

Feedback from cultural advisors in senior centers:

- *Residents who participated in the project were very satisfied with the activities. Carers also gave positive feedback on the activities. The visits fitted in very well with everyday life. The times were agreed with the department and the cultural director to make it work as well as possible.*
- *One resident was clearly liberated about dance and became enthusiastic about dancing even in situations other than moments spent with a dance partner.*
- *The one-to-one encounters were very effective for the senior centre, as many residents do not have the opportunity to have as many one-to-one encounters as they need, so the dance friend activity complemented their daily life and the needs of the residents really well.*
- *The Dance Friend training for volunteers was really well done. So many wonderful, moving and joyful encounters. The joy of dance and music and also jealousy :)*
- *The encounters and contact between the dance friend and the resident was a pleasure to follow.*
- *I wish the project would take root and spread in nursing homes!*
- *It was challenging to find a place for the pad in Kivelaja that was always available for all volunteers and supervised at the same time.*
- *In Roihuvuor, the dancing friends mainly work in the memory house. There was a lot of momentary joy and concentration in these moments. A few clients also remembered the dancing friends and some of the movements such as "Eagle's Wings". The fact that someone gives personal time to a resident is really valuable and all the movements support the residents' ability to function.*
- *For some, looking through the bench was too challenging and working as a "mirror" worked better. As a rule, residents in senior centres are already living with advanced memory loss. The activity could also be suitable for clients of day centres, etc. with a higher level of functional capacity.*
- *It is challenging and time-consuming to arrange schedules with volunteers and to ensure continuity of activities.*
- *If we could arrange regular times when we could put a dance session in the monthly programme, the group home staff would be more aware of the situation. Information about the activities to the ward is needed so that the nursing staff know who the dance friends are and what they do.*
- *All in all, the project went very well. Personally, I hope to find time to support enough volunteer dance friends, because not only is dance friending a rewarding experience for many, it can also be stressful for the volunteer and can evoke strong emotional experiences, i.e. they need a work-management approach.*

Volunteer Dance Friends and Video Guide senior dancers' feedback:

- *Successful project - good process management*
- *Great encounters with seniors who are already quite frail, both with the professionals at the beginning and with the vapers. In a small way, movement and moments together and also through a new medium.*
- *Excellent implementation. Ready-made videos. Good training and introduction to the work of the participants. Vera Nevanlinna .Thank you ! for the positive Eevi Tolvasse who inspired me to volunteer as well*
- *It seemed that the visits lifted the spirits of the clients, the meeting seemed like a pick-me-up.*
- *For me, the encounter with Janina (choreographer Janina Rajakangas created Dance Friends and directed the video guide) was crucial - she believed and trusted us dancers.*
- *Dance/music seemed to have a special place in the lives of my three clients ... I felt I was doing something meaningful and life-giving. I also found a lot of joy in myself and looked forward to attending the meetings.*
- *The customers were very different, but it worked well with all of them.*
- *A happy feeling for the customers and for myself.*
- *Everyone is positive and helpful .I feel I am a necessary friend to many of the residents Socialising on the ward. I got the extension lead to the taplet ,the taplet was not in the cupboard where it was kept and the charge almost ran out*
- *Met my expectations. There have been happy moments too when a friend said to me "I don't have time ...I'm going away , don't you have someone else to dance with?" The meetings have often ended with dancing in the common room, accompanied by a song.*
- *We have danced while going through my "compulsory guideline of dancing presence exercise" .We have danced according to the animal picture cards.*
- *The tapestry is good and works . More music needed !Spooky cage (finger play) for Kettelbey Abbey garden I have used*
- *"I'm going on a long journey, "You're so much younger dance you " Where do you live I'll move near there too" "Now I'm so tired.I can't thank you for asking " the last one was all about the house Hay dances . My third friend left , before the start three times wanted to go home .julan starts always last naturally . Maybe the music would help.*
- *This is important ,for customers a dance friend production also for a friend Thank you to the Silver Streets cultohj deputy Ella uppmann for the joyful collaboration!*

Feedback from dance artists who have worked on the Dance Friends project:

- *(Tanssikaverius) Exceeded expectations, the atmosphere in the meetings was very relaxed.*
- *The video library didn't work with one resident who wished to see younger dancers. The fact that not all residents were able to watch the videos was also new. Not everyone's eyesight was good enough, and not necessarily their sense of hearing. In these situations, I learned how to apply the video library so that they acted either as sound alone or just as a stimulus for me in how I led the dance sessions.*
- *The Dance Friends project exceeded my expectations. The encounters got under my skin and I felt that I was doing really important and rewarding work. I was amazed at how the encounters were, at best, exactly the same thing as what I do as a professional dancer as a dancer with Deborah Hay. Dancing together in a state of complete ignorance, with no need to try to understand what was happening. One resident asked me in the middle of our dance together, "Is this your dance or mine? I also learned a lot about how to face people, to be present and to look beyond memory loss and diagnoses. I got to practice gentleness, acceptance of self and others, and practice what I love most about dance - being in a state of not knowing.*
- *I really hope so (that the visits of Dancefriends will continue) with all my heart. The joy and gratitude that the encounters give to the residents is absolutely wonderful and touching. I have applied for a grant to continue this project. It happens that I will be volunteering myself before any grant is awarded to me. That's how valuable and rewarding this work has been, and I don't want to leave it there.*
- *Any spontaneous hugs. Every heartfelt thank you. The moments of dancing together when I don't know which moves which. The utterly wonderful state of not knowing. The way I can communicate when the other doesn't speak a language I can understand. The way I was offered candy as a thank you. The warm thanks and praise from the nurses. The laughter and excitement of music and movement. The insights into what dance can be. And that we can dance. The joy of making someone smile with my own dance. Conversations about knitting socks and how wonderful life is. Group dances among the five residents as the other residents in the room joined in the dancing. The*

dancing hands of a sleeping person, not asleep. He was listening and dancing. The laughter that came in the middle of the dance. Crying, which came in the middle of the dance. The worry that was forgotten in the dance. The healing power of touch. And above all this phrase: How boring life would be without such a flutter!

- *Another important lesson was to keep the project flexible and to apply it continuously. On a personal level, I feel that I learned quite a lot about listening and acting in the moment, as every working day was different and required different tools. Each service centre was different and had its own way of working and schedules, which could change with each visit. We also worked in very different spaces: lobbies, shared living rooms in the units, shared rooms and residents' own apartments. The condition of the people being danced to also varied considerably, so that exercises that worked well the first time were not successful the next time. Sometimes it was also necessary to simply state that the resident did not have the resources to cope today.*
- *The personal lesson I take away from this project is the courage to confront. Working in a service centre without any experience or training in elderly work before the project started felt exciting, even a little scary. How would I know how to encounter a person with memory and/or disability through dance? How to move bodies with a radically different functional capacity from my own? However, I quickly discovered that curiosity and a willingness to be present go a long way. It was not about serving someone else, but about bringing your own interest (dance) close to another person and exploring it together. The video bank of the Dance Friends project served as an avenue for joint exploration, an equal encounter and at least a little blurred the boundary between facilitator and participant - We explored the given tasks together, with the video acting as a facilitator. I believe this was sometimes the key to engaging the residents: we were on the edge of something together. I see a need for this way of experiencing art and that it is in itself a value that should be cherished.*
- *Without exception, the older people I met were grateful for the time spent with them, talking and working together. Everyone seemed to long to be seen and present, and dancing was not the main benefit of the moment for everyone, although from my point of view it was a way to be present and to meet.*
- *By visiting regularly, many of the residents, who were already deeply ill with memory problems, seemed to find a connection and increasingly recognised me. For example,*

one resident, over 90 years old, remembered me and our dancing together, even though she could no longer perceive where she was. Also, some of the videos on dancingfriends.fi, and in particular the senior dancers featured in them, became for many people some kind of memory or anchor for our encounters.

- *What I found central was the observation of how, through movement, we can achieve a shared presence in the same moment, even with people who otherwise no longer live in the present but are in other worlds because of their memory impairment. Through dance and movement, through making, experiencing or watching, one can free oneself from defining the present moment and its events in words and just focus on encountering bodily. At the same time, as if as a by-product, a person's physical functioning is maintained, which is of real importance for the general well-being of many residents of a service home.*
- *Dance friends do not underestimate the ability of participants to challenge their thinking and experience new things. Thinking about things differently and encountering things through dance seemed to open up new ways of seeing, experiencing and acting for many. Many encounters had invigorating moments of realisation: in encounters we danced with just language, mimicked the movement of the trees swaying behind the window, analysed scenes we saw on video like dance critics and created a whole choreography based on memories of a resident's favourite forest.*
- *"I will never forget this moment" is in many ways a sobering response from someone with a profound memory loss, but it sums up something about our project: even if the shared dance moment fades from your mind after 15 minutes, there may be a sense of pleasure left in your body that can bring you peace of mind and comfort when you're otherwise confused and feeling alienated.*
- *Volunteers found their encounters with residents meaningful and touching, but also challenging. Many said that the encounters were easier than they had originally thought and that the videos served as an easy way to start the encounters. The videos on the Dance Friends website were a good conversation starter and made it fairly easy to get down to concrete work.*