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**For Immediate Release**

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**Inspiring older amateurs to find their inner artist**

LeeAnn Manzari took up painting when she retired, and recently had one of her first works shown on national television's "Project Runway." Susan Meehan returned to a love of poetry at 79, winning the D.C. Poet Project's open mic competition, which led to the publication of her first book.

Moving features about older local adults like Manzari and Meehan are part of the *Beacon* newspaper's Celebration of the Arts — a year-long project intended to inspire readers to try a new means of self-expression through the arts. Stories also highlight local classes where people can learn to paint, sculpt, make jewelry, shoot and manipulate photographs, write poetry and more.

This April, area amateurs 50 and over will be invited to submit their best works in a regional Celebration of the Arts competition, with awards, cash prizes, and the opportunity to exhibit in one or more local galleries.

The Celebration's Advisory Board is headed by Maryland's First Lady, Yumi Hogan; together with Rosie Allen-Herring, President & CEO of the United Way of the National Capital Area; Linda Mathes, CEO of the American Red Cross in the National Capital Region; Jonathan Stevens, Vice-President for Thought Leadership at AARP; and Joann Vaughan, Executive Director of the Maryland Federation of Art.

Community partners, including dozens of area nonprofits and governmental entities, are helping spread the word about the Celebration throughout the region. Corporate sponsors include AARP, Pepco, Sommerset Retirement Community, Vantage House and Brooke Grove Retirement Village.

"There is so much to celebrate when people over 50 try something new and discover a new passion. We're very excited about this project, and expect hundreds to participate in the competition," said Stuart Rosenthal, publisher of the *Beacon*.

For more information about the Celebration of the Arts, or to learn how to become a community partner or sponsor, email [arts@thebeaconnewspapers.com](mailto:arts@thebeaconnewspapers.com) or call (301) 949-9766.