

SONGWRITING WORKS™ ON THE OLYMPIC PENINSULA
A Successful First Year of New Music in Washington.



Songwriters Judith-Kate Friedman, Matt Sircely, Paula Lalish, Keeth Monta Apgar

Sparked by a passion for musical collaboration, improvisation and making a difference through the power of music, Songwriting Works' director Judith-Kate Friedman approached Arts Northwest's Karen Hanan in 2008 about working together to bring Songwriting Works, an evidence-based community health-through-song making program to older adults and professional songwriters on Washington State's Olympic Peninsula. They applied to the National Endowment for the Arts' new grant program, "Creativity and Aging in America" and were one of fourteen programs nationally to be awarded funding. The project's inaugural year had five phases: Firstly, in conjunction with partnering organizations Olympic Area Agency on Aging, Community Advocates for Rural Elders (CARE Partnership) and others, Songwriting Works formed an advisory council of elders from the fields of music, arts, health, education and social services. They guided local development and delivery of the program.

Arts Northwest put out a call to performing songwriters in its membership to become paid apprentices in Songwriting Works' facilitator certification program.

Criteria included excellence in performance and teaching as well as an interest in serving older adults & their communities through music.

In April, Washingtonians Keeth Monta Apgar, Paula Lalish, Matt Sircely, and Utah's Anke Summerhill were selected. Their training commenced with a week-long intensive during which they participated in hands-on songwriting workshops with older adults at community senior centers, skilled nursing and assisted living facilities, a day-long MetLife/American Society on Aging training in Port Angeles, WA and a performance of work-in-progress at the Sequim Irrigation Festival. Classroom training with Songwriting Works faculty addressed creative engagement with older adults, best practices in group facilitation and research on making music with elders diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Performing artists on the faculty included sound healer Vicki Dodd, composer and choral director Laurence Cole, and singer and mythologist/ author Daniel Deardoff who brought their expertise on the power of sound, song and the Oral Tradition.



Project Director Judith-Kate Friedman, Advisory Council's Laurence Cole, Marty Richards

Phase Three brought Songwriting Works workshops to sites in Clallam and Jefferson counties where one in three persons is age 60 or older. A pilot program provided eight workshops for elders with dementia who participated with members of their families. Together, drawn into music-making by the facilitation team, they composed words and music to three original songs including a poignant cantata honoring veterans of World War II.

In Phase Four, audiences heard this piece, performed with PT Songlines Choir in a full concert of newly composed songs from the project. Project songs were also shared via radio station KONP-AM 1450 based in Western Washington.



PT Songlines Choir perform WWII Homecoming Song at November 11th Songwriting Works Concert. Pictured (LtoR) Laura Martin, Sarah Goldblatt, Nancy Mulholland, Kristin Wolgram, Oma Landstra, Rebecca. Photo: Aimee Ringle.

In Phase Five, in conjunction with research consultants from Western Washington University's Critical Junctures Institute, project outcomes for elders with dementia, their families, and the professional songwriters engaged in the training were gathered and analyzed. Findings will be published on Songwriting Works' website in early 2010. As Songwriting Works on the Olympic Peninsula enters its second year, songs are being transcribed and collected for a songbook; Videotape of the concert and of training and workshop sessions is being reviewed for use in toolkits – one for professional musicians and one for family care partners -- and plans are in development towards a future film documentary in addition to the continuation of training and program development in the region.

For more info: www.songwritingworks.org or contact: Judith-Kate Friedman, Founder and Director, Songwriting Works™ 360.385.1160

