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**Creative Aging Classes at Hartford Public Library**

Dancing and singing classes in folkloric Puerto Rican music; instruction in traditional quilting skills; and sessions in the basics of digital photography, are all part of the Hartford Public Library’s (HPL) outreach to seniors as part of the Creative Aging In Libraries Program. HPL has 10 locations in Hartford, CT.

The Creative Aging program runs workshops for adults over 50 years of age. These classes continue the programming initiated in the Library’s Arts and Archives: Master Classes in the Arts and Humanities for Older Adults series. The goal is to have fun, social and informative creative learning experiences, and to foster lifelong learning through the arts.

For each HPL class, a local teaching artist held eight, two-hour sessions. Each group had a public display of the students’ work at the end of the sessions.

Last fall, Karen O’Maxfield, an artist and photographer from Hartford, taught her students the basics of working with a digital camera, how to create a PowerPoint presentation, and how to compose good pictures. In one session, O’Maxfield held a field trip, walking with her students within a block of the library, and helping them develop their artistic eye for better photo subjects. They had a show of their work at the library’s Camp Field Branch on Nov. 19.

Julio Valencia Cortijo’s students were from the Hispanic Senior Center. They learned Plena folkloric songs and dances. Plena, which became popular in Puerto Rico in the early 1900s, was referred to as a “sung newspaper,” because it was a way for people to spread messages. It remains popular at holidays and in the Christmas season. These sessions were for Spanish speaking seniors and held at the library’s Park Branch and the senior center. The students performed on Jan. 6, Three Kings Day, at the Pope Park Recreation Center. Some played instruments and sang and others danced. They wore traditional outfits, made by a sewing class at the Park Branch.

Irma Nelson held a quilting class in the Downtown Library. Participants began with 27½-inch squares, learned to use templates, hand pieced the blocks, created borders, and bound the edges with mitered corners. The quilters showed off their completed work at a reception on Jan. 14. Their work hangs in the hallways on the second floor.

A new set of quilting classes will start in April in the Dwight Branch.

Creative Aging in America's Libraries is supported by a National Leadership Grant from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services in collaboration with Lifetime Arts, Inc., AARP Foundation, American Library Association and Westchester Library System.

**Hartford Public Library|500 Main St.|Hartford CT 06103**

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