



For Immediate Release

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**PUBLIC COLLOQUIUM INVITES LIVELY DIALOGUE ON
HOW TO MAKE NEW YORK CITY
A GOOD PLACE TO GROW OLD**

New positive attitudes toward aging are shaping the building of a new older New York. A Public Colloquium, **Vital Aging in a Vital City**, will engage public officials; arts, health, and social work professionals; and New Yorkers of all ages in conversation on how to make the City that never sleeps a good place to grow old. The Colloquium will be held at Saint Peter's Church, 54th Street and Lexington Avenue, on Thursday evening, February 5th, from 6:15 to 8:30 pm.

Preceding the Colloquium, starting at 5 PM, will be a viewing of the exhibition entitled *A Long Way Home: Elder Artists in the Neighborhoods of New York*. Culminating a two-year project conducted by Elders Share the Arts (ESTA) in twenty senior centers, in diverse neighborhoods spanning the borough's twelve community districts, the project invited older adults to explore visually their interior and exterior "geographies," inspired by the theme, "a long way home." The works created vividly and authentically express stories of place, culture, and identity. Mediums include painting, drawing, and collage.

"Not only is New York City home to the largest concentration of older adults in the country, they're the fastest growing segment of the City's population," explains ESTA's Executive Director, Carolyn Zabloutny. "Older New Yorkers embody a new understanding of aging that recognizes the potential for continuing growth and development."

At 6:15 PM, the Colloquium will begin with a conversational interview with Gene Cohen, M.D., PhD, Professor of Health Care Sciences and Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, who directs the Center on Aging, Health & Humanities at George Washington University. Among his many contributions to the field of gerontology, he has served as the Past-President of the Gerontological Society of America and as the Acting Director of the National Institute on Aging at the National Institutes of Health.

Dr. Cohen has conducted extensive research on both healthy older adults and those residing in nursing homes. His groundbreaking research on creativity and aging points to the direct impact of creative engagement on overall health and well being and informs two major books for the general public: *The Creative Age: Awakening Human Potential in the Second Half of Life* (2000) and *The Mature Mind: the Positive Power of the Aging Brain* (2006). Both books will be available for purchase.

His work has sparked awareness of the fact that creativity in later life has been greatly under-recognized – both its potential and its prevalence. This radically new understanding of the capacity for growth and development throughout our lifetimes profoundly affects how we view and prepare for the aging of our communities across the country and in major cities like New York.

Following the interview a panel of leading thinkers, policymakers, and practitioners will convene including the new Commissioner for the New York City Department for the Aging, Lilliam Barrios-Paoli; Kate D. Levin, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; Jo Ivey Boufford, President of the New York Academy of Medicine; and Victor G. Rodwin, Director of the World Cities Project at the International Center for Longevity.

Ample time will be allowed for reflections, questions, and comments. "It's not just services, it's opportunities we need," 80-year old *A Long Way Home* artist, Rose Fontanella, declares. "Finally I have the time to be creative."

Elders Share the Arts is a New York City-based community arts organization dedicated to fostering the creative expression of older adults, primarily by giving voice to their stories and life experiences. For more information about *A Long Way Home* or any other of ESTA's programs, call 718-398-3870, or write: Elders Share the Arts, 138 South Oxford Street, Brooklyn, New York 11217.