

MEDIA RELEASE

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Artists Create Age-Positive Birthday Cards as Part of *Changing the Narrative's* Anti-Ageism Campaign

DENVER - Frustrated by the racks of birthday card options that mock older adults as weak, deaf, forgetful and crabby, the anti-ageism group Changing the Narrative is making birthday card shopping empowering and uplifting, producing "age-positive" cards that celebrate aging and honor the recipients.

A contest attracting submissions from professional greeting card designers from around the country resulted in 10 winning birthday cards—all designed by women, several by women of color—to be part of a collection of age-positive cards. The artists are from cities and states across the country, including **San Diego, CA, Seattle, WA, St. Paul, MN, and Providence, Rhode Island.***

The original contest that accepted applications only from Colorado-based general artists was wildly successful, with the birthday cards selling quickly to buyers around the country. As a result, and due to popular demand, Changing the Narrative decided to expand the contest nationally.

"We chose the artists based on their creative talents and their enthusiasm to join the movement to end ageism," said Janine Vanderburg, Director of Changing the Narrative. "We invited experienced, professional, and successful greeting card designers to participate in the contest. The wonderfully diverse designs share one thing: a message that age is something to celebrate."

"Getting older is a blessing and a gift," said Aarica Smith of **Atlanta, Georgia**. "Not everyone gets to experience another trip around the sun. The birthday card should reflect and celebrate the unique beauty of the person."

"I'm all about creating products that are uplifting, colorful and fun – age shouldn't be excluded from that," said Lauren-Ashley Barnes of **Dallas, Texas**. "I was excited to design something that is all-around inclusive."

"Helping to "Change the Narrative" and literally re-write ageist greeting cards aligns perfectly with our mission to empower and celebrate in an inclusive, non-judgemental, positive manner," said Hilary Meehan of Mirthos Paper in **Southport, North Carolina**. "The cards encourage everyone to embrace the messy, beautiful, magic parts of what makes each of us unique but also exquisitely similar - at every age, at any time!"

Changing the Narrative challenges the notion perpetuated in many traditional birthday cards that we should feel bad about aging and that getting older is all about decline, deterioration, and depression. In an effort to be humorous, some of the cards portray older adults as bench-sitting curmudgeons, boozy women who can't remember what they just said, flatulent grandparents, or lecherous old men, all reflecting and reinforcing the negative stereotypes about getting older.

But ageism isn't funny, it's harmful. A recent survey found that 93% of older adults in the U.S. experience ageism, and research by Dr. Becca Levy of the Yale School of Public Health shows that having negative beliefs about aging affects our physical and mental health, increases the likelihood of developing dementia, and decreases our life span.

Sarah Schwartz, AKA The Paper Nerd, editor-in-chief of Stationery Trends Magazine said, “Over the hill’ cards have been the norm and that concept wasn’t challenged until recently. The conversation is changing. But cultural changes take a while. The momentum is building. Cards are micro-conversations. With one card and one person, you can evolve your perspective.”

For Vanderburg, that's the point. She continued, “Our goal at Changing the Narrative is to not only raise awareness and understanding of ageism but also to make a real-world difference. We want to change how people think, talk, and act about aging and ageism; we want to change the messages we hear in our workplaces, in our doctors’ offices, and in our everyday lives; and we want to change the stories we tell about ourselves as we age. Sharing “happy birthday” messages that celebrate aging instead of mocking older people is an important step in changing the stories that our culture feeds us about getting older.”

For more information on how to support these winning artists through these birthday cards and to learn more about ageism and what you can do to address it, please visit changingthenarrativeco.org.

Changing the Narrative is a U.S.-based campaign changing the way people think, talk and act about aging and ageism through evidence-based strategies, strategic communications and innovative public campaigns. Our end game? To end ageism, together.

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*The card designers are based in:

Encinitas, CA
Mission Viejo, CA
San Diego, CA
Fort Collins, CO
Atlanta, GA
St Paul, MN
Southport, NC
Greenville, RI
Dallas, TX
Kenmore, WA