



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## **Cross-Industry Collaboration Drives National Conversation on Creative Aging**

**EVANSTON, IL (January 18, 2023)** – Three organizations, Mather, an 82-year-old not-for-profit dedicated to creating Ways to Age Well<sup>SM</sup>; Georgetown University's Aging and Health program; and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, working with its Office of Accessibility and VSA, recently collaborated on a unique cross-industry initiative to answer the critical question: how can innovations in creativity developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic fight ageism and support healthy longevity? The results have been compiled into a Creative Aging Innovation Report, *The Next Wave in Creative Aging*, which is available as a free download at [www.mather.com/whitepaper](http://www.mather.com/whitepaper).

Creative Aging is a movement that has been gaining momentum for the last 15+ years, initially growing out of a study by the National Endowment for the Arts and National Institute of Mental Health in 2006, which found that older adults who engage with the arts have better outcomes in physical health, mental health, and social connection, and that humans are wired to become more creative as they age. The movement has sought to make meaningful creative encounters more available to older adults and look to where arts and culture can be part of the solution to society's most pressing needs related to aging.

Working together, [Mather](#), [Georgetown University's Aging and Health program](#), and [the Kennedy Center](#) hosted three virtual Creative Aging Innovations Forums between January and March 2022, welcoming thought leaders from arts organizations, senior living organizations, academic institutions, philanthropy, and government to investigate the challenges and opportunities presented by COVID-19, particularly as they may impact or inform Creative Aging.

“Our organizations came together during a time of disruption,” said Caroline Edasis, Director of Senior Living Community Engagement at Mather. “We saw a chance for creative engagement to transform the systems that support older Americans. Instead of continuing to tackle questions of isolation, access, and meaning across the lifespan in silos, these forums allowed us to generate new ideas and use cross-industry collaboration to run with them.”

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The group employed an interactive problem-solving approach to reveal themes and ideas for the next stage of development. The participant list included an awe-inspiring group of practitioners, researchers, and change-makers in aging, the arts, academia, and policy, along with older adult artists and residents of Mather senior living communities in Arizona, Illinois, and coming soon to Tysons, Virginia.

Exploratory questions based on critical issues in supporting the health and wellbeing of older adults led to the identification of three main themes: 1. autonomy, mastery, and belonging; 2. access and inclusion; and 3. redefining care systems through a strengths-based lens. These themes were then developed in small-group incubators with diverse representation across senior constituencies, workforce, and academic leaders.

The outcome became 16 idea abstracts that represent the potential for interdisciplinary problem-solving in four areas: research and innovation, systems-level change, infrastructure and spaces, and intergenerational lifelong learning. The idea being that other organizations or groups could then take the concepts generated and implement or build on them.

“It is our hope that others will continue the conversation originating from the Creative Aging Innovation Forums,” said Pamela Saunders, Associate Professor & Director of the Aging and Health Program, at Georgetown University. “We encourage the implementation of the abstracts developed by forum participants that include key elements for their actualization.”

Some of the ideas generated include, *Changing Names to Change Minds: New Strength-Based Terminology for Senior Living Communities*; *Creating Children’s Books Centered On The Adventures Of Older Adults*; *Intergenerational Activism to Save the Planet*; and *Rural Arts Creativity Houses (REACH)*, which will identify creative places and program strategies for asking and answering, ‘What do you (older adults) hope for?’ especially within under-resourced communities and working to build coalitions to answer these needs and desire to break down isolation and build social engagement.

“Envisioning and cultivating inclusive and accessible arts practices that embrace every human of every age in every community, in other words to encourage and support creative aging, is vital,” said Betty Siegel, Director of Accessibility and VSA at the Kennedy Center. “This report makes clear that the techniques and strategies to bring the arts to all persons are within our grasp. What we need now is commitment by those in the field of arts, disability, and aging – from the grassroots to the leaders across many sectors – to engage the arts as a viable and critical component of any healthy society.”

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The group will continue to meet for periodic updates and future exploration and collaboration going forward. “The process was invigorating, inspiring, and full of palpable potential and momentum,” said Edasis. “It makes me optimistic for the future of aging in this country, for what it could mean for older adults to have increased access to creative encounters in their communities, and for how we must continue to work in more collaborative ways to bring new ways of living, working, and creating to life as we age.”

For more information, or to download the Creative Aging Innovation Report, *The Next Wave in Creative Aging*, please visit on the web at <https://www.mather.com/whitepaper>

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### **ABOUT MATHER**

Mather is a unique not-for-profit organization founded in 1941 that is dedicated to creating Ways to Age Well.<sup>SM</sup> Headquartered in Evanston, Illinois, Mather maintains a focus on its vision of changing the way society views aging whether through its growing portfolio of award-winning senior living residences, engaging and inspiring programs that keep people better connected to the communities in which they live, or its groundbreaking research by Mather Institute where next-gen practices for the greater aging services industry are being shared and developed. In 2021, it created a new wellness model for senior living and aging services, called The Person-Centric Wellness Model, which is a personalized philosophy that takes an important factor into account: that wellness looks different to everyone. Mather’s Life Plan Community in Tucson, Arizona, Splendido, was ranked #1 in wellness by the International Council on Aging’s 2022 Pinnacle Awards. Coming in 2024, Mather will open its newest luxury Life Plan Community in Tysons, Virginia, for those age 62 and better. To learn more visit [www.Mather.com](http://www.Mather.com).

### **ABOUT THE GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY MASTER OF SCIENCE IN AGING & HEALTH PROGRAM**

The Georgetown University Master of Science in Aging & Health program prepares students for work in a wide variety of aging-related fields. The curriculum provides students with thorough, scientifically grounded, training in theory, policy, and research in gerontology; a hands-on experience through an individualized internship, and opportunities to interact with professionals in the field of aging through research and mentoring. The program covers biology, psychology, economics, ethics and humanities of aging, health care administration, and policy. This curriculum is based on competencies endorsed by the Academy of Higher Education (AGHE).

### **ABOUT THE KENNEDY CENTER**

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is America’s living memorial to President John F. Kennedy, attracting millions of visitors each year to more than 2,000 performances, events, and exhibits. With its artistic affiliates, the National Symphony Orchestra and Washington National Opera, the Center is one of the nation’s busiest performing arts centers dedicated to providing world-class art, powerful education, and outstanding memorial experiences to the broadest possible constituency. Across all its offerings, the Kennedy Center

is committed to increasing accessible, inclusive opportunities for all people with disabilities of all ages to participate in, and learn through the arts, including free performances. On September 7, 2019, the Kennedy Center inaugurated the REACH, its first-ever major expansion. The REACH provides visitors with new opportunities to interact and engage with the Center as the nation's premier nexus of arts, learning, and culture. On September 8, 2022, the Kennedy Center unveiled *Art and Ideals: President John F. Kennedy*, a new 7,500-square foot permanent exhibit exploring Kennedy's presidency and his commitment to the arts. To learn more about the Kennedy Center, please visit [www.kennedy-center.org](http://www.kennedy-center.org). To learn more about the Center's Office of Accessibility and VSA, please visit <https://www.kennedy-center.org/education/vsa/>.

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Lori Keenan

847/902-2905

Smarthinking PR for Mather

Lori@SmarthinkingPR.com

**Some examples of the various abstracts include:**

CREATIVE AGING INCUBATORS building on what we have learned from the pandemic to grow opportunities for innovations in Creative Aging to break down isolation and tap talent and expertise to solve problems of living independent and healthy lives.

ART-FRIENDLY HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS FOR OLDER ADULTS (AFHS) encouraging a health care system to implement a creative arts model for care including activities to relieve caregiver stress and improve patient experience with quiet and well-designed spaces for care. These redesigns would then be replicated throughout its system and document effectiveness/impact.

AWE EVENTS perpetuating the magic of the early pandemic—singing out windows, music on balconies, public art, etc.—and keeping this momentum present in the Creative Aging movement to build broad-based community support and interaction across generations especially in difficult times.

CHANGING NAMES TO CHANGE MINDS: NEW STRENGTH-BASED TERMINOLOGY FOR SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITIES addressing Industry standards by adopting of new language that embraces Creative Aging by placing a higher value on interdependence and strengths recognizing potential of aging to fight ageism

CREATING CHILDREN'S BOOKS CENTERED ON THE ADVENTURES OF OLDER ADULTS addressing ageism through an intergenerational lens using narratives to engage and teach about what it means to live a long and full life.

INTERGENERATIONAL ACTIVISM TO SAVE THE PLANET fostering partnerships resulting in intergenerational programming built into educational k-12 and lifelong learning systems to address the climate change, a critical issue of our day together by building on each generations strength and experience.

RURAL ARTS CREATIVITY HOUSES (REACH) Identifying creative places and program strategies for asking and answering, “what older adults do you hope for,” especially within under-resourced communities by building coalitions to answer these needs and desire to break down isolation and build social engagement.