



# THE MINKA MONTHLY

Official Newsletter for the Minka Learning Lab for Living Well



## NATIONAL FAMILY CAREGIVERS MONTH IN NOVEMBER!

By Dr. Lisa Fournier, DSL, MPM,  
Project Coordinator, Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program

Being a caregiver is a tough job. November is the month to consider the people who lovingly provide assistance and care to friends, neighbors and loved ones. Whether doctor visits, cleaning the house, getting groceries or providing companionship, caregivers are there for millions of people. The Minka Learning Lab, Dementia Friendly Rockport and Dementia Friendly Petersburg are specifically recognizing the people who provide care for people living with dementia - the care partners. A newer term, a care partner means reciprocating health, wellness and care with your loved one.

We start on November 1 with a "Dementia Overview" for the first week. Workshops include the Alzheimer's Association "10 Warning Signs," the importance of an early diagnosis by Deaconess Health Clinic and how to use storytelling to engage both the care partner and person with dementia.

**Continuation on Page 2 ...**

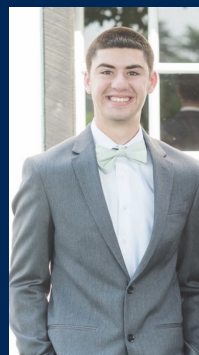
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# EDITOR CORNER

## THE END

By Thomas Engels, Intern



As many of you might know, I am graduating in December, so this will be my last newsletter as the editor for the *Minka Monthly*. When I started this internship back in January, I had no idea how much I would learn. This has been an incredible experience, and I am extremely heartbroken to be leaving. During the past year, I have gained a lot of valuable experience that I am looking forward to using in the future. Although I am a marketing major, I enjoyed expanding my knowledge on dementia, aging, advance care planning and living-in-place. Lastly, I would like to thank Lisa, Mary, Katie and the Minka Advisory Board for helping to expand my knowledge for the future. I would not have been successful in this role without their guidance.

Do not worry! The *Minka Monthly* will be continuing with a new intern. Over the last few months, I have been working with Maggie McNeely. She is excited to be taking over the editor position of the *Minka Monthly* until she graduates. Welcome Maggie!

Thank you all for this memorable opportunity!

This month's newsletter contains articles about National Family Caregiver Month. Enjoy!

**Continuation from page 1:** In addition, we are offering a Dementia Live simulation, where you can experience what it would be like to have dementia. The second week's theme is "Caregiver Health" from November 8-14. The workshops for the week include the Alzheimer's Association "Healthy Living for Your Brain and Body," how to become a Dementia Friend by Southwestern Indiana Regional Council on Aging and a food demonstration and information on dementia risk reduction strategies. "Advance Care Planning & Community Resources" is the theme for Week 3. We will hear from USI faculty members and Amedisys on tools and programs for advance care planning and end-of-life care. In addition, we will provide information on community resources. There are many more workshops being offered during these three weeks. Please join us! For more information and to register, please visit the USI Center for Health Aging and Wellness [website](#). Also, you can see a printed version of the Calendar on page 7.

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## TWO SIDES OF CAREGIVING

By Robin Arnold, Clinical Quality Improvement Analyst

Caregiving is a term that is often used without a true understanding of its meaning. When I was in college, I accepted a job caring for a lady with Parkinson's disease. She was a charismatic 69 year old bound to a wheelchair and unable to care for herself. At 20, I found myself mesmerized by her zest for life despite the debilitating condition that robbed her of all independence. This was foreign territory that I quickly felt compelled to be a part of. The physical side of caregiving was the priority, but my eyes were being opened to the impact this also had on her emotional well-being. Fostering a relationship, focused on recounting memories, needed to be a priority for me to understand who she was. I looked forward to our encounters of gazing at old pictures, reminiscing about her life and watching her face illuminate when I walked into the room.

Fast forward to 2018, when I once again found myself in the caregiver role but this time was not by choice. My mother was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor and so began the transition to a path of uncertainty. My brother, father and I were forced to immediately re-prioritize our lives overnight. I quickly realized how vastly different caring for a family member was. Not only was I now the caregiver, I was also still the daughter.

Studies have shown that at some point in our lives, we will all be faced with caregiving in some capacity. Without proper education, being prepared to advocate on the significance of both the emotional and physical needs of the individual can be challenging. My mission is to spread awareness with compassion, courteous goodwill and a servant's heart.



"Without proper education, being prepared to advocate on the significance of both the emotional and physical needs of the individual can be challenging." — Robin Arnold, Clinical Quality Improvement Analyst

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## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

### Support Group for Student Caregivers

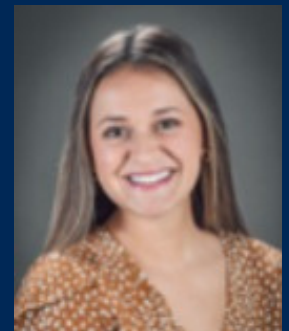
By Maddie Moore, Intern

My name is Maddie Moore, an intern at the USI GWEP. I have recently started a support group for student caregivers. Taking on the role of caregiving alone is extremely difficult. Being a student on top of that can seem nearly impossible. Oftentimes, students are overlooked as caregivers in need of resources and support. In reality, it is one of the toughest ages to take on such a huge role. Caregivers often feel overwhelmed and alone, in need of someone to talk to. Caregivers need so much more attention and support than they realize.

Our support group is a safe space for students to talk to others in similar situations and to be able to speak freely. Anyone is welcome, whether your parent, neighbor, friend or loved one is living with dementia.

We want student caregivers to understand that they are not alone!

*The student support group is free of cost and is held the second Thursday of every month at 4:00 p.m. at the Minka house behind Education Center. The next one is on November 11.*



"Our support group is a safe space for students to talk to others in similar situations and to be able to speak freely." — Maddie Moore, Intern

# GERO 101

## WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO LIVE WITH DEMENTIA?

By Elizabeth Lovellette, Intern

The Dementia Live experience is a hands-on process that guides participants through the simulation of living with dementia. The program is supposed to be difficult for the participants to give them insights into the world of a person living with dementia. Anyone is allowed to participate in this experience. There is no test. It is to experience life with dementia.

Cognitive disorders are complex to navigate as they differ from person to person. Dementia is a slow progression that can take time for a formal diagnosis in individuals. Having a diagnosis is crucial as it can alter the level of care one receives. In addition, it allows for active participation in defining one's wishes for quality of life with their loved ones.

Caregiving is a difficult job. Therefore, as a country, we should work to prioritize the mental and physical well-being of our caregivers. The health of these caregivers should be a priority if they are paid or not. When immersed in the dementia live experience, it is the hope that each participant takes away a new perspective on living with dementia. There are many different layers that affect society's interpretation of dementia. Policy, education, a caregiver's knowledge base, empathy levels and more all play a role in what might appear as a simple diagnosis.

*Join us on November 2 at 1:00 p.m. at the Minka Learning Lab to participate in the Dementia Live Experience. You must pre-register [here](#) (limit 5)*

*In addition, learn from a provider why early diagnosis is important on November 3, noon, Zoom. To register click [here](#).*

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## TECH & U

### MINKA AND THE AGING EXPERIENCE

By Maggie McNeely, Intern

The telepresence robot, or "Shuri", is a unique asset that can be found in the Minka Learning Lab for Living Well. It is a robot that stands approximately five feet tall and has a tablet screen that simulates a head. This machine functions similarly to a zoom call on any other device, except Shuri allows the person making a call to move around the space. Simply use the direction arrows on your computer or laptop to direct the two-wheeled robot around your house or apartment! This can be of use especially for caregivers who are not always able to be at the house of the person they are providing care for. For example, the person requiring care hears a strange beeping noise coming from somewhere in the home but is not able to place what it is or how to make it stop.



"When immersed in the dementia live experience, it is the hope that each participant takes away a new perspective on living with dementia." - Elizabeth Lovellette



"This can be of use especially for caregivers who are not always able to be at the house of the person they are providing care for." - Maggie McNeely, Intern



They can then call their caregiver to have them log on to the robot and deduce where the sound is coming from by having Shuri investigate. The caregiver can then communicate through Shuri to instruct the person on what to do. This is just one example of a person requiring care to live in place may need and allows an easier mode of access for the caregiver to provide help.

*Although we do not have a specific program offering in November. Please drop by or register for a Minka Learning Lab tour to interact with smart home technology. More information can be found [here](#).*

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## LET'S TALK ABOUT DEMENTIA THE GENUINE GIFT OF THANK YOU

By Dr. Lisa Fournier, DSL, MPM,  
Project Coordinator, Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program

Caregiving or care partnering for a person with dementia can feel like a thankless job. Perhaps a sibling is removed from the situation and you are left with the bulk of the work or people take for granted you are a "natural" at it - whatever that is supposed to mean. The gratitude may never appear or worse the "better you than me" phrase crops up in conversations. Unfortunately, a care partner may never hear these words from those who "should" say it.

Thank you is a phrase that pays in dividends. In leadership, one learns thank you can shift an environment to one of motivation, inspiration and dedication. Without these two simple words, people can feel disregarded and taken for granted. What if care partners started saying "thank you" to their loved one with dementia? What would happen?

I was the care partner of my mom, who lived with Alzheimer's Disease for 14 years. I am grateful for that time. Don't misunderstand, it was a difficult journey. However, I got to the point of telling my mom, "thank you for letting me take care of you." You would see this huge smile come across her face and she would say something like "I love you, honey." That was her thank you, full of love and care. An equal gift of care partnering.

As care partners, perhaps it would be nice to hear a thank you from some of the people who "should" be saying it. However, the true motivating and inspirational thank you may come from the person who you are giving hours of compassion and care to. It pays back in dividends. Thank you to all of the care partners who walk an incredible path with their loved one.

*Help out those care partners around you. Learn more about being a Dementia Friend on November 9, noon, Zoom. To register click [here](#).*



"Care partnering is considering each other equally in health, wellness and care." - Lisa Fournier, DSL, MPM, Project Coordinator, Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program

# LIVING WELL

## FAMILY CAREGIVING

By Dr. Kathy Elpers, Professor of Social Work

As our population ages, family caregivers or care partners play a necessary and important role in providing for the care, support and well-being of older adults. Families' involvement in the care of aging parents is vital, as a society cannot replace or be the sole entity responsible for their care. This has been especially challenging during the pandemic with social isolation for the older adult and caregiver.

Rosalynn Carter, the wife of former president Jimmy Carter, has stated, "There are only four kinds of people in the world: those who have been caregivers, those who currently are caregivers, those who will be caregivers, and those who will need caregivers." Everyone will either need care or know of someone who will need care at some point in their lives. It is a well-known fact that we live in an aging society. According to the 2010 Census, 13% of the population in the United States was 65 and older. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that the population of individuals age 65 and older will be 92 million in 2060, which means that one out of every five persons will be 65 or older.

Caregiving in the U.S. 2020, a report published by the National Alliance for Caregiving in collaboration with the American Association of Retired Persons, states an increase in the number of unpaid family caregivers will increase from 43.5 million in 2015 to 53 million in 2020. It is reported that more than one out of five or 20% of all American adults are providing unpaid care to elders age 50 and older. The majority are comprised of women (61%) and males (39%). The estimated economic value of these caregivers' unpaid contributions was approximately \$470 billion in 2017 (AARP Public Policy Institute).

Anyone who has or is currently a caregiver or care partner understands the blessings and challenges of caring for an aging parent, relative or an older person. Caregivers or care partners want to provide care, but also struggle with how to balance caregiving duties with other responsibilities, such as work and their own families. In addition, it is not easy for the elder person to become dependent on others for care. As a result, sometimes conflict occurs, which can make caregivers feel unappreciated and adds to the stress of caregiving.

We need to develop a culture of care for our elders and support for caregivers or care partners. It is common for caregivers to feel isolated and unaware of the resources available in the community, such as Southwestern Indiana Regional Council Association. and More, home health care agencies, mental health services, educational programs, financial assistance programs and support groups.



"Caregivers or care partners want to provide care, but also struggle with how to balance caregiving duties with other responsibilities, such as work and their own families." — Dr. Kathy Elpers, Professor of Social Work

Our community needs to come together collaboratively to support our older adults and family caregivers. There are so many issues that impact both caregivers or care partners and the elder recipients that this article cannot begin to cover all of them. More information can be found on Internet websites such as [Family Caregiving Alliance](#). In addition, the [Alzheimer's Association](#) and the [U.S. Department of Health & Human Services](#) provide resources for families caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease.

Locally, [SWIRCA & More's website](#) has a wealth of information related to caregiving, and also has information on how to apply for services through the National Family Caregiver Support Program. For more information, call SWIRCA & More's Aging and Disability Resource Center at 812-464-7817.

Please see the [Calendar of Events for National Family Caregivers Month](#). Share with others and encourage attendance to learn more about caregiving for those with dementia!



Dr. Kathy Elpers is a member of the advisory council for the Center for Healthy Aging and Wellness and the planning committee for the Mid-America Institute on Aging, co-sponsored by the University of Southern Indiana and SWIRCA & More. More information [here](#).



## EVENTS CALENDAR

# November National Family Caregivers Month

Caregivers do so much for their loved ones. Let's recognize their dedication!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>1</b> <b>Welcome To National Family Caregiver's Month!</b> 12-1 p.m. CT <i>Lisa Fournier, USI</i>	<b>2</b> <b>10 Warning Signs of Dementia</b> 12-1 p.m. CT <i>Alzheimer's Association</i> <b>Dementia Live Experience @ The MINKA</b> 1-2 p.m. CT <i>USI GWEP</i>	<b>3</b> <b>Why Early Diagnosis is important</b> 12-1 p.m. CT <i>Deaconess Health Provider</i>	<b>4</b> <b>What Should You Know Next? Referrals &amp; Resources</b> 12-1 p.m. CT <i>Robin Arnold, Deaconess Health</i>	<b>5</b> <b>Creating Dementia Awareness through Storytelling</b> 12-1 p.m. CT <i>Ijfa Zhulamanova, USI</i> <b>Alzheimer's: the Caregivers Perspective Discussion (Live)</b> 2-3 p.m. CT	<b>6</b> <b>Alzheimer's: the Caregivers Perspective Discussion</b> <b>Join us on Facebook:</b> facebook.com/DementiaFriendlyUSI <i>Lisa Fournier, USI</i>
<b>7</b> <b>Alzheimer's: the Caregiver's Perspective Discussion</b> <b>Join us on Facebook:</b> facebook.com/DementiaFriendlyUSI <i>Lisa Fournier, USI</i>	<b>8</b> <b>Healthy Living for Your Brain and Body</b> 12-1 p.m. CT <i>Alzheimer's Association</i>	<b>9</b> <b>Be a Friend! Dementia Friends Indiana</b> 12-1 p.m. CT <i>Linda Wright, SWIRCA</i>	<b>10</b> <b>Demonstration: Healthy Eating for a Healthy Mind!</b> 12-1 p.m. CT <i>Elizabeth Kamas, USI</i>	<b>11</b> <b>The Importance of Taking a Break from Caregiving</b> 12-1 p.m. CT <i>Lisa Fournier, USI</i> <b>Student Support Group at the MINKA Learning Lab</b> 4-5 p.m. CT <i>Maddie Moore, USI Student</i>	<b>12</b> <b>Exercise for Brain Health</b> 12-1 p.m. CT <i>Stephanie Walden- Schwake, USI</i>	<b>13</b> <b>Alzheimer's Association's Family Conference</b> 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. <b>Brain Foods for Brain Health</b> <b>Join us on Facebook:</b> facebook.com/DementiaFriendlyUSI
<b>14</b> <b>Brain Foods for Brain Health</b> <b>Join us in Facebook:</b> facebook.com/DementiaFriendlyUSI	<b>15</b> <b>PREPARE</b> 10-11 a.m. CT <i>Kevin Valadares, USI</i>	<b>16</b> <b>Advance Care Planning and Dementia</b> 12-1 p.m. CT <i>Amarda Overby, Amedisys</i>	<b>17</b> <b>Respecting Choices</b> 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. CT <i>Kevin Valadares, USI</i>	<b>18</b> <b>Community Resources</b> 11 a.m. - 12 p.m. CT <i>Community Organizations</i>	<b>19</b> <b>Caregivers Month Wrap-up</b> Recording: USI.edu/caregiversmonth	

Free Virtual Learning!

For more info and to register: [www.usi.edu/caregiversmonth](http://www.usi.edu/caregiversmonth)

# SPOTLIGHT

## MINKA WINS NAM AWARD

By Dr. Lisa Fournier, DSL, MPM

Project Coordinator, Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program

We are super excited here at the Minka Learning Lab for Living Well for USI to be recognized as a U.S. National Academy of Medicine award recipient! The \$50,000 award will be used to research and develop an artificial intelligence prototype. "Joi," a virtual assistant, helps people with dementia improve emotional well-being and live in place longer. The Healthy Longevity Global Competition is an international movement to extend human health span by accelerating research, innovation and entrepreneurship for people to live and enjoy their lives into their later years.

[See this article in USI Communications!](#)

[More information about the competition](#)

[More information about the project](#)

*Information and materials reported in this Minka Monthly were supported by the National Academy of Medicine. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Academy of Medicine.*



"The \$50,000 award will be used to research and develop an artificial intelligence prototype."  
— Dr. Lisa Fournier, DSL, MPM, Project Coordinator, Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program

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## PAST NEWSLETTERS

Click [here](#) to view all previous Minka Monthly Newsletters.

## SOCIAL MEDIA



To follow the Minka Instagram page, visit [instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com)



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## MINKA VISION STATEMENT

Aging well is personal. Each of us expects to live where we want and how we want as we go through life. Our homes are not always set-up for aging well. In addition, our communities may be stifled by issues with access to healthcare, crime and violence, food insecurity, inclusion, age discrimination and more. The Center for Healthy Aging and Wellness wants to transform southwest Indiana by creating a Learning Lab for Living Well housed in the Minka house at USI. The Learning Lab for Living Well offers an interdisciplinary focus to involve students, faculty and campus stakeholders in research, healthcare leadership development, and simulations that address challenges for living-in-place and open health profession career opportunities. In addition, the Learning Lab for Living Well provides everyone in the local community a place to learn about and to adapt home innovations for living-in-place. Home innovations designed to integrate smart home technology, health coaching and learning workshops for a personalized, adaptable approach to aging well. The Center for Healthy Aging and Wellness at USI looks to offer a blueprint for other rural communities to address social determinants of health.