

MACEDONIA FACE ACTIVE FOR LIFE SENIOR CENTER

VOICES FROM THE HILL



The Historical Significance of Crawford Grill

The Crawford Grill holds a nostalgic spot in the hearts of many seniors living in the Hill District. It was once located in the Lower Hill and relocated to Wylie Avenue in 1943. The seniors remember the Hill District as a lively and musical neighborhood, with the Crawford Grill serving as a place where everyone convened. From the 1930s--early 2000s, the grill was famous for its jazz. Everyone was welcome as visitors united over a shared love for jazz and soul food. The Crawford Grill symbolizes the spirit of the Hill District's cultural importance to Pittsburgh and the world.

In its prime, Crawford Grill No. 2 saw the likes of Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong and other jazz legends taking the stage.

Dr. Tim Huang, an assistant professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Computing and Information, developed a project titled "Time Travel Back to the Crawford Grill." Huang's project combined old images of the Hill District and stories from the seniors at Macedonia FACE Active for Life Senior Center with VR technology to retell their stories. By utilizing photographs to create a three-dimensional experience, the project allows the memories shared by participants to come to life and gives viewers the opportunity not only to experience the Hill District of the seniors' youth, but also to step directly into their memories.

With the assistance of VR technology, Huang hopes this project can raise awareness for underrepresented populations of Pittsburgh. Overall, the project aims to bridge the generational divide between younger community members and the seniors residing in the Hill District. Huang believes illustrating the Hill District's historical significance can help younger individuals evoke a sense of community and pride for their current community. In turn, the Macedonia FACE Active for Life Senior Center and University of Pittsburgh hope that this project helps educate the public about the robust history and culture that has thrived in the neighborhood for decades and continues to do so. As the project moves into the future, this confluence of technology and memory will provide the opportunity to explore even more locations of significance in the historic Hill District and beyond.



Though it shut its doors in 2003, the building that once stood as Crawford Grill No. 2 is preserved by the U.S. National Register of Historic Places.

Art Gallery

At the Macedonia FACE Active for Life Senior Center, the seniors hold within them an array of talents. One of these talents is painting. To experience their artistic talent, you can browse through their works and admire how the Hill District's culture is reflected in their artwork. The seniors' imaginations and artistic abilities are evident as you examine their art.

Many paintings are showcased in the Nafasi Gallery located on Centre Avenue in the Hill District. The Nafasi Gallery is a part of the Hill District Arts Plan and aims to highlight the African American cultural legacy. Below are samples of the seniors' artwork being displayed at the Nafasi Gallery. The paintings depict African American culture in the local Pittsburgh area. All are welcome to visit the gallery at 2145 Centre Avenue and experience their artwork person. Details about the hours are available at 412-765-1820.

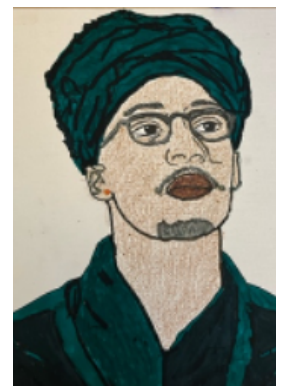


The Nafasi

This wall displays a sample of the art provided to the Nafasi Gallery on Centre by members of the Macedonia FACE Active for Life Senior Center community.

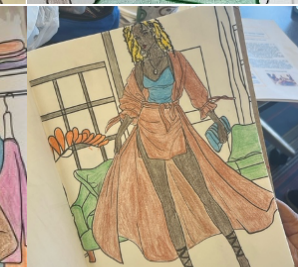
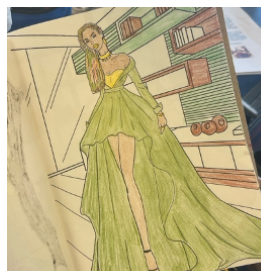


ORA WILKES



ARTIST UNKNOWN

HELEN MENDOZA



REGINA WEST

Information Seeking with Communities

On October 28, 2024, Jennifer Nwogu met with the seniors at Macedonia FACE Active for Life Senior Center to discuss her doctoral research. Nwogu is a PhD student at the University of Pittsburgh who focuses her research on bridging the gap between seniors in the African American community and voice-based technology. During the interactive session, the seniors revealed their preference for voice-based artificial intelligence technology over traditional technology; however, they also expressed their personal challenges with using it. Nwogu affirmed their experience, stating voice-based technology was not designed for group interaction, nor was it programmed to recognize pattern structures unique to African American Vernacular English (AAVE). Because of these challenges, Nwogu works to create a voice-based technology that can overcome these inequalities.

Community in the Loop
Information is how we navigate our daily lives. As the world relies more on technology, it is important that our community of African American seniors has equitable access and sees themselves equally represented.

In 2022, researchers from the University of Pittsburgh collaborated with a group of seniors at Macedonia FACE Center to learn about their experiences with technology and information-seeking. Sharing their experiences gave us insights into many interesting things! Now we want to collaborate with seniors to create a technology that is easily accessible for daily information seeking.

Key Insights:

Personal and Community Relationships:
Many seniors rely on personal relationships and their community to navigate daily information, a pattern that extends to their use of technology as well.

Voice-Based Artificial Intelligence (AI) Technology:
Hands-free interaction using your voice makes it easy to receive information from an AI tool.

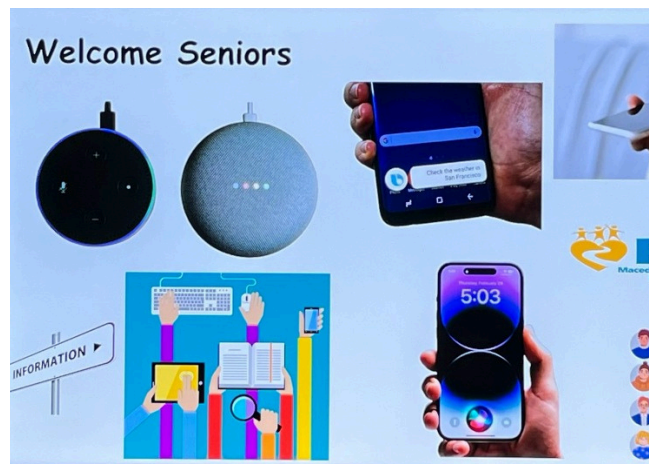
The Overview
Flyers handed out by Nwogu highlighted the importance of accessible, adapted technology in community settings.



Jennifer Nwogu is a doctoral student at the University of Pittsburgh's Learning and Research Development Center.

Takeaways

Upon reflection, the seniors concluded that they would benefit from a technology that could relay the Center's information when programmed to do so. However, they would not feel comfortable with the technology knowing their personal information because of privacy concerns. From this feedback, Nwogu will continue to engage with the local senior population to create a technology that allows African Americans to have equitable access to technology.



Pictured above is the first slide of Nwogu's slideshow from the investigative activities she completed with Macedonia FACE Active for Life Senior Center community members.

■ Experimenting with Technology

Nwogu divided the four participants, Ms. Regina, Ms. Sheila, Ms. Delores, and Ms. Pauline, into two groups. While one group role played as the "voice AI" technology, the other acted as the "community." Similar to how Amazon's Alexa operates, Nwogu had the community group prompt the AI group with common questions that would arise in the Senior Center. Once the question was prompted, the AI group responded to their question to the best of their ability. Each group was only permitted to answer or question the other group four times. After both groups used their four attempts, Nwogu and the seniors reflected on their experience participating in the exercise. It was common for the seniors to become frustrated with the AI group's wordy responses or not receive an answer to their question because the question was not formatted in a way that fit into the programming's strict understanding of grammar and structure. These challenges and frustrations reflect some African American seniors' struggles with modern technology.

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FACE

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