

*What problem(s) were you addressing?*

The overarching problems we sought to address through our project in 2022-2023 were as follows: 1) Enhancing quality of life for people living with dementia and care partners in two underserved neighborhoods of North Philadelphia, Hunting Park and a group of abutting neighborhoods in Northwest Philadelphia; 2) Employing community-centered, culturally-specific approaches to developing programs enhancing quality of life: most notably, to create programs designed and implemented in collaboration with and in direct response to the needs and priorities of community members. To follow where they lead.

*What change did you expect to create? What were the desired objectives, outcomes and outputs of the program and progress made toward each during the reporting period?*

We expected to continue the efforts begun in the first four years of the project to broaden neighborhoods' understanding of and engagement with people living with dementia and their care partners.

*Objectives and Outputs, Selected:*

Continuing objectives:

1. Continuing biweekly community advisory group meetings and shifting from Zoom as primary meeting vehicle to in-person, per the preference of community advisors. **Objective met.**
2. Continuing to develop community-led programs piloted during 2020 through 2022. **Objective met and efforts still ongoing.**

New and/or improved objectives:

1. Rededicating ourselves to solidifying and supporting community advisory group members' leadership roles in biweekly meetings and in the programs and events they generate. **Objective met and efforts still ongoing.**
2. Renewed efforts to introduce the project to faith communities within each neighborhood. **Objective met and efforts still ongoing.**
3. Completing a first draft of the manual of community-driven program development best practices for work with people living with dementia that has been one of the long-term objectives of the project but had to wait until the project was far enough long to make it possible. **Objective not met. Insufficient financial resources received from project funders to hire the necessary staff with specialized skill sets needed to do this work.**

Arts-based initiatives (continuing):

1. Printing and distribution of "community conversations"/adult coloring book modeled on the Hunting Park "flip book" created in 2018 and 2019. **Objective met, and more. The new volume was distributed to community advisors early in 2023. Because it was a combined effort of community advisors in Hunting Park and in the Northwest, we were able to introduce it to \*both\* neighborhoods at various events and programs, including "Music in the Neighborhood." It served not only as a resource for conversations and interactions within the communities, but also as a "calling card" for the project itself, garnering interest in engagement with the project by new participants.**

*Outputs:*

1. Printing and posting of e-book version of community conversation book, *engaging 40-60 people through dissemination. Achieved.*
2. Delivery of monthly "Music in the Neighborhood" music programs online, outdoors in Hunting Park or in NW Philadelphia, *engaging 100-200 people. Partially achieved. Corporate sponsorship discontinued in July 2023 due to changing priorities.*

3. ***New output:*** in brainstorming sessions facilitated by Project Coordinator at the end of 2022 and in early 2023, community advisors developed a menu of programming ideas for 2023 based on their priorities, ***bringing in 20-40 people*** from multiple generations and faith communities thus far in 2023.

***Measures of success, qualitative and quantitative; numbers/demographics; diversity, equity and inclusion***

Outcomes were measured this year through “on the ground” experiential evidence documented in real time by staff.

Of particular note: community members gained sense of self-esteem, empowerment and connection by encouraging and attending to each other’s stories around dementia and taking on the responsibility for making such connections. ***Successful outcome, but with a smaller reach than anticipated pre-COVID.***

Our ED facilitated an open and honest conversation with some of our longest-serving community advisors regarding their current assessment of the project, posing questions about the relevance of the project and its mission to their and their neighbors’ lives post-COVID (and after four years). They responded passionately about their continuing commitment to both the project and its mission and noted that it would be a great loss to them personally and to the community were the project to be discontinued.

***Collaborations, leveraged resources, staff empowerment***

In January 2023, our full-time, salaried Community Engagement and Volunteer Manager Cleo Smalls, who had overseen ARTZ in the Neighborhood since April 2021, resigned from her full-time position to rejoin the staff at Center in the Park, where she had served as their director of programs prior to COVID. Because of her dedication to our project and its mission, she suggested that she stay on as a contract project coordinator for ARTZ in the Neighborhood. ARTZ Philadelphia and Center in the Park have long planned to collaborate with each other, but COVID disrupted those plans. Cleo and I met with Renee Cunningham, CEO of Center in the Park, to discuss how we might re-start those plans for collaboration with Cleo as a bridge, and we have been continuing to find opportunities for joint efforts, including holding our last “Music in the Neighborhood” program for the Northwest in the auditorium at Center in the Park.

***Unanticipated outcomes and barriers***

**Unanticipated outcomes:** We are learning that post-COVID, community advisors are more interested in coming together with each other and their neighbors in community at ARTZ in the Neighborhood programs/events (like “Music in the Neighborhood,” for instance) that grow out of their programming priorities, and they are less interested than they were pre-COVID in planning and implementing those same programs themselves. They are teaching us that their and our roles need to shift somewhat, while still prioritizing programs that are “of, by, and for” community members.

**Unanticipated barriers:** We are immeasurably grateful to our funders for this project – first and foremost, to Friends Foundation for the Aging – for their unprecedented flexibility and generosity during the height of the pandemic. 2022-2023 has seen a simultaneous scaling back of funding by multiple funders and individual donors for multiple reasons, including a volatile stock market, global geo-political and financial woes, changing sponsorship priorities, and of course the need to distribute resources equitably. This perfect storm has had a detrimental impact on all of our programs and projects, including ARTZ in the Neighborhood. In July 2023, we were obliged to suspend our beloved satellite program “Music in the Neighborhood,” which not only brought profound joy to our partner neighborhoods on a regular basis, but also provided us with a reliable forum for engaging new project participants. Scaling back of funding also necessitated our temporary suspension of our contract with our outside evaluator for

ARTZ in the Neighborhood, who has been working with us since 2020, and is essential to the “how to” manual that has always been a strategic goal for this project. We continue to apply for alternate sources of funding for all aspects of this project, but this has indeed posed a barrier to forward movement.

***Sharing and replicating results***

We continue to share our experiences and learnings formally and informally with colleagues. In 2024, funding permitting, we plan to draft the first iteration of a manual of best practices for community-driven program development for people living with dementia and their care partners. The ultimate goal of this manual is to share all that we have learned – all that we have been taught by our community partners and advisors – and to enable others across the region and beyond to learn from our advisors too, and to replicate our approach. The agency of people living with dementia-related conditions including memory loss is central to all that we do at ARTZ Philadelphia. There can be no greater confirmation of agency, we believe, than watching one’s own experiences, perspectives, insights, and priorities shape a new set of best practices.

***Project Financial Statement, Variances, and Sustainability***

We have attached a project financial statement for the period of the grant, from January 2023 through December 2023 (final four months projected). We have included notes describing the reasons for variances from the original budget. The following actions will ensure the project’s sustainability for 2024 and beyond: 1) Our five-year plan foregrounds diversity/equity/inclusion/accessibility best practices. ARTZ in the Neighborhood will continue to be the centerpiece and a key driver of our DEIA efforts. 2) We are continuing our conversations with a long term care/senior housing partner based in Northwest Philadelphia that might provide substantial outreach support to community members who could benefit from engagement with our North Philadelphia programs, as well as potentially providing additional funding to support the expanded footprint of the project that such outreach would require. And while Acadia Pharmaceuticals, which sponsored our satellite “Music in the Neighborhood” program from July 2021 through June 2023, will not sponsor that program in 2023-2024 due to a change in their sponsorship priorities for the year, they have already provided \$5,000 in seed money to support our work on the draft manual for which we are also seeking funding from Friends Foundation for the Aging.

***Feedback on interactions with FFA***

As we noted in last year’s final report, we have found it particularly valuable to receive both financial and strategic support from Friends Foundation for the Aging’s Board and Executive Director, even when things are not going quite as we had hoped. It is that continued support and honest feedback that enables us to acknowledge, scrutinize, and learn from missteps and to change course for the better while learning productive, lasting lessons.