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# Islands of Milwaukee

Using the arts to build relationships and create more connected communities as we age

May 2013 - November 2014

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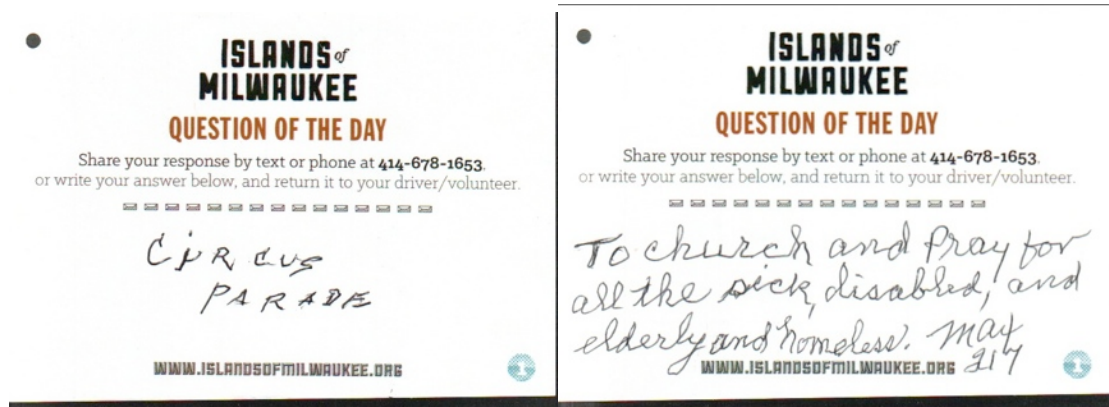
Sojourn Theatre artists James Hart and Rebecca Martinez dance with Fran Cheney during an “Artistic Housecall” in October, 2013. Photo by Anne Basting

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# Islands of Milwaukee

Using the arts to build relationships and create more connected communities as we age

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**If you could go anywhere in Milwaukee right now, where would you go?**

## Guiding Questions

- How do we create a more connected Milwaukee that values and includes older voices in civic life and public decision making?
- How can we bring meaningful engagement to older adults living alone or under-connected to community?
- How can we deepen the capacity of existing systems to create a sustainable mechanism to invite and nurture engagement with older adults living alone or under-connected to community?

## Summary

Islands of Milwaukee began with an assembly of partners exploring these questions, including UWM's Department of Theatre; Sojourn Theatre; Milwaukee County Department on Aging; Interfaith Older Adult Programs; Goodwill Industries of Southeastern WI; and Stowell Associates. Together and over time, we created a simple invitation to creative and social engagement that can be used by volunteers and caregivers to meaningfully engage older adults and invite and inspire them into a broader network of relationships. We called this the "Question of the Day" approach. Responses are gathered in multiple ways, built upon, connected with others, and shared back with the originators as well as the general public.

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## Core Partners

UWM Dept of Theatre  
Sojourn Theatre  
Milwaukee County Dept on Aging  
Interfaith Older Adult Programs  
Goodwill Industries of Southeastern WI  
Stowell Associates

## Dissemination Partners

Doors Open Milwaukee  
WUWM's Lake Effect  
Riverwest Elders  
SouthShore Connecting Caring Communities

## Core Arts Team

Co-Lead Artists	Anne Basting and Maureen Towey
Designer	Shannon Scrofano
Consultant	Michael Rohd
Graduate Asst	Chelsea Wait
Graduate Asst	Sarah Freimuth
Artistic Housecalls	Anne Basting Chelsea Wait James Hart Rebecca Martinez Cuong Nguyen Samantha Goodrich James Radtke

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## Funding Partners include:

MAP Fund  
Helen Bader Foundation  
NEA Art Works  
Greater Milwaukee Foundation  
Princess Grace Fellowship  
Colectivo Coffee Roasters

*In addition, we applied to but did not receive:*

*Art Place  
Wisconsin Humanities Council  
Forest County Potawatomi  
Community Foundation  
Home Instead Foundation*



Basting leads a discussion at a Stakeholder meeting at Stowell Associates, with the Sojourn team.

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## Questions of the Day Begin

In the spring of 2013, Basting's "Performing Community" class at UWM met with individuals through the Interfaith Southwest Neighborhood Outreach Program; Home Delivered Meals program; and Interfaith's Telephone Reassurance program. Through this process, we discovered that the project was too difficult to explain - to partners and elder participants. Was this "arts and crafts?" Was it visual art? We decided that we needed the simplest invitation to engage in a playful, thoughtful exercise - to encourage people to think differently and to share their thoughts. Thus, the Question of the Day format was born.

Questions of the Day were tested through ride-alongs with home delivered meal drivers; at workshops with volunteers; and by core stakeholders, and first went out to participants in November 2013.

Questions went out through 4-color-printed, 4x6 cards hand-delivered by Home Delivered Meal drivers and shared at Meal Sites place settings; through the project's Facebook page and website; through our google voice answering system; and through emails sent to volunteers and coordinators.

## Gathering Responses

Responses to the Questions of the Day came back to us through our google voice line; hand-written cards gathered by Meal Drivers and Meal Site Coordinators; and our website and Facebook page.

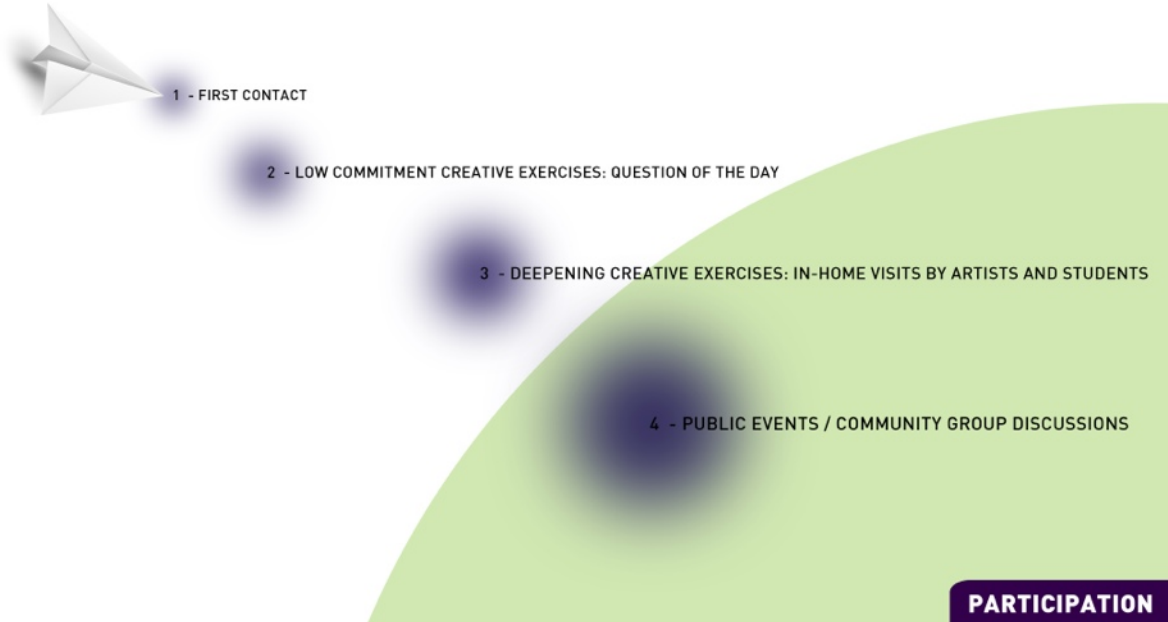
Project assistants organized responses into our shared file system (dropbox, google docs etc.). Anyone leaving a name and number was called back and asked if they would like an "artistic housecall" as a way to deepen the engagement.

## Creating Response Loops

After we gathered responses, we shared them back with respondents to let them know they have been both received and built upon. We did this through hand-delivered posters (that went to HDM and Meal Sites); a weekly segment on public radio; our website; and publications in newsletters and papers about the project.

## ISLANDS OF MILWAUKEE

Through collaboration between artists, students, care workers and older adults, our goal is to research public health issues around isolation and generate large scale public events.



## Chronological Listing of Questions of the Day

The first 5 Questions were considered “Pilot” and were distributed by Meal Drivers alone. From the 6th Question forward, they were delivered to Meal Sites, by Meal Drivers, Interfaith Volunteers, and home Caregivers. Questions 2 through 45 were delivered weekly starting in November 2014. We did not deliver Questions during Thanksgiving or Christmas, as Drivers had other tasks to attend to at those times. An \* denotes which Questions yielded a radio segment on WUWM’s Lake Effect.

1. How does water move? Spring 2013
2. If you could go ANYWHERE in Milwaukee right now - where would you go - and why? \* (Fall 2014)
3. What is something you treasure in your home, and why? \*
4. What is something you wish you could learn? \*
5. What is something you could teach another person? \*
6. Where is a place you would feel comfortable talking to someone you don’t know? \*
7. What has helped you stay connected to your community? What could make you feel more connected?
8. Is there an intersection you wish you could cross but feel it is too dangerous? \*

9. What is the most well-worn path in your home?
10. What is a well-worn path for you outside your home?
11. What blocks your path?
12. What are the sounds of your neighborhood? \*
13. What are the sounds of Milwaukee? \*
14. What is your safe harbor?
15. Where do you connect with nature?
16. What is the most beautiful sound in your home? \*
17. What is the most beautiful sound in the world? \*
18. What gift would you give the next generation?
19. What might you like to tell Milwaukee? \*
20. How would you start a story?
21. What does courage mean to you? \*
22. Let's write a story of courage: Who are the main characters?
23. Let's write a story of courage: Where should our story take place?
24. Let's write a story of courage: What act or situation requires courage?
25. Let's write a story of courage: What should be our hero's strengths? Weaknesses?
26. Let's write a story of courage. Who is our main character's trusty companion?
27. Let's write a story of courage. What obstacles face our main character?
28. Let's write a story of courage. Who or what helps our hero overcome those obstacles?
29. Let's write a story of courage. How should our story end?
30. Let's write a story of courage. What is the moral of our story?
31. Whom do you consider have courage in your own life?
32. How are you courageous in your own life?
33. What is a good citizen?
34. What advice would you give young people today?
35. What advice did your parents or grandparents give you?
36. If you could ask a Question of the Day, what would it be?
37. Have you ever done something secretly kind for someone?
38. How could people be more kind?
39. What is the most valuable thing you've learned?
40. Would you like to be part of the performance/exhibit for this project?
41. What is something beautiful to you?
42. How are you beautiful?
43. How are you creative everyday?
44. What are you curious about?
45. Do you like these questions? Why/Why not?



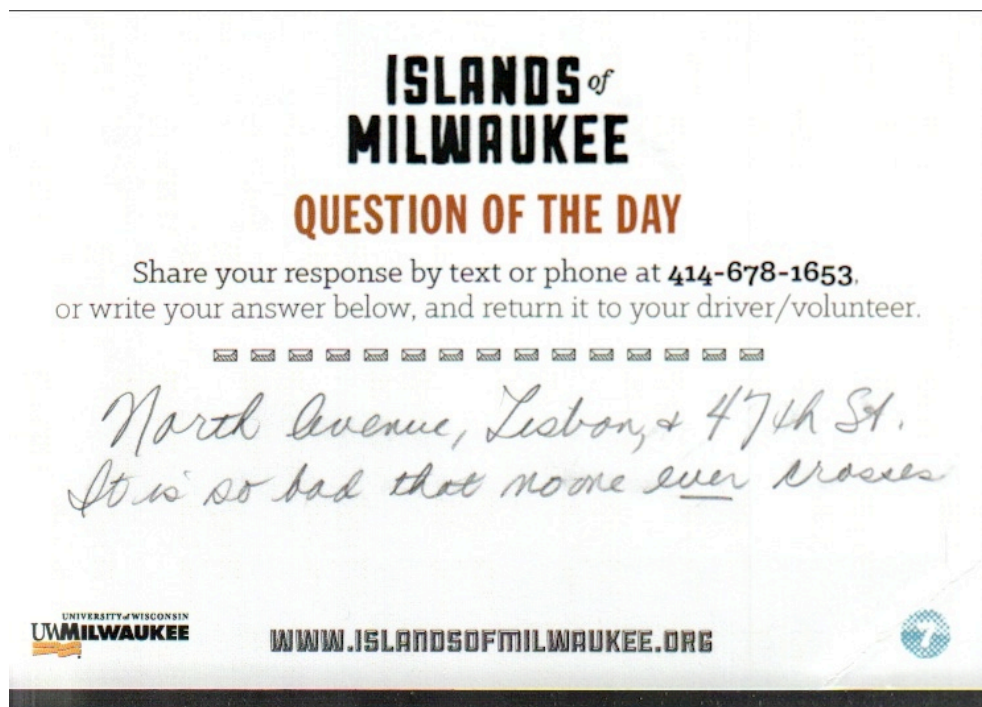
In total, we received 2,500 hand-written responses. By far, the majority of our responses came from hand-written cards at both the Meal Sites and the Home Delivered Meal systems. In total, we estimate that we received 3,000 responses from web, google-voice, and hand-written cards.

The most popular questions were:

- What is something you treasure in your home, and why?
- Is there an intersection you wish you could cross but feel it is too dangerous?
- What is the most beautiful sound in your home?
- What is the most beautiful sound in the world?

### What we learned

It was helpful to work in series of questions that built over several weeks. It was best to introduce a question series with a question focused on the past and move to the present and future and/or more poetic interpretations. In this way, we met people where they were most comfortable engaging, and encouraged them to move beyond it toward imagination and civic visioning.



"Is there an intersection you would like to cross on foot but feel it is too dangerous?" We received over 300 answers and presented the data to the City of Milwaukee Bike and Pedestrian Transit Coordinator.

## Promotion/Engagement - Islands of Milwaukee Efforts

To engage stakeholders, volunteers/staff, and elders themselves, we attended meetings and demonstrated the value of creative engagement.

Fall 2013 Semester	UWM Storytelling/Performing Community Class	25	Students
9.5.13	Chelsea at Beulah Brinton HDM site	6	Volunteers
	Calls to Eastside IF Volunteers	75	Volunteers
9.6.13	Chelsea at Clinton Rose HDM site	6	Volunteers
9.9.13	Riverwest Elders meeting	8	Older Adults
9.9.13	Interfaith Eastside Workshops	15	Older Adult Volunteers
9.9.13	Beulah Brinton Driver Workshop	5	Staff/Volunteers
9.10.13	Clinton Rose Driver Workshop	5	Staff/Volunteers
10.17.13	Wellness Council MCDA	25	Staff/Older Adults
10.2.13	Workshop with Students	25	Students
10.2.13	In-Home Visits during Sojourn Residency	4	Older Adults
10.24.13	SouthShore CCC	5	Staff/Older Adults
11.7.13	Ride-along with HDM	20	Older Adults
11.8.13	Auditions with students	40	Students
11.11.13	Meal Site Dialogue St. Aloysius	19	Older Adults
11.11.13	Medical College Workshop	9	students/faculty
11.12.13	Care Manager Workshop	14	Staff
11.12.13	Ascension Lutheran Meal Site Dialogue	23	Older Adults
11.13.13	Arlington Court Meal Site Dialogue	45	Older Adults
11.14.13	Beulah Brinton Meal Site Dialogue	24	Older Adults
11.15.13	Commission on Aging	30	Staff/Older Adults
11.20.13	Ride-Along HDM	20	Older Adults
	Meeting with Alderman Kovac	1	Staff
11.21.13	SouthShore CCC mtg	8	Older Adults, staff
11.21.13	IF Managers Presentation	20	Staff
12.12.13	Stakeholder meeting	12	Older adults, staff, volunteers
1.19.14	First Unitarian Church Dialogue	40	20 Older Adults, 20 general public
1.23.14	Southshore CCC mtg	10	older adults/volunteers/staff
2.3.13	In-home visit (Bill)	3	Older adult, staff
2.4.14	Interagency Council on Early Childhood	15	staff
2.5.14	Visit to Ascension Lutheran Meal Site	20	Older Adults
2.6.14	Stakeholder meeting	12	staff, older adults, volunteers



2.7.14	Opening talk for UWM Gallery Exhibit	20	general public
2.17.14	In-Home Visit (Bill)	2	Older Adult, staff
3.3.14	How to Stop Traffic workshop at Chai Point	20	Older Adults
2.26.14	Professional Dimensions Women's Networking Club	60	general public
3.13.14	How to Stop Traffic workshop at Eastcastle	12	Older Adults
3.24.14	How to Stop Traffic workshop at Evergreen Square	2	Older Adults
3.26.14	How to Stop Traffic workshop at Williamstown Bay Buildings x3	25	Older Adults
3.27.14	SouthShore CCC mtg	8	Older Adults, staff
3.28.14	Visit to Meal Site, Arlington Ct.	40	Older Adults, staff
4.2.14	Information Fair at Wilson Sr. Center	15	Older Adults
4.3.14	Stakeholder meeting	8	Staff, Older Adults
4.4.14	How to Stop Traffic workshop at Sacred Heart Sr. apartments	10	Older Adults
4.4.14	Ride-Along with HDM (BB)	20	Older Adults
4.4.14	Bike and Pedestrian Task Force mtg	20	Staff, general pub
4.21.14	How to Stop Traffic workshop at Kelly Sr. Center	4	Older Adults
4.22.14	Nutritional Council presentation	60	staff from meal sites and sr centers
4.24.14	Ride Along with HDM driver (BB)	20	Older Adults
4.24.14	SouthShore CCC mtg	6	Older Adults, staff
4.27.14	Meal Site visit (Wash Park)	20	Older Adults, staff
4.28.14	Meal Site visit (Beulah Brinton)	20	Older Adults, staff
4.29.14	Meal Site visit (Ascension)	15	Older Adults, staff
4.27-30	In-Home Visits	5	Older Adults, staff
5.1-2.14	Crossings performances	200	Older Adults, staff, general public
5.22.14	SouthShore CCC mtg	12	Older Adults, staff
6.6.14	Stakeholder mtg	10	Older adults, staff, volunteers
9.4.14	Stakeholder meeting	10	Older adults, staff, volunteers
9.12.14	Workshop, Stowell Associates staff	15	staff
9.10.14	Dialogue on IoM, Plymouth Church	20	General public
9.20-21.14	IoM Performances, Milwaukee's City Hall	2,000	General public
9.20-10.20.14	IoM Exhibit, Milwaukee's City Hall	2,000	estimate - general public

**TOTAL POINTS OF CONTACT 5,565**

In addition, Basting presented on the IOM at several national and international presentations, including:

- Dalhousie University Medical School, Halifax, Nova Scotia (October, 2013)
- Global Alliance for Arts and Health, Dallas, TX (April 2014)
- Hiram College Medical Humanities Summer Institute, Hiram, OH (July 2014)
- Imagining America, Atlanta GA (October 2014)

## In-Home Visits

Questions of the Day were designed as the first step to engagement. Many participants responded to multiple questions. If they left their name and phone number (by phone or card), we called and talked with them, thanking them for their participation, and inquiring whether they would like an “artistic housecall.” We had a 90% response rate to this inquiry in our pilot effort, and we engaged with: Fran, Jim,



Antoinette dances with Sojourn’s James Hart during a home visit, or “artistic housecall” in October, 2013. Photo by Anne Basting.

Antoinette, Tony, June, Angie, Ernest, and Taylor. Angie created paintings. Bill told stories and sang. Ernest told stories by phone. Taylor told stories. June baked. Antoinette, Jim, and Fran danced, and Tony shared stories and guided the project as an advisor (as did Fran).

These visits were not designed to be sustained, but to connect the person to a meaningful experience by making it 1) connected to the person’s identity; 2) a rigorous art-making experience that builds skill; and 3) connected to the larger world. We did this by learning about what was important to each person, making art together, and building on it and sharing it with others for the larger purpose of creating a dynamic discussion about creating a more connected community as we age.

## Communication

To keep Stakeholders and “friends” of the Islands of Milwaukee up to date on our many endeavors, we created an electronic newsletter that went out monthly starting in January, 2014. The Islands of Milwaukee Facebook page is active each week, as is the website. In May 2014, we created an Islands of Milwaukee twitter account as well. The final iteration of the website prepares the project for growth and to share the exhibit and performances as models for other cities and partnerships.

## The Crossings

On ride-alongs with Home Delivered Meal Drivers, we noticed that many meals were delivered to apartments or homes across the street from food services. But the multi-laned street was nearly impassable to pedestrians. Social isolation among older adults can be a result of our built environment - and the loss of confidence or comfort in walking and crossing the street.



Debby Pizur of SSCCC, Mayor John Hoenfelt of Cudahy, and Basting at the Crossings.

To address this aspect of Islands, we collaborated with Southshore Connecting Caring Communities (SSCCC) on their pedestrian safety initiative over 2013-14 and amplified their efforts through a street performance to create a city that SEES and STOPS for pedestrians. Together we identified 3 intersections in 3 different municipalities. Intersections were selected for their perceived dangerousness to pedestrians and for their proximity to senior apartment buildings - whose the residents would grow into collaborative partners for the events. We reached out to a dozen senior apartment buildings and conducted workshops (“How to Stop Traffic”) to engage elder residents - particularly those with disabilities. We invited civic officials at the city, county, and state levels to cross with us, and invited press to cover it. Basting worked with UWM Theatre students and Sojourn Theatre artists to create the street performances, which took place May 1st and 2nd, 2014. The experience lead to real policy changes at 2 of the 3 Crossing sites. Please see the “Crossings Guide” for more details on this extensive project that was inside of the larger Islands of Milwaukee project.



## Culminating Exhibit and Performance

We shared the results of our 2-year effort in a performance/exhibit at Milwaukee's City Hall on September 20th and 21st (2014) in conjunction with Doors Open Milwaukee, a city-wide open house that is based at City Hall. Inspired by the many meetings with stakeholders and several visits to City Hall, Sojourn Theatre designer Shannon Scrofano designed a large island on the ground floor of City Hall featuring audio and visual stations inspired by our engagement with elders through our Artistic Housecalls. Each station offered an emotional impression of the elder and was connected (literally) by string leading to a panel on the 2nd or 3rd floor.



Ernest listens to his audio stories, mixed by sound artist Kevin O'Donnell.

Each elder had their own panel, which described how we met them and details of our encounter. Each panel also displayed the core Question of the Day which that elder responded to. Strings suspended near the panel featured hand-written responses to that QoD by other elders participating in the project. Blank cards and pencils invited audience members to write their own responses and add them to the interactive Question display.

September 20th and 21st were the opening two days of the exhibit. This was strategically held in conjunction with Doors Open Milwaukee, a city-wide open house that draws thousands of visitors to City Hall to get tickets for tours and to tour the building itself. Each day, we staged 10-minute performances each hour to animate the exhibit and invite audience members to engage with it.

Three performers shared the mission of the project, answers to several Questions of the Day, and elements of the artistic housecalls, including the "Dance of the Driftwood" by Jim, and an adapted



version of “Rock of Ages” by Bill. We arranged for Ernest and Angie to be present, and Ernest met his Sojourn Theatre collaborating artist James Hart for the first time in person, after months of sharing stories by phone.

## Exhibit Docents Foster Collaboration

Basting and Graduate Assistant Sarah Freimuth coordinated a roster of volunteers from the partnership network to be “docents” at the 6 interactive question stations. Volunteers took 2-hour shifts throughout the 2 full days of performances. Each station also featured a “service card,” an artfully designed card that profiled the program through which we met an elder in the project. Docents engaged audience members, explaining the project, addressing the issue of social isolation, and ringing a triangle every time someone answered a Question of the Day and added it to the display. The docent system brought the exhibit alive, and enabled staff and volunteers from the various partnering agencies to talk and play with each other in a new collaborative setting.



A docent from the partnership network engages an audience member at the IoM exhibit.



## City Hall Setting Attracts Families

The partnership with Doors Open enabled us to engage with a diverse spectrum of people across race, age, and gender. The design of the exhibit enticed the curious to listen to the voices of older adults and wrestle with issues of community connectedness. The City Hall setting also fostered a direct connection with civic officials.



Anne Basting and Michael Rohd invite Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett to answer a Question of the Day (“How will you stay connected to community as you age?”) at the opening of the IoM exhibit on September 20th, 2014.



Volunteer Docent Tillie Franks joined the project out of her passion for pedestrian safety. She encouraged audience members to consider the question “Is there an intersection you would like to cross on foot, but feel it is too dangerous?” The question station was next to the mayor’s office. The IoM exhibit was open during City Hall hours between Sept 20th and Oct 20th, 2014.



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## Outputs

### **Partnership System, Workshops, Training**

- Partnership system among arts, education, home-care, county and non-profit service providers.
- A system for creating, delivering, gathering, analyzing, storing, building upon, and re-sharing creative responses to Questions of the Day.
- A Powerpoint to introduce arts students to working with older adults through the arts.

### **Engagement with Elders**

- 12 Artist-led workshops at Meal Site
- 10 In-Home Visits with an Artist
- 10 Phone Visits with an Artist
- 45 Questions of the Day distributed (through 5 different mechanisms)
- 3,000 responses to Questions of the Day (through 5 mechanisms)

### **Communications/Web**

- 10 “Currents” Newsletters
- 3 generations of the Islands of Milwaukee website
- 21 radio segments on WUWM’s Lake Effect

### **Performances and Exhibits**

- 3 Crossings Performances (May 2014)
- A Crossings Guide
- A Crossings video
- An exhibit at the UWM Union Gallery (Jan - Feb, 2014)
- Art installation at Milwaukee’s City Hall
- “Service Cards” handed out in art installation, profiling various aging services in Milwaukee
- An exhibit guide
- 14 brief performances to engage audiences in IoM (Sept 2014)
- Video of the IoM performances

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## What Did We Learn and How?

We received IRB approval for this project through UWM and gathered consent from all elders who received Artistic Housecalls, all artists, and all staff/volunteers who participated. To ascertain the benefits and challenges of this initial pilot, we analyzed all field notes, minutes from Stakeholder meetings, and two anonymous surveys sent to Stakeholders, one in the middle of the project, and one after the exhibit/performance was complete. A total of 9 out of 15 stakeholders responded. Did we accomplish our goals?

**Goal #1: To create sustainable partnership to bring meaningful engagement to older adults living alone or under-connected to community.**

- 33% of respondents said we were somewhat effective.

- 33% said we were effective.

- 22% said we were very effective.

- 0% responded with neutral, somewhat ineffective, or ineffective.

When asked to provide examples, comments focused on creating new partnerships; creating lasting and meaningful relationships with elders; and finding a simple way to engage elders. Here are their textual responses:

The meetings included a variety of partners all bringing special talents to the project

The questions got people talking

Isolated seniors were physically connected to community members in an engaging way.

A couple of participants have developed a lasting relationship with the artists they worked with--which is significant. Much of the strategical building of the project created new kinds of relationships between entities that wouldn't previously communicate, or wouldn't have communicated about hopes, desires, imagination, the city, etc. Drivers seem to have gotten a lot out of this before they got tired of the questions.

The meals on wheels participants are individuals who are homebound and have little contact with family/friends. this project connected them to others through thought provoking questions. They were able to share their answers through discussion with their driver, written on cards and/or by leaving messages on the voicemail

I thought the QOD was genius and really helped start conversations at the dining sites.

face to face and personal engagement, effectively listening to aging needs

When asked for **suggestions to improve**, respondents said we should expand to more meal dispatch sites, improve recording techniques and expand our volunteer base to better transition from Question of the Day to Artistic Housecalls.

**Goal #2: To create a public conversation about the importance of staying connected to community as we age.**

- 33% of respondents said we were somewhat effective.
  - 33% said we were effective.
  - 22% said we were very effective.
  - 0% responded with neutral, somewhat ineffective, or ineffective.
- When asked for specific examples, respondents pointed to the Crossings events and the intergenerational audiences at the City Hall exhibit and performance.
- When asked for suggestions for improvement, respondents pointed to greater media exposure.

**How would you like to continue with the project?**

- 63% would hold workshops for staff/volunteers in creative engagement.
- 63% would feature the creative expression of older adults living alone in their various communication systems.
- 50% would collaborate to hold more Crossings events.
- 88% would continue to develop Questions of the Day and distribute them to their networks.
- 88% would continue to like to collaborate with artists in some way.

When asked for **general feedback** about the project, respondents shared these comments:

**“The more I learned about the project, the more involved I became. It’s not only individual contact, but creatively getting whole groups excited and involved. This happens over a timespan, so that has to be taken into account into the overall rollout of the program.”**

**“Overall, Islands set up a network of organizations that had a wealth of basic assistance, but a dearth of social/emotional assistance and got them talking about arts and imagination. Keep it up!”**

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## Beyond Survey - What We Learned

After analyzing field notes from logistics team meetings (graduate students and Basting); artistic team meetings (Sojourn members and Basting), and Stakeholder meetings (core partners and Basting), we identified several key elements to the success of the project.

1. **Language is crucial.** We spent an entire Stakeholder meetings coming to agreement on a tagline for the project - one that staff, families, artists and elders would recognize themselves in. We also wrestled with how to refer to targets of the project. “Social isolation,” “lonely,” “under-served,” and “homebound” are not words elders embrace or recognized themselves in. We arrived at “older adults living alone or under-connected to community.”
2. **The Creative Feed-back Loop is crucial.** Elders, volunteers, and staff all need to know “where are these answers going?” or they will lose faith in the process and tire of responding. We initially thought that radio would be the best way to create a high-profile, high-value way to share the stories back with respondents, but realized that few participants were listening to the broadcasts. We sent cds of the radio segments to meal sites and meal dispatch sites to offset this.



We also created “micro-exhibits” that could go back out through the Home Delivered Meal drivers to the people who responded. These were small booklets that featured highlighted Questions of the Day and a range of the handwritten answers (captured with a graphic design program) we received.

Home Delivered Meal Drivers embedded the Questions into their delivery process.

The Meal Site participants did not feel as connected to the feed-back loop. Posters with responses we made were not distributed or were posted on bulletin boards removed from the diners. They “tired” of the process, according to staff. Participants need to feel a connection between question, response, the joining of that response to other voices, and the building upon all responses by artists. They need to feel the direct path of answer to community building and meaning-making.

**3. Learn the systems and build into their strengths.** We spent nearly a year in meetings, site-visits, and ride-alongs learning the systems in place to reach older adults living alone and under-connected to community. We held stakeholder meetings to identify goals and language for the project. Only through this process were we able to engage such a broad range of people in the process of creative engagement to accomplish our goals.

It also enabled us to create a process that fit into the strengths and capacities of each group, that encouraged their own creativity, and that would ensure that the process could continue.

**4. Communicate, communicate, communicate.** To maintain the momentum of the partnership network between meetings, and to grow the public dialogue about the issues at the root of the project, we created a newsletter that went out each month. We printed and mailed it to those without computers. We updated our Twitter feed, website, and Facebook page regularly. We planned rolling press exposure to maintain a presence in the public eye throughout the process



**Question of the Day:**

**“Where do you connect with nature?”**

- Relaxing by the lake
- Sitting by the sun
- I am native American and we've always been part of nature. I don't believe I connect with nature. I believe that I am part of nature. God created us all and we are all one.
- Traveling
- Every time you eat
- My feet
- In my yard from my front porch
- I love all the beauty, winter or summer
- Singing birds

“The Currents” was our newsletter that we sent out to increasing numbers of people as the project progressed.



Drivers at the Beulah Brinton Center were enthusiastic ambassadors to the project.

and build a sense of anticipation for the final exhibit/performance. It proved important to our goals to re-explain our project multiple times to multiple stakeholders, so that administrators, staff, and volunteers could witness the impact their ideas had on the shaping of the project, just as we were creating feedback loops for the participants.

**5. Peer to Peer training is crucial.** Once the meal drivers came on board, the project blossomed. When a volunteer or staff member “got it” - understood how the QoD could be used to deepen relationships and invite creative expression, we invited them to share their thoughts with others. As



we prepare to expand to more meal dispatch sites, we will deepen the peer training component as well, modeling the engagement in video to share with other drivers.

**6. Artistic House calls should respond to the individual's interests and invite them to grow.** Angie wanted to experiment with painting so we arranged for a painter to visit with her. We also invited her to stretch herself and write a poem. Bill shared stories about his farm. We invited him to adapt the lyrics to a hymn to create an original song based on his stories. Always listen to their interests - always invite people to grow. Also listen to when they have had enough. People have the choice to detach from the project. After several visits, one of our house call participants told us he was done. We sent him a thank you packet and left open the invitation to engage us again.



Interfaith volunteer Ellie Quinn sings the song that Bill wrote with Sojourn's James Hart.



One of Angie's many paintings. This one she titled "Blood on the Sidewalk."



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## Looking Forward

The final iteration of the website is “content management” and ready for us to continue adding Questions of the Day and Artistic House calls from Milwaukee and other cities. Based on Stakeholder exit meetings, our current plans include:

- Expansion of the project from 2 to 4 Home Delivered Meal dispatch sites, including videos of peer to peer training/advocacy.
- Integration of the Question generation, Artistic Housecall, web and phone support systems into coursework at UWM’s Peck School of the Arts through faculty engaged in service learning.
- Continuation of partnership/friend newsletter series.
- Collaboration with congregate meal sites to generate questions.
- Creation of “micro exhibit” to share with the home delivered meal recipients and “mini-exhibits” to share with the congregate meal site diners.
- Creation of a flexible, traveling installation (exhibit) featuring the ongoing progress of the project.
- Promotion of the project at national gatherings of aging services providers.
- Application for a grant to support the creation of educational materials to share with other cities interested in replicating the model and building their own partnership network to bring meaningful engagement to older adults living alone or under-connected to community.



At the end of each of the IoM 10-minute performances, Question of the Day cards fluttered down from the 8th floor. Performers invited audience members to pick them up and ask the question of a stranger.