

The Arts and Health Project:

supporting healthy aging through the arts



‘Community-engaged’ arts programs promote health, well-being and social inclusion for vulnerable older adults

by Jenifer Milner

In the year 2000, as the world contemplated the potential of a new century, Gene D. Cohen, MD, PhD, contemplated the potential of aging. To this potential, as well as damaging myths of aging, Cohen drew the public’s attention in his then-new book *The Creative Age: Awakening Human Potential in the Second Half of Life*.¹ He heralded “a new juncture” in the field of aging—“one in which we move beyond studies of *what aging is* to *what is possible with aging*.”

“Finally, we are ready to talk about what is possible, not despite aging, but *because* of it,” Cohen observed. “There is no denying the problems that accompany aging. But, what has been universally denied is the potential. The ultimate expression of that potential,” he wrote, “is creativity.”

A geriatric psychiatrist who established the world’s first federal research program on mental health and aging and a former acting director of the US National Institute on Aging, Cohen was director of George Washington University’s Center on Aging, Health and Humanities when *The Creative Age* was released. He also held positions at GWU as a professor of psychiatry and a professor of health care

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