

**Riderwood Erickson Community – June 27, 2008**

**Date:** June 27, 2008  
**Location:** Riderwood Erickson Retirement Community  
3140 Gracefield Road, Silver Spring  
**Forum:** Senior Community Forum  
**Facilitator:** Morrie Warshawski, Theresa Colvin, Sharon Blake  
**Scribe:** Elizabeth A. Bentley-Smith

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**Summary of Major Themes**

- Maryland provides a rich environment for retirees.
- Retirees like to be close to arts and education offerings.
- The arts help “enliven” their environments, and make retirees feel good.
- The arts bring people together.
- These retirees want more contact with professional artists.
- Desire to share their knowledge with young people.
- Need for more showcasing opportunities for art by seniors.

**Some Key Quotes**

“I love everything about MD because of the variety of the climate, the mountains, the shore; we have everything here.”

“Arts really impacts all parts of life”

“In Europe every youngster knows about opera - it is just their culture; here it is focused on TV and children are not exposed to opera and the symphony; when we were younger we would attend these [types of] shows, but they don’t do them anymore.”

“The sharing is what is great; have a common interest.”

“Would be nice to have a real artist to come rather than just the teachers.”

“[We would like] any type of workshops to come to [Riderwood] community, but we don’t have any money to hire artists in residence and would like that.”

“Would like to do something gallery wise with our community areas. Our seniors do paint but the problem is showcasing arts here. The only time is the Arts and Crafts fair and that is twice a year.”

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### Raw Transcript

Pamela Schubert – Philanthropy Director at Riderwood Community, introduced the event, welcomed MSAC and discussed her role in the process: “Part of the greater corporate responsibility [of Riderwood] is to reach out to the community as whole and we were contacted by MSAC to host a focus group.”

Morrie Warshawski

- Welcome, and thank you for coming
- Introduction of Sharon Blake, Theresa Colvin, and Elizabeth Bentley-Smith

Theresa Colvin

- Welcomed the participants and provided a quick outline of MSAC.
- The Arts Council was founded in 1967. It is a state agency and part of DBED. Our mission is to advance arts in Maryland. Through grants we are able to support all of the major, mid and small organizations, along with individual artists, arts in education programs such as arts in residencies along with a host of other projects.
- We try to make arts accessible to Maryland citizens and work to build a relationship to the arts.

Morrie Warshawski

- We are doing these forums around the state with all kinds of people. This is the second retirement community, and we will also be meeting with the youth, artists, and citizens in every region of the State.
- Went around and each participant introduced him/herself and what made them come to the meeting
- Discussed the process of the focus group: will facilitate a discussion of five questions about the agency; fairly painless; and finish in about 90 minutes.

❖ <sup>1st</sup> question: What do you value about living in Maryland? Is there something different about it?

- Moved here from Virginia, came here under protest; like MD because of roads and traffic, like the people, shopping centers and the music; go to UMD to listen to music; have wonderful music here [Riderwood] such as last night there was music from Russia
- Love everything about MD because of the variety of the climate, the mountains, the shore; we have everything here
- It is interesting from an historical point of view; many things of interest to do; nice to be close to DC with both Kennedy Center and Strathmore
- Moved to MD because the job opportunity sounded the best; having jobs in the state is very important

- Educational level is quite high
- People from out of state and the people who live here are culturally enhancing
- Such a variety of things to do; can't get bored
- Community college gives courses here at Riderwood; people who attend the classes bring so much; love to hear the stories
- MD is consumer oriented; like annuities, can't get one for just 10-years; wonderful to be near DC and activities to do; the arts are outstanding after living around the country and can compare to other states
- Love classes at Montpelier, just 13 minutes from here [Riderwood]; fabulous workshops over there; can rent studios and take jewelry classes there and have jazz concerts; outstanding teachers
  
- ❖ 2<sup>nd</sup> question: What role do the arts play or should play in our society? Are arts important to keep? What role should they play?
  - A large role because they help with humanity; well-rounded person; something to do outside every day
  - Especially important because don't have arts in schools so important for children to get exposed to arts in some way
  - Arts really impacts all parts of life
  - Don't know what people do without an artistic hobby, especially when older; if not instilled in younger age, then so many are just starting out at our community
  
- ❖ In your lifetime you have seen role of arts change? Have they been good, bad?
  - A long time ago, there wasn't as much an opportunity as now; now everyone seems to be able to take art classes
  - Many more schools have opened up because for arts; it was much harder in previous years; had to be in metro area in order to find it and now it exists in smaller areas, etc.
  
- ❖ What about your children, grand-children?
  - It is so limited in school and they are deprived
  - In Europe every youngster knows about opera it is just their culture; here it is focused on TV and children not exposed to opera and the symphony; when we were younger we would attend these [types of] shows, but they don't do them anymore
  - They don't take art in college, they take computers; hard to find a future in their opinion; they focus too much on graphics
  
- ❖ What about the arts in your youth?
  - My teacher lived down the street so got to know art teacher personally and show her drawings and get a strong relationship
  - Not part of my life; just took art for teachers in college; didn't get into it until much older
  - Participated in some music but not [visual] art
  - Studied all types of art since I was small

- In our small community, on Sunday afternoons we would have cello and violin performances at friend's houses in their salons, and people would bring out their instruments; my children did not have that
- Many voiced they had to learn instruments
- Raised in Philly – now help hold a dance here once a month; like arts that are free
- Took clarinet and was in high school band; in singing group here [Riderwood]
  
- ❖ 3<sup>rd</sup> question: What type of arts and cultural activities do you participate in now?  
Writing, painting, dancing...what does this mean to your life here?
  - Sculpt and take up painting; listen to interviews on [Riderwood and MPT] TV; simply do it for sheer enjoyment, the pleasure
  - In tap class; work on performing arts council here at rider; bring in various acts to go show
    - M: Why tap dancing? A: Good exercise, mental and keeps me moving
  - Have a benevolent care fund [at Riderwood] and have a fundraiser with gala; takes a lot of planning and there is a dance, plus did the graphics/flyers; can do things that are worthwhile for neighbors in community; it is not a selfish thing; can put pictures up in the art display of various media; [Riderwood arts] council started years ago and have lists of people who want to come here, and have had the Count Basie Band and Baltimore Symphony
  - Nice to contribute in an area where you can contribute
  - Everything is resident driven which is great
  - Take art classes 2-3 times a week; can show work through arts and crafts show; can put up your art at least once a month; can't live without it; keeps you stimulated; good for blood pressure and everything; good for mental health to have a hobby; can meet great people
  - The sharing is what is great; have a common interest
  
- ❖ Do you attend performances?
  - Baltimore Symphony; UMD; Strathmore; Kennedy Center; bus trips to galleries; trips to Walters and Phillips Museums; went to simulcast of [DC] opera
  - Can't top UMD performances because get student discounts since students of PG County Community College classes
  - Roundhouse; Olney Theatre, saw Mousetrap there
  
- ❖ What art performance or piece of art has really made a difference in your life? What is its impact?
  - Orchestra in Baltimore really made a difference; main forte is Strauss; Stars and Stripes Forever
  - Like to watch videos on Thursday from 10-12 at the [Riderwood] chapel where they showed a ballet; [ballet] movements were unbelievable; played Tchaikovsky's First Symphony

- UMD has national conducting institute and it was unbelievable; also have the piano competition which is fabulous; So close, it is so great
- I like military bands; Air Force band is wonderful; performance of singers, was just wonderful; can be Marines, Army, Navy...they were all just wonderful
  
- ❖ What about a visual work of art that has made a difference?
  - Monet, but saw Giverney so that makes a difference
  - Ed Hopper saw his exhibit
  - Elisia Markova; love Russian dancers; collect the videotapes of ballets
  
- ❖ 4<sup>th</sup> question: How aware of you of MSAC? And its work?
  - Came to [this meeting] to find out about it
  - Looked up website to find out what it was about
  
- Question from focus group member: What is the Arts Council's involvement with dance in the area? Sharon Blake discussed the program
  - Maryland Youth Ballet; provide support for dance programs all over MD; it is the smallest program at this time; give out general operating support for programs and administration; just launched touring program for any artist to present work at multiple venues for more visibility and can make a living
  - Group Member's Concerns: What about the Olney ballet? Is it supported? They wanted to do the Nutcracker here, but can only do excerpts because there is not enough space here; hard to get people to come and perform because lack of space; have 2800 people and a theatre that seats 300, need bigger space; don't think the designer [of Riderwood] knew people would be so interested; not even enough cars space; but on plus side, do have a theatre and many spaces in general
  - Sharon Blake discusses MSAC and visual art programs: The Arts Council gives out grants to visual arts too; Baltimore Museum of Art; Walters and others
  - Theresa Colvin: MSAC also supports the Metropolitan Arts Center; Montpelier; the Arts Council gives out individual grants to artists to encourage work which all of you [the attendees] are available to apply for
    - ◆ The attendees requested information about the James Backas Gallery at MSAC; wants invites for shows so can get a bus ahead of time
  
- ❖ 5<sup>th</sup> question: When you were talking about arts in the community and space issues, what advice can you give MSAC about programs, to make arts richer, etc., for your community and other retirees in general?
  - Since first time hearing of, just advertising here and that would help
  - Let the community know in advance

- Any type of workshops to come to [Riderwood] community, but we [Riderwood] don't have any money to hire artists in residence and would like that
- Would be nice to have a real artist to come rather than just the teachers
- Theresa Colvin: The type of artists in residences run the gamut, normally they are matched up with the community; just a complete a grant to participate; it is a quarterly program
- Artists can tape a lecture on the Riderwood TV
  
- ❖ How do you get information?
  - Janet in charge of activities and events that community members can go to, but Pam is in charge as well as Claudia Farr
  - Will find that people here are very interested, even when things are offered people sign-up quickly; the cost for PG County Community College is \$50 per semester and can get as many classes as wanted but have to go through a lottery process
  
- ❖ Do you contribute to the Arts?
  - Give money to McLean art and Vienna art society, member of VSA
  - More going to art exhibits
  - Kennedy Center; public tv; Smithsonian
  
- ❖ 6<sup>th</sup> question: Is there anything else you would like to say?
  - Not part of the groups at community, but very involved with ballroom dancing
  - Have so many things already, but the impact might not be as great; problem is so much to do [at Riderwood] so hard to decide
  - Glad to see that you [MSAC] are supporting things, and glad to see MSAC is supporting younger arts groups for the future
  - Have a group that supports elementary school art by trying to bring seniors together with the youth is great
  - This community proves that retirement does not mean you don't stop doing things
  - Interacting with youth is great, but would love to have artists come
  - DEF: do you do something with writers? Yes, we support the writer's guilds in montco and PG; give grants to writers in the area individually
  - Would like to do something gallery wise with our community areas; seniors do paint; problem is showcasing arts here; only time is the arts and crafts fair and that is twice a year; looking at having displays in card room in village square [at Riderwood]
  - There are groups here that need to help stimulate participation; there is a need, just not sure how to reach them in a smaller setting; perhaps a permanent venue would be helpful in this process