

## "Singing in the Brain" Creative Aging Singing Workshop at PAL

*submitted by: Shawne Macdonald,  
Creative Aging Circle*

Over one hundred would be singers gathered at PAL for a singing workshop on May 20 and ended up enjoying an uplifting, energizing afternoon of harmony. For some, it was unexpected. "I never thought I could sing a song like Hey Jude", said Nancy Brown, "but with the singing exercises I could. They were very engaging, and made you feel comfortable. It was a lot of fun." Seniors from all around the St. Lawrence neighbourhood mingled, connected, and found that maybe, just maybe, they could actually sing.

The "Gathering Sparks" singers Eve Goldberg and Jane Lewis (minus their partner Sam Turton on that day) led off with an interesting review of just why singing together is so good for the brain. The latest neuroscience research shows it increases all sorts of feel good hormones, elevates levels of neuro-transmitters, and that people who sing in a choir actually live longer. They followed up with the "ABCs" of singing. Said Dorothy Mungham, "Their approach of no critiques brought out the best in everybody. They elicited spontaneity in people. There was lots of helpful information." Eileen Samuel noted, "They did a spectacular job. They gave practical solutions on how to control the voice. And they had a lovely way about them. I love how they dealt with people's fears of singing."

By the end of the workshop, the group was singing in beautiful harmony. For some, it was a first. Monica Lewis said, "It was good to be part of a big group. This allowed me to just let loose." Erin Harris of the Older Women's Network observed that "The workshop brought together silos of seniors all up and down The Esplanade who have been isolated from each other". Two dozen residential buildings, including co-ops, condos and apartments, were represented by audience members.

The Creative Aging Theories is a collaboration between PAL's Supporting Cast, the Older Women's Network Advocacy Agency, and Woodsworth Co-op. The purpose: to bring St. Lawrence seniors together in a creative community and to promote networking, to reduce social isolation and to learn about other programs. PAL's Supporting Cast coordinator Rosanne Figueira helped organize the event. Austin Schatz was in charge of the sound system and the PAL kitchen

volunteers, Christine and Carole kindly helped with refreshments. Bill Ferguson of Woodsworth MC'd the event.

At the close of the workshop, the PAL Choir extended an invitation to the audience to join. A number of audience members said that they would like to continue singing together in a group, whether in a choir, song circle or another singing workshop. Stay tuned!



*A full house for this enjoyable workshop.*

## Degenerative Spondylosis

*submitted by: Arlene Meadows*



Patient of "Degenerative Spondylosis" and "Stenosis" is probably going to be the toughest role I'll ever have to play. But if I could just get me hands back for a week....! But the Esplanade PAL's and my chums who should be called honorary PAL's, plus Supporting Cast and Dixon Hall, all win first prize in kindness!

Love and Hugs, Arlene Meadows