



UNIVERSITY CIRCLE INC

SENIOR CONNECTIONS FACT SHEET

University Circle Interactive Cleveland (UCIC) is on a mission: to promote education and lifelong learning through the use of videoconferencing. Developed more than a decade ago through a *National Endowment for the Arts* grant as an educational video-conferencing initiative, UCIC programming involves cultural institutions in and around Cleveland—from the *Cleveland Museum of Art* to the *Rock and Roll Hall of Fame*.

UCIC grew out of University Circle's education efforts, a nonprofit organization responsible for guiding development, service and advocacy for this urban district in Cleveland, Ohio. Through its community development work, education and public programs, University Circle reaches more than 6 million people annually and has become a center of innovation in healthcare, education, arts and culture. *Senior Connections*, its newest initiative in life-long learning completes offerings from hands-on pre-school programs through learning for seniors in retirement communities and senior centers in the Northeast Ohio region.

The consortium of museums, educational and cultural institutions is a content collaborative established to promote life-long learning using the resources and collections of their organizations. The consortium has worked together for over a decade to envision and produce unique learning opportunities via interactive video-conferencing. Offering over 200 high-quality lessons and learning experiences, the members of the consortium currently serve close to 250,000 students in the US and abroad annually. Over the past three years, these learning programs have been adapted to benefit senior adults in active aging/continuing-care communities and senior centers in Northeast Ohio. Presently, we are working with these communities: Laurel Lake (Hudson); Rockynol (Akron); Solon Senior Center (Solon) & Copeland Oaks (Sebring).

The program model for **SENIOR CONNECTIONS** is based on scheduling weekly connections at a time in their schedule selected by the wellness or activity staff. Blended activities using videoconferencing, on-site outreach programs and field trips provide the basis and the inspiration for the current program model for **SENIOR CONNECTIONS**. Participants are able to travel the globe with engaging programs promoting cognitive health and wellness among the residents. Most importantly, residents who are not as ambulatory or comfortable leaving their familiar surroundings can actively participate in this high-quality weekly program. The program is designed to provide arts, culture and science programs to the most educated group of retirees in history. Every day in this country, 10,000 people turn 65 and are looking forward to retirements filled with intellectual stimulation, helping to maintain their cognitive development, exploring new interests and engaging with their communities.

As one resident from Laurel Lake states, *"Videoconferencing at its best can be a first-class learning tool. I think it's amazing and enjoy videoconferencing with museum staff, scholars and experts in their field."* In evaluations of the program, it was found to contribute to wellness for participating seniors and to encourage social activity. The typical elder in retirement communities attending the program is older than eighty, and 81% of residents surveyed attend the programs *"as often as possible."* They attend for a variety of reasons, including *"learning something interesting and new"* and *"as a social and learning experience."* 85% of residents *"love the convenience of having the programs delivered on-site,"* and about 50% of residents participate in the follow-up field trips. 98% would like to participate in the off-site trips, but at times are unable to because of mobility or health reasons.

The *Senior Connections* program can be replicated anywhere, is proven, tested, affordable and offers quality programming through its UCI partnerships. It is a community education model that encourages elders to open up to the continuing potential of lifelong learning at a more engaged older age.

To find out more about bringing Senior Connections to your community, call (216) 707-5021, or e-mail skreisman@universitycircle.org.