



The Center on Aging

at The UNIVERSITY of VERMONT

FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dear friends, it is a pleasure to welcome you to this first edition of the Center on Aging (COA) newsletter. The COA at the University of Vermont (UVM) was established in the fall of 2008 as a result of a generous endowment gift from local philanthropist Lois McClure. She, like us who work within the COA, recognizes that major social, political, economic, and health issues loom in our future because of the significant demographic shift currently taking place, not only locally, but nationally and internationally as well.

Of course, I refer to our aging population, which will transform the way we think about important programs such as entitlements and health care delivery. Just to cite a few graphic facts and figures that will illustrate my point, consider these. Over the next 20 to 30 years, the percentage of people over the age of 65 in the United States will grow to 25%. This will happen sooner in Vermont, likely by 2025, making our state at that time the sixth or seventh oldest in the United States as measured by percentage of the population over 65. We are already the second oldest state based on median age. Concurrently, the ratio of people working to those who are retired and collecting entitlement benefits will shrink dramatically. Think of the implications for Medicare and Social Security benefits as contributions to those programs continue to decline. An even more startling fact is that the oldest of the old, those over 85 years, will increase by a factor of 2.5 during the same time period. Barring a medical breakthrough, 50% of those people will experience mild to moderate dementia that will dramatically increase health care costs beyond their current skyrocketing level.

This all sounds quite gloomy, but I am optimistic because of the vision of people like Lois McClure and because of the extraordinary talents of faculty, students, and staff at UVM and across the state. The COA was established

to help harness the energy of those of us who recognize the myriad problems posed by our aging population, so that we can find solutions that modify outcomes in a meaningful and positive way.

I believe that we are already making progress. The COA has begun to partner with community and state representatives to find ways to improve the health of our seniors, keep them out of nursing homes, and encourage them to remain contributing members of the workforce. We are exploring ways to develop programs and services for seniors that rely on volunteerism. Many of these programs are meant to be preventive, to maintain good health and decrease the likelihood of frailty. I suspect that there will be positive benefits for those who are volunteering as well.

Thanks to the efforts of our Associate Director of Education Deborah Worthley, and Program Director Jeanne Hutchins, we will be holding our third annual Gerontology Symposium in March. Our first two were wildly successful in terms of the number of registered participants and their very positive feedback about the educational opportunity resulting from attending the symposiums. We have a very high quality program of speakers for this year, and I hope to see you there. Regarding policy and research related to aging, the COA is laying the groundwork for successful collaborations both within the university and in partnership with state and community representatives.

In closing, I am hopeful that as the COA grows over the next few years, we and our partners will contribute to turning dire predictions about the consequences of an aging population into what has the potential to be a vibrant cohort of wise, healthy, and happy individuals who enrich us with their experience and ongoing contributions to our society. Stay tuned for more about the COA in the coming months.

William Pendlebury

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Thanks To Our
Volunteers

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EDUCATION NOTES

Deborah Worthley, Associate Director, Education

Our education initiatives continue to expand and focus on two areas: providing professional development for the diverse network of healthcare and service providers who serve Vermont's elder population and expanding formal gerontology education. Our overall goals are to create a more informed workforce and public and to foster a better understanding of the aging process and its implications, positive and otherwise, for all of us.

In fall 2010, we hosted a brown bag lecture series on the UVM campus that featured three recent research projects by UVM faculty and students. This first time event was an opportunity to showcase some of the many aging-related research initiatives taking place on the UVM campus.

We are hosting two Gerontology Symposia in 2011. The "northern" symposium will take place on March 23, 2011 at the Sheraton in Burlington. The "southern" symposium will take place on the Castleton State College campus on June 10, 2011. The theme for both symposia is "Quality of Life: Make it Better, Not Just Longer." Workshops and presentations will include innovations in housing, technology, communication, and brain health. As in past years, the symposia are a great opportunity to get together with fellow colleagues and learn from each other. Registration fees for these events will remain at the low rate of \$10, thanks to sponsors.

We expect to offer the Gerontology Certificate completely online by summer 2012. This credit certificate, available through UVM's Department of Continuing Education, will become more accessible to Vermonters who are interested in acquiring an academic credential in aging. It is appropriate for those currently working in the field of aging and for people interested in a new career in aging, as well as those seeking more

knowledge to assist aging family members more effectively. Dr. William Pendlebury, Director of the Center on Aging, will serve as lead faculty for the overall certificate and the Foundations of Gerontology course.

For more information about the certificate, call (800) 639-3210 or (802) 656-2085 or access <http://learn.uvm.edu/> on line.



Lois Howe McClure,
Charlotte resident and
Center on Aging supporter

"It's so appropriate that VT should take a leadership role with aging initiatives such as the Center on Aging. As a small state with the second oldest population in the country, we are capable of leading the way to improve the lives of elders here and elsewhere."

RESEARCH NOTES

Paul Newhouse, Associate Director, Research

The second annual Research Day is scheduled for April 7, 2011 at the atrium in the Given Building at UVM. This free event is open to the public and showcases research related to aging by faculty and students from UVM and area institutions. This year's Research Day will feature keynote speaker Dr. Carol Ryff, professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and director of the Institute on Aging at that institution.

In 2010, more than 25 presenters participated, sharing a broad array of research topics, including the following:

- Transportation and Rural Elders
- Nutrition and Social Eating Habits Among Seniors Living Independently

- Assessing Barriers to Utilization of Adult Daycare Centers in a Rural County
- The Impact of High-Calorie-Expenditure Exercise on Quality of Life in Older Adults with Coronary Heart Disease
- Supporting Age Diversity in Nursing: An Examination of Work Patterns in the Oldest RN Cohorts

**You are invited to join our Aging Research List Serv
Please go to our website at www.uvm.edu/~ctraging
and click on COA Research List Serv
in the left-hand column**

POLICY NOTES

Barbara McIntosh, Associate Director, Policy

The Vermont public policy landscape regarding aging is changing, and clearly this is a time to reflect on priorities, collaboration, and coordination.

Health care is in the forefront for a number of reasons including economics, longevity, increases in some health conditions, and legislative changes. Governor Shumlin, along with the three members of Vermont's congressional delegation, Senators Patrick Leahy and Bernie Sanders and Representative Peter Welch, recently pledged to work for speedy and dramatic healthcare reform in the state. They noted that success in this effort depends, in part, on being granted federal approval to move forward with a single-payer system and resisting insurance industry pressures.

The Governor's Commission on Healthy Aging is also meeting to revise the executive order and develop priorities

for the future. The Governor's Commission on Healthy Aging priority list for 2011 includes the following:

- Develop a list of best practices, information sheets, and communication tools for municipalities, cities, and towns to promote healthy aging.
- Continue the Governor's Healthy Aging Awards.
- Work with Commission members and the Commission representative to the UVM Center on Aging to develop recommendations and guidance to the Center.
- Work with the Blueprint for Health staff to understand the role of healthy aging in Blueprint activities.
- Explore the opportunities and implications of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA).

Vermont has long been known for its organizations' cooperation and collaboration around aging issues. This was again evident as the following people and organizations provided long-term care information to the Vermont Senate Health and Welfare Committee: PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly), Dolly Fleming; Independent Home Care Associations, Rachel Lee Cummings; Caregiver Initiative, Susan Gordon; Housing, Nancy Eldridge; Vermont Association of Adult Day Services (VAADS), Sue Chase;- Adult Day, Senior Center Association, Gail Moreau; Area Agencies on Aging, Ken Gordon and Joyce Lemire; Vermont Health Care Association (VHCA), Laura Pelosi; Nursing Homes and Residential Care, Vermont Assembly of Home Health Agencies (VAHHA), Peter Cobb; Home Health and Vermont Association of Hospitals and Health Systems (VAHHS), Bea Grausse. The intent of the meeting was to provide the legislators with nonpartisan background information on the issues surrounding long-term care and aging in Vermont.

MEET THE CENTER ON AGING FELLOWS

Commitment. Openness. Respect. These are words that Molly Dugan of Cathedral Square Corporation used to describe **Maggie Holmes** and **Susan Varga**, the Center on Aging Geriatric Fellows. As Project Manager for Cathedral Square's collaborative Support and Services at Home: A Care Partnership (formerly Seniors Aging Safely at Home and generally known as SASH), Molly has worked closely with both women over the past 2 years, first with Maggie and currently with Susan.

Maggie Holmes, the Center on Aging 2009 Geriatric Fellow, is currently a fourth year UVM medical student. The Hinesburg native chose to study medicine both to learn about human health and disease and to play a role in helping people improve their health and well-being. When asked why she took a year off from medical school to be a Center on Aging Fellow, Maggie replied that she had been considering geriatric psychiatry and wanted to expand her knowledge of geriatrics.

(Center on Aging Fellows, continued)

Maggie found that the knowledge of health and disease gained in medical school enabled her to contribute more fully to the SASH program. It also facilitated her extensive literature review and analysis of programs related to chronic disease, falls prevention, exercise, and nutrition. Maggie then created a database of evidence-based practices for the SASH program.

Through her experience with SASH, Maggie came to understand what it takes to initiate a care partnership involving multiple organizations. She learned about planning, coordination, communication, grant writing, and policy making. More important to Maggie, however, is what she learned about, and from, the seniors themselves. She developed a close relationship with many of these residents of Heineburg Senior Housing in Burlington, the pilot SASH site.

Maggie shared this memory: *"I remember how kind everyone was at Heineburg. The residents were always so helpful! I remember coming into the building one time with a bandage on my finger since I had accidentally cut myself that morning when slicing a bagel. Everyone was so concerned and full of advice! It definitely made me feel better. It also speaks to how lucky I was to work with such lovely people."*

Maggie highly recommended the program for medical students considering applying to be a Center on Aging Fellow.

Susan Varga is the Center on Aging 2010 Geriatric Fellow. Originally from Romania, Susan has lived in Vermont since childhood. In March, she will be returning to her UVM medical studies as a fourth year student. Susan decided to become a physician because *"I think fundamentally medicine is a very human profession—filled with all of its joys and sufferings—and I have always been drawn to connect to others through that shared spectrum of experience."* Susan, who is considering a career in geriatric psychiatry, became a Geriatric Fellow to get to know the population better.

Susan stated that professionalism and communication are the skills learned in medical school that are most applicable to the SASH program. She also emphasized the value of a patient-centered orientation because SASH involves working very closely with the participants. Through SASH, Susan has learned specific skills, such as falls risk assessment, and she

has also become aware of the challenges and needs of the aging population, such as the prevalence of depression and cognitive changes and the importance of addressing these issues. Through the SASH initiative, Susan has seen how community resources can be used to help individuals.

In addition to registering Heineburg residents for SASH, performing initial assessments, and helping to create an individualized Healthy Aging Plan based on each participant's needs, Susan led a 12-week program entitled Eat Better Move More. This evidence-based program furnished information on nutrition and health issues, encouraged active discussion among SASH participants, and included indoor or outdoor exercise. Susan said that the popularity of the program led more Heineburg residents to sign up for SASH.

Like Maggie, Susan has developed close relationships with some of the Heineburg residents. Susan told the story of one resident who was bedbound, socially withdrawn, afraid to walk, and chronically ill with diabetes, obesity, and hypertension. Susan gently encouraged this resident to get out of bed, and they became friends while walking together regularly, just a few feet at first and ultimately, months later, out of the building to the Heineburg Senior Center next door. With her newfound confidence, the resident started attending the Eat Better Move More program and gradually became more socially and physically active. Today, she is able to move around on her own and plays a vital role in the Heineburg community.

The contributions of the Center on Aging Fellows to the SASH program cannot be overstated. Molly emphasized the Fellows' willingness to jump in and take on whatever task was needed to move the new SASH model forward. She commended their openness to implementing a new model of care, their commitment to the initiative, their role as staff extenders, and their interest in working directly with SASH participants. Molly noted that the Fellows' enthusiasm and respect for the SASH participants have been reciprocated, and as a result, close relationships have developed between the Fellows and some of the Heineburg residents. She stated that the Fellows have become part of the fabric of the model and part of Heineburg. The SASH participants have given the Fellows a greater understanding of the strengths and chal-

(Center on Aging Fellows, continued)

lenges of aging, and the Fellows, in turn, have brought fresh ideas, evidence-based practices for health and wellness, and a genuine desire to connect with the residents on a personal level. Molly is pleased to report that the Fellows' participation in SASH has been, and continues to be, a shared experience of value to everyone in the program. Thank you, Maggie Holmes and Susan Varga!

For more information on the SASH program:
www.cathedralsquare.org

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CENTER ON AGING

There are many opportunities to help further the Center on Aging's important work through tax deductible contributions. Some of those include:

- **Underwriting the Gerontology Symposia:** This helps keep registration fees at \$10.
- **Support for Geriatric Fellows:** Second year medical students commit to a year-long program involving the Support and Services at Home: A Care Partnership (formerly Seniors Aging Safely at Home) initiative.
- **Powerful Tools for Caregivers training:** Support is needed to bring trainers to Vermont to train instructors statewide to present this 6-week caregiver course.

If you would like to help support the Center on Aging, please contact Jeanne Hutchins at (802) 656-0292 or Jeanne.Hutchins@uvm.edu.

MEET GERONTOLOGY STUDENT MARSHA CAMP

Current student **Marsha E. Camp** recently took the time to describe her unusual background and to share her reasons for pursuing the UVM Certificate in Gerontology:

I come from a funeral family in the Rutland Area, where my family operated a small rural funeral home. In 1982 I went back to college after completing my UVM B.A. in history, to a small school in Boston called the New England Institute of Applied Arts and Sciences and received a diploma and became licensed as a funeral director and embalmer in Vermont. I have always had great interest in death and dying, in particular the work of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. After finishing my M.Ed., I was hungry to keep studying something that I was passionate about. I now work in the area of higher education disability services here at UVM and had the great fortune of studying with Dr. Brookes Cowan in the Sociology Department for a great deal of my certificate coursework.

Marsha described the close fit between the certificate coursework and her initial interest in aging:

I enjoyed the fact that I could pretty much choose relevant courses that fit my work schedule. I will be finished with my certificate this summer. My interest in aging stemmed from my work in the funeral industry and from the fact that I am getting older (now 53) and my father and aunts and uncles were aging as well. The question of how to age well seems very relevant to me, my friends, and family. My coursework has included an internship with the Madison-Dean Initiative at the Visiting Nurse Association, the Social Organization of Death and Dying, Seminar in End of Life Care, Aging and Adaptation, and the Philosophy of Death and Dying.

The Certificate in Gerontology program includes coursework, classroom presentations, and an internship in the field. When asked to describe the most valuable learning opportunities she has encountered so far in this program, Marsha had this to say:

My internship with Madison-Dean in-

troducted me to the world of palliative care and hospice. I have found these to be very helpful with friends and family who have become ill and then died. I wrote a paper on access to these services and programs and found that ethnic and racial factors limit access to quality end of life care. In Mabel Schroeder, who discussed the challenges and joys of living for 95, now 96, years. Her presentation was eye opening and helped me to better understand the needs of our aging population

How can the study of gerontology better serve our aging population? Marsha offered these insights and emphasized the need to rethink our approach to aging in response to this emerging demographic shift:

The baby boomer generation is now entering the young-old cohort (65 to 74), and our society and healthcare systems have not figured out how they and the older cohorts will be supported and cared for in an ever changing society that has become more mobile and less connected. I believe that the changes we will need to make will come from people who are

*(Marsha Camp, continued)
connected to the community and have the ability to make sweeping changes in how we think about aging. I don't want aging to continue to be medicalized when it is a normal process.*

Marsha was asked how she hoped to apply what she had learned in the certificate program. Evident in her reply is her dedication to learning and her lifelong interest in aging and dying:

The Gerontology Certificate for now will be added to my resume and waits for a time when a position that involves disability and aging finds its way to me. In the meantime, I will continue to take courses and write about my experiences with aging, death, and dying.

VT NEWS

Vermont Senior Games Association Reorganized

The Vermont Senior Games Association (VSGA), formerly the Green Mountain Senior Games, entered its 28th year with a newly elected group of officers, board of directors, and a change in the organization's name. The revitalized organization plans to expand its offering significantly to the Vermont aged 50-plus community.

Affiliated with the Vermont Govern-

nor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports and a member of the National Senior Games Association (NSGA), the VSGA provides both competitive and noncompetitive sports-oriented programs and activities. This summer, the VSGA will conduct state championships in 15 different games ranging from track and field, swimming, bicycling, triathlon, to tennis, basketball, and running road races. On even-numbered years, the state champions also qualify to participate in the NSGA

national summer games championships, which will be held in Houston this June and in Cleveland in 2013.

The mission of the VSGA is to encourage all Vermont residents aged 50 and over to gain healthy aging, a high quality lifestyle, and well-being by being physically active. Whether through participation in a walking program or in our competitive sports, we base our activities on good fellowship and having fun.

For a copy of the VSGA newsletter or for more information, please contact Don Kjelleren at (802) 985-2766

Dr. Susan Wehry Named DAIL Commissioner

Dr. Susan Wehry was appointed as Commissioner of the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living, also known as DAIL, by Governor Peter Shumlin. DAIL is part of the Agency of Human Services. The department provides services to Vermonters over 60 and those with a disability. Wehry, who lives in Burlington, is a geriatric psychiatrist and consultant. She is also a clinical associate professor at UVM's College of Medicine and an attending physician with the Department of Neurology at Fletcher Allen Health Care.

HIGHLIGHT CORNER

Volunteers for the Center on Aging

Isn't technology great? The Center on Aging began working with United Way to seek out volunteers to assist with the many tasks and opportunities the Center encounters.

Our first two volunteers are our webmasters. Fred Brown lives in Cabot, Vermont and Frankie Bailey lives in Lake Wood Ranch, Florida. They've never been to the Center on Aging and they've never met the staff face to face. All of our communications are via email. The two work together to post information, keep the website current and make sure it's looking great. They are a wonderful resource and a virtual member of the Center on Aging team. The production of this first edition of our newsletter was so much easier thanks to the efforts of two more volunteers. Holly Lukens put to work her background in editing, writing and gerontology as our newsletter editor. Annie McCormick stepped forward with her graphic design skills to create the brochure design for our upcoming symposium and the format for our newsletter. Their enthusiasm and talents are much appreciated.

To view our other volunteer opportunities go to:

<http://volunteer.truist.com/chittenden/org/opp.aspx?agency>