



KEEP THE APPLAUSE GOING— BRAVO! ENCORE!

T rue or False? As we age our interest in arts and culture diminishes. Absolutely FALSE...of course!

If our interest in arts and culture does not diminish as we age, how do we explain that the number of older adults who attend arts and cultural programs drops off so dramatically?

It turns out that it is not interest that is lacking. According to older adults and their families, the problem stems from trying to overcome barriers that keep seniors from the arts and culture programs they once enjoyed. Many arts and cultural performances are at night yet many seniors are not comfortable with night driving. Parking more than 200 or 300 yards away is also a challenge for someone who is not handicapped yet might have had a hip or knee recently replaced or need a walker. Walking up or down stairs to get to a seat or being far

away from a rest room might be a challenge. Being on a fixed income causes the cost of tickets to be perceived as too high.

As a result of observing this downward attendance trend, the PHS Senior Living Foundation introduced ENCORE, an initiative to remove the barriers to arts and culture for older adults. ENCORE, inaugurated to celebrate PHS' 90th anniversary, showcases art, dance, literature, music, opera, and theatre. It focuses on overcoming transportation issues, addresses venue accessibility, provides convenient or preferred seating and improves the affordability of admission for older adults and their families. Programs are open to the public and can be experienced by seniors at all levels of care and all economic means.

During the 2006/2007 season, ENCORE included

over fifty arts, culture and educational programs attended by over 2,000 older adults of all faiths and economic means. These programs presented many disciplines including fine art, dance, opera, plays, and arts and culture related lectures.

ENCORE programs have been presented by the American Repertory Ballet, the New Jersey Opera Theatre, The Princeton Festival, Princeton University Summer Concerts, George Street Playhouse, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Monmouth University and Princeton University. Last fall, more than one hundred fifty people attended a book signing and talk by actor Jack Klugman of the *Odd Couple* and Quincy television programs. The event was arranged with partner, the George Street Playhouse, and held at Meadow Lakes in Hightstown, New Jersey, one of the PHS Senior Living

communities. Klugman, who has overcome throat cancer and is still performing, had a particularly strong message for seniors about perseverance of the arts and culture in the face of health issues and about maintaining a sense of humor through it all.

This summer, the PHS Senior Living Foundation, formerly Presbyterian Homes of New Jersey Foundation, celebrated the launch of the 2007/2008 ENCORE season along with the Foundation's new name. The Foundation is the philanthropic arm of PHS Senior Living which is a not-for-profit organization providing a continuum of care for over 4,000 residents in over 25 communities throughout New Jersey.

ENCORE's 2007/2008 season will include several events and programs developed in partnership with world-class arts and cultural partners such as DancEnhance, a collaboration with the American Repertory Ballet. DancEnhance is based on research that maintaining an active lifestyle and developing new skills awakens the mind and spirit of those faced with the physical realities of the aging body. Moving to music, whether through a choreographed piece or an improvised exercise, fosters mental stimulation essential to staying young in spirit and body. The benefits of regular physical activity, combined with an active mind, are fundamental to nurturing the senior community.

Another program featured this season will be ENCORE OPERA! Presented throughout all of New Jersey, these operatic outreach programs of education and performance are specifically designed to address the unique aspects of interacting with both students and fans of opera of all ages.

ENCORE's LET'S TALK ART! consisting of lectures, discussions and professional artist-led workshops was developed in collaboration with tri-state, world-renowned museums and arts organizations.

For this summer's ENCORE Princeton University Concerts program, the Foundation has arranged for seniors in Central New Jersey to participate by using pick up points for tickets and buses which take them right to the front door of Richardson Auditorium of Princeton University.

Available to seniors throughout the entire New Jersey community, ENCORE programs have older adults in mind whether they are living in their own homes or in group settings either independently, in assisted living or in nursing care. Although some programs take place in traditional theatrical venues, ENCORE's goal is to bring world-class arts and cultural programs to the communities throughout New Jersey where older adults live.

Bravo ENCORE! for keeping the applause going.

If you would like more information about the program contact Joseph T. Claffey, Executive Director, PHS Senior Living Foundation at (609) 987-3982. Email: jclaffey@phsnet.org or visit www.phsseniorliving.org.