volunteer instructor, Dr. Teresa Unseld, an Associate Professor at the University of the Arts of Philadelphia.

The purpose of the course is to provide an expressive outlet for the participants’ creativity. While the older adults are drawing they are exercising cognitive abilities, and sometimes they are enhancing their problem solving and critical thinking skills. Participants engaged in the class are socializing and sharing life experiences. Perhaps the most important benefit of the Drawing Class is that it builds the participants’ self-esteem. Most if not all of the participants have had no formal training in the arts. The older adults are enthusiastic about their drawings and take the class quite seriously.

Their work was exhibited at the University of the Arts in December 2013. During the exhibit the older adults had the opportunity to share with students from the university their creative process which was a wonderful exchange between young and old. For those who attended the exhibit, the seniors described how they produced the piece and what they were thinking about as they were drawing. When participants were asked what motivates them to draw they responded, “To express my inner feelings”, “The ability and opportunity to learn new things”, “Express myself”, and it’s “Very relaxing and stimulating”.

Number of Staff/Volunteers required to run program: 1 volunteer art instructor
Revenue: 0 Expense: $300 for year Net: -$300
Contact: Kathy Boles, St. Charles Senior Community Center
1941 Christian Street, Philadelphia PA kboles@chs-adphila.org
Fundraising Award Winner

_Cuisine of the Region_

Northeast Focal Point Senior Center, Deerfield Beach FL

The Northeast Focal Point (NEFP) Senior Center was established in 1981 through a joint effort between the City of Deerfield Beach, Florida and the all-volunteer Board of Directors. Operating under the administration of Deerfield Beach’s Senior Services Department, the NEFP Senior Center provides a structured and comprehensive set of programs and services that increases independence, encourages community engagement and improves quality of life for seniors across northeast Broward County.

NEFP Senior Center programs are funded through a combination of federal, state and local revenue streams, fee for service, revenue from the onsite Thrift Shop, grant funding, donations and fundraising. One of our biggest, and most recognized, fundraisers is our annual “Cuisine of the Region”. Now in its 15th year, this event, held at the exclusive Hillsboro Club, showcases food and wine samplings from over 25 area restaurants.

On this evening, local community, business and government leaders come together with NEFP staff, volunteers and clients to bring awareness and raise money for the Senior Center. Attendance for this event regularly exceeds over 350 people and participants generously donate their money through event ticket purchases and live and silent auctions. By obtaining the venue, food, wine, auction items and human resources all gratis, costs for the event are kept at a minimal. This event regularly generates over $60,000 in net profit and is so highly praised and efficiently run, that it serves as the bench mark for all other area food and wine fundraisers.

**Number of Staff/Volunteers Required to run program:** 100  
**Revenue:** $70,200  
**Expense:** $4,800  
**Net:** $65,400  
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Fundraising Honorable Mention

Sponsorship Breakfast Program

Westlake Center for Community Services, Westlake OH

Our Center has the good fortune of enjoying great partnerships with local elder care oriented businesses and organizations who are interested in sponsoring our programs throughout the year by providing funds, meals, and speakers. In November, we hold a Sponsorship Breakfast which has the dual purpose of thanking these sponsors, as well as providing an organized mechanism to ask for assistance for the year ahead.

About 45 individuals, representing 35 or more organizations, attended the breakfast which included networking time, certificates of recognition given by our Mayor, favors and door prizes. The perimeter of the room had the sign-up sheets covering our "asks" for the ensuing year. The whole event lasted between 1-2 hours, depending on how long our sponsors wanted to linger.

Last year this event netted us approximately $10,000 worth of program support. This enabled us to offer free and low cost, quality programs, and stay organized and well-planned for the year ahead. In turn, our sponsors appreciate the opportunity to plan, organize and network. Even though it is an event to thank THEM, they end up thanking US, because they really do enjoy it. It is a win-win in terms of organization, fund-raising, collaborating and relationship building.

**Number of Staff/Volunteers required to run program:** 5 staff are involved in planning and executing tasks. Planning starts months ahead--total of 65-70 hours in total

**Revenue:** $10,000  **Expense:** $400  **Net:** $9,600

**Contact:** Lydia Gadd, Westlake Center for Community Services
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lgadd@cityofwestlake.org
Leadership, Civic Engagement and Community Development Winner

The Senior Breakfast Club

Beverly COA and Senior Community Center, MA

The Senior Breakfast Club is an intergenerational, social/educational program that fosters positive relationships between senior citizens and high school seniors. The purpose of the program is to provide older adults with the opportunity to share their post high school and career experiences with high school seniors who are actively planning their post-high school career paths. The senior citizen participants listen as the students share their plans and dreams and often provide friendly advice. They meet monthly and alternate their gatherings between the Center and High School.

Outcomes include:

Enhanced Leadership and Socialization: Older adults want to remain productive and engaged in the community and this program creates opportunities for regular interaction with students. Positive relationships related to educational goals, career pathways, civic attitudes and behaviors are developed in a trusting environment.

Increased Emotional Support: Regular participation in structured social activities benefit the health and functional abilities as people age. Teens often need someone other than a parent to listen to their dreams. Participants from both cohort groups feel their involvement is of value.

Positive Community Involvement and Partnerships: This intergenerational program bring together diverse groups and helps to counteract negative stereotypes. Sharing talents and resources helps to create a unified group identity. Students and senior adults feel less alienated when they are recognized as contributing members of society. This Senior Breakfast Club helps to enhance community spirit, and strengthen partnerships among community organizations and individuals.

Number of Staff/Volunteers required to run program: A team of five: 2 high school administrators and 2 Senior Center staff and 1 COA Board member. A student-senior adult team was formed halfway through the year to plan a end of the year party.

Revenue: 0  Expense: $350 - donation from local bank to pay for breakfast items; in kind donation from high school.  Net: -$350

Contact: MaryAnn Holak, Beverly COA and Senior Community Center
90 Colon Street, Beverly MA; mholak@beverlyma.gov
The BIG Think: Is Charlottesville Ready for the Age Shift?

Senior Center, Inc., Charlottesville VA

The BIG Think was a partnership our Senior Center initiated. We invited JABA (our local AAA), ACAC (a private, local fitness and wellness club), the Jefferson School City Center (JSCC, a new community center in a renovated historic African-American school), and The University of Virginia’s Institute on Aging. The BIG Think was a breakfast event attended by 150 of Charlottesville’s most prominent pubic, business, nonprofit, and philanthropic leaders.

The purpose was to engage community leaders in an educational program about how our area needed to be, and could be, more age-friendly. Engaging leaders in housing, economic development, health and human services, education, transportation and more was successful due to the quality of the speakers and extensive collaboration and marketing efforts. Sponsorships allowed the event to be free which helped.

Generations Matter CEO Matt Thornhill spoke about the shifting demographics of an aging America; how aging is an issue impacting all of us; and how being more age-friendly is imperative to economic development as well as quality of life for all. Our Center recruited the speaker, managed the guest list and marketing, and managed the collaborative efforts. JABA provided gifts in kind of staff support, logistics, and breakfast. ACAC and the Institute on Aging helped promote the event and underwrote the expenses that were not donated.

Number of Staff/Volunteers: 4 paid staff, Volunteers: 12 center/24 partner.
Revenue: $5,000  Expense: $5,000  Net: $0
Contact: Peter Thompson, Senior Center, Inc.
1180 Pepsi Place, Charlottesville VA, peter@seniorcenterinc.org
Nutrition, Fitness and Health Promotion Winner

The Secret Garden and Shaking off the Pounds

Frank Bailey Senior Center, Riverdale GA

On March 18, 2015, Frank Bailey Senior Center presented The Secret Garden and Shaking off the Pounds with the assistance of Clayton State Nursing Students. Previously these two programs were separate but with the nursing students’ assistance the two programs were combined. The two programs were implemented by Frank Bailey Senior Center and the nursing students were invited to assist.

This exercise and nutrition education program kicked off with light exercises for 15 minutes by the center’s fitness instructor. Members were invited to take a trip through a secret garden and discover information on the nutritional value in the foods we eat. Three stations for the program were set up: Blood pressure check, manned by the nursing students; Fresh fruits and vegetables, manned by the staff of Frank Bailey; and Smoothie Station, manned by the nursing students. Center staff sautéed vegetables and sliced fruit at the fresh fruits and vegetable stations for members to taste. Members were given recipes on how the vegetables they tasted were prepared and learned how fruits and vegetables can help shake off pounds when prepared as a healthy fruit and vegetable shake.

The nursing students prepared smoothies with the abundance of fruits and vegetables provided by staff and students. The smoothies were prepared with or without dairy for members to sample. Recipes on how to make the smoothies were provided so members learned how to prepare a quick, nourishing and satisfying meal to help keep them cool during the summer weather. The program was geared towards education, with the goal that members would find better health by tweaking thier exercise and diet routine.

Number of Staff/Volunteers required to run program: There were six center staff members and six Clayton State Nursing students that ran this program.

Revenue: $0 Expense: $200 (food) Net: -$200

Contact: Adah Silver, Frank Bailey Senior Center
6213 Riverdale Rd, Riverdale GA adah.silver@co.clayton.ga.us
Nutrition, Fitness and Health Promotion
Honorable Mention

Brain Fitness Fair

Rufty-Holmes Senior Center, Salisbury NC

The Rufty-Holmes Senior Center Brain Fitness Fair consisted of fifteen interactive stations, plus an activity area for 20 minute sessions of the "Brains, Balance & Agility" class. All activities were hands-on. Thirteen community organizations participated including Novant Health who requested that they be allowed to be a co-sponsor. Other organizations included the Alzheimer's Support Group, Health Food Store, Retirement Centers, Therapeutic Massage Company, local health related businesses and a Healthy Living Coach.

Each organization hosted a brain fitness station. Stations provided brain games like "Cranium" or "Simon", memory tests, healthy brain foods, brain teasers, memory aprons and more. Additionally, the Center set up several brain activities including a series of computer brain games, a brain puzzle table, a Name That Tune station, and mini sessions of brain related exercise classes incorporating both physical and memory exercises. The local hospital provided balloons, bottled water, and representatives from their Stroke and Neurology Department. Various Brain Games and Puzzles were placed on tables so that participants could work them as they waited for stations to come available.

The fair was held on Wednesday, September 9 from 1:00-3:00 pm and was open to the community at no charge. Attendees included older adults, care givers and family members. Participants said they would like to see this program offered again–soon.

Number of Staff/Volunteers required to run program: eight
Revenue: $0  Expense: $0  Net: $0
Contact: Jennifer Sandke, Rufty-Holmes Senior Center
1120 MLK Ave, Salisbury NC  Email: jennifer@ruftyholmes.org
Ateaze Senior Center had a “Spirit Week”, the week of September 21, 2015, in honor of National Senior Center Month. The purpose of “Spirit Week” was to acknowledge the 2015 theme set by the National Institute of Senior Centers, and to celebrate LIFE at our senior center; Learning, Independence, Friends, and Energy. Each day of “Spirit Week” had a different theme and our senior center members were encouraged to participate every day of the week by dressing up according to the daily themes.

The purpose of our “Spirit Week” was to promote senior center spirit, and to encourage our members to get involved and work together toward a common goal of promoting and supporting the senior center. Monday was “Traditional Baltimore Day”, Tuesday was “Pajama Day”, Wednesday was “Wacky Tacky Day”, Thursday was a “Senior Prom”, and Friday was “Festive Friday”. Every senior center member received a prize of their choice for their participation.

This program was a week long of free activities intended to bring fun, enjoyment, and a sense of community to our senior center members.

**Number of Staff/Volunteers required to run program:** 2 staff members.  
**Revenue:** n/a  
**Expense:** $250 total for prizes, as well as snacks and entertainment for the senior prom.  
**Net:** -$250

**Contact:** Katelyn Deranger-Poncheri  
Ateaze Senior Center  
7401 Holabird Avenue, Dundalk MD  
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Special Events Honorable Mention

Cruise Nite Ice Cream Social

Peterson Senior Activity Center, Kearney NE

In July 2015, we took our center members back to their younger years, by partnering with The Central Nebraska Auto Club for a Cruise Night Ice Cream Social. The Central Nebraska Auto Club is a car club with approximately 150 members, who own or appreciate the full gamut of classic or antique cars.

The evening began with the car club parading their classic and antique cars by all assisted living and skilled care facilities in our community and ending their parade at our center, where 150+ cars lined the roundabout and parking lot in front our building.

Our members were able to get up close to the cars, talk to the owners, reminisce about their first car and bring back memories. Inside our center, an ice cream sundae bar was set up with a variety of toppings, for the seniors to build their own sundaes, and a Patsy Cline impersonator entertained them while enjoying their ice cream. An estimated 395 people attended and 420 bowls of ice cream were served.

Number of Staff/Volunteers required to run program: 3 staff and 5 Volunteers
Revenue:$277 in donations Expense: $0 Net: $277
Contact : Deb Eirich
Peterson Senior Activity Center
2020 W. 11th Street, Kearney NE
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Thank You!

Thank you to the following National Institute of Senior Centers Best Practices Team members, who served as judges for the 2015 NISC Programs of Excellence Awards:

- **Joanne Moore**, Director, Duxbury COA Senior Center, Duxbury, MA 02332

- **Julie DeMarco**, Senior Center Manager, Bigelow Center for Senior Activities, Fairfield, CT 06824

And a big thank you also to **Jill Hall**, Division Chief, Senior Centers and Community Services Division, Baltimore County Department of Aging, Baltimore, MD, for chairing the Program Awards Committee.