



THE MINKA MONTHLY

Official Newsletter for the Minka Learning Lab for Living Well



AURORA SERVES THE MOST VULNERABLE

By Zachary Heronemus, Executive Director Aurora, Inc.

Founded in 1988, Aurora leads the way in our community to prevent and end homelessness. Beginning as a coalition of individuals and organizations working for those experiencing homelessness, Aurora has grown into an independent organization that offers many programs to ensure those without a place to call home are not forgotten.

Each year, over 400 men, women, children and seniors experience homelessness in Evansville and Vanderburgh County. To assist the most vulnerable, Aurora deploys a variety of housing assistance programs that provide stability and wrap-around case management tailored to the needs of the individual or family. Aurora's social workers strive to ensure our clients not only have safe, decent housing, but also have resources to be self-sufficient and successful when they exit our programs.

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EDITOR CORNER

HONORED TO BE THE NEW EDITOR

By Maggie McNeely, Intern



Hello everyone! My name is Maggie McNeely, and I am honored to be the new editor of this newsletter for the Minka Learning Lab for Living Well. A bit about me - I am double majoring in sociology and marketing. The added major in marketing was a little short notice, so I am thrilled to be able to gain real-world experience through this Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program internship. I have a heart for helping the older generation, having worked as a certified nursing assistant in an assisted living facility for three years. I realized that my passion was not in healthcare though, as much as it is in marketing. I am very grateful to have found a job position that combines my past experience with my future aspirations.

In addition to editing the newsletter, I am leading the social media accounts for the Minka. Now, I do two separate types of posts on both Facebook and Instagram. In these weekly posts, I feature the technology we are incorporating at the Minka to help adults better live in place. On Instagram, Wellness topics are posted on Wednesday to showcase random health facts. On Facebook, for November National Caregivers Month, we continue to raise awareness for dementia by sharing facts, statistics and more to bring to light an incurable disease affecting a large portion of the population. I encourage everyone to follow both accounts @usiminkalearninglab!

I am looking forward to working at the Minka Learning Lab for Living Well to expand my knowledge of the marketing field and to help aid in the development and research of using technology to help the aging population. I cannot wait to see what the next semester has in store!

If interested in contributing to this newsletter, please contact Maggie McNeely at mrmcneely@eagles.usi.edu

Continuation from page 1: As we focus on the future of our work and the population we serve, be aware that our community has the highest rate of homelessness per capita in the state of Indiana. Over the past 5 years, Aurora, in partnership with ECHO Housing, has drastically reduced the number of people deemed chronically homeless from approximately 140 to 35. These individuals have spent 12 months or more, either consecutively or through a three to four-year period. We feel confident that we will reach functional zero in regard to our chronically homeless population within 2022.

With this milestone in reach, Aurora will move the needle greater in the community by working to prevent and drastically reduce the time our most vulnerable experience homelessness—whether they be on the street or in shelter.

To learn more about Aurora and how you can help raise awareness and lend support, please visit www.auroraevansville.org. If interested in touring Aurora, please contact Zac Heronemus at 812-901-1042.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

By Dr. Elissa T. Mitchell, Associate Professor of Social Work

"Connections between generations are essential for the mental health and stability of a nation." This statement, from cultural anthropologist, Margaret Mead, has never been more true.

There is an abundance of research and awareness around people living longer lives and whether the medical and social service sectors will be able to support the resulting burden of care. There is less attention given to the positive aspect of having a large and diverse population of people with time, experience, and wisdom to offer younger generations. People are living longer than ever before and many older adults are healthier than the previous generation, enabling them to remain active and engaged in their later years. Those in younger generations have abilities and skills to contribute as well, but could often benefit from support and guidance from elders. Indeed, a key ingredient for positive youth development and resilience is a relationship with a devoted adult.

Research has demonstrated this in many different contexts and settings. In fact, having caring relationships is linked to health and well-being at all stages of the lifespan. Older adults who have meaningful relationships and the opportunity to engage in their communities are more likely to report being happy and often have more positive mental and physical health outcomes. Bringing the generations together can result in positive outcomes for all. As we are thinking about healthy aging, let's not forget the younger generations and the mutual benefits that can emerge when connections between generations are formed. We all want to be engaged and feel valued, have meaningful relationships, and be seen as having something to contribute. By facilitating and engaging in intergenerational relationships, everyone benefits.

Dr. Elissa T. Mitchell is an Associate Professor of Social Work, Director of the Center for Social Justice Education, and a member of the MINKA Advisory Board.



"People are living longer than ever before and many older adults are healthier than the previous generation, enabling them to remain active and engaged in their later years." - Dr. Elissa T. Mitchell, Associate Professor of Social Work

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT HOW TO GIVE BACK THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

By Thomas Engels, Intern

November has started and the holidays are right around the corner. During this time, many people gather to celebrate the season. Not everyone is as fortunate as others, so here are some ways you can give back locally this year.

The first place to consider is donating to Aurora Evansville. Aurora is a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving the homeless and near homeless in the greater Evansville area.

This includes the older population in the community. Currently, the shelter needs sleeping bags, backpacks, cleaning supplies, personal hygiene items and laundry detergent. Aurora also has a volunteer program for people to help at the shelter that can be found on their [website](#).

Next, the [Evansville Rescue Mission](#) aids the Tri-State by providing food, shelter and clothing. Some volunteer opportunities include serving meals, working at the donation center and assisting in the administrative office. Evansville Rescue Mission currently needs a variety of frozen meat, canned vegetables, canned fruit and plastic ware.

Another local place to give back is the [Tri-State Food Bank](#). Their mission is to improve the quality of life for our community's food-insecure families and children by providing adequate food and nutrition through their network of local charities and organizations feeding the hungry. They are currently hosting a virtual food drive for people to participate in to provide money for food. Volunteers are also welcome to help with packing bags or boxes for mobile food distribution, sorting donated items, packing older adult meal boxes and general cleaning.

Consider giving back locally this holiday season! For further information, view each organizations website.

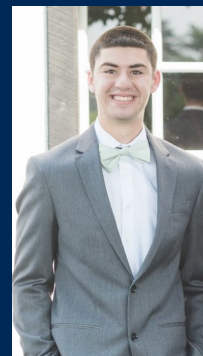
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COOKING SAFELY THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

By Maggie McNeely, Intern

This holiday season is particularly a special time because of the gathering of families and sharing in meals enjoyed while together. Undoubtedly, there will be lots of cooking in homes across the country, and it is important to practice safety in the kitchen. Kitchens can be very dangerous places considering the number of opportunities there are for fires, burns, cuts and other injuries or damages. Cooking on an electric or gas stovetop can lead to many injuries if one isn't fully aware and cautious of what they are doing.

One piece of kitchen technology that is found in the Minka Learning Lab for Living Well is a conduction stovetop. A conduction stovetop works using conduction between the stovetop and the pan only. Conduction is the process through which heat is conveyed through a substance, in this case it is being conveyed through the special cooking pots. This means that the stove itself doesn't get hot, which decreases the risk of getting burned and eliminates the chance of accidentally melting or burning non-heat safe items. Also, if a pot is not on the burner the stovetop will not work, so even if it is accidentally left on, there is no danger. Conduction stovetops do require special pots and pans. Here at the Minka Learning Lab for Living Well, it is our goal to help people learn about living-in-place and what that means for them. It is important, as people age, that they are able to continue making food for themselves and their loved ones thanks to new technology that makes kitchens safer.



"Not everyone is as fortunate as others, so here are some ways you can give back locally this year." - Thomas Engels



"Kitchens can be very dangerous places considering the number of opportunities there are for fires, burns, cuts, and other injuries or damages." - Maggie McNeely, Intern

LET'S TALK ABOUT DEMENTIA

LEARNING AT NOVEMBER'S NATIONAL FAMILY CAREGIVER'S MONTH

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

What a fantastic learning month for National Family Caregiver's Month as we honor the care partners and those living with dementia. As a previous care partner for my mom, it was the hardest job I've ever done. In the same breath, I can say I am blessed by the gift of getting to really know my mom throughout our Alzheimer's Disease journey. This month is dedicated to those who take on the enormous responsibility of taking care of and protecting their loved one at the expense of their own well-being. The USI GWEP Team thanks our partners, Dementia Friendly Petersburg, Dementia Friendly Rockport and Dementia Friendly USI Community for their support!

Week 1 started off by learning more about dementia. The [Alzheimer's Association](#) kicked the week off with the 10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's by sharing the differences between normal aging and dementia. Then, [Deaconess Health clinic](#) discussed the importance of early diagnosis and the Deaconess dementia referral process to community organizations, such as [SWIRCA & More](#). Wrapping up the week, Ilfa Zhulamanova, a USI Faculty member, facilitated a storytelling lecture and simulation with GWEP team members. In the simulation, a GWEP standardized patient played the role of a mother with dementia with her care partner daughter. They discover together the importance of stories to help convey memories and positive events. As they share a few laughs, the daughter was able to get to know her mother in a deeper way than only as her "mom." To check out the simulation or any of these presentations, click on this link for the recordings: [Caregiver Month Recordings](#).

Week 2 focused on caregiver health. The [Alzheimer's Association](#) led the week with Healthy Living for Your Brain & Body conveying risk reduction strategies for care partners, including the MIND diet and the importance of exercise. Linda Wright from [SWIRCA & More](#) facilitated a Dementia Friends session on Tuesday where participants learned how to better connect to people living with dementia. For future workshops, please visit [Dementia Friends](#). A food and cooking demonstration was offered by Elizabeth Ramos, an instructor in food and nutrition. Our own GWEP intern, Thomas Engles, sampled the goodies for the camera during the session! The Importance of Taking a Break from Caregiving, facilitated by Lisa Fournier, kicked off Thursday with discussion topics about caregiver burnout. We wrapped up the week with exercising for brain health with Stephanie Walden-Schwake, Director of USI's Recreational Fitness & Wellness Center. The recordings for Week 2 can be found at [Caregiver Month Recordings](#).



" This month is dedicated to those who take on the enormous responsibility of taking care of and protecting their loved one at the expense of their own well-being." - Lisa Fournier, DSL, MPM, Project Coordinator, Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program

The last week highlighted Advance Care Planning topics and Community Resources. Dr. Kevin Valadares, a USI Faculty and GWEP Team member, explained the importance of gaining the desired quality of life by sharing one's values and wishes with their loved ones and care partners. [PREPARE](#), an interactive website program, offers pertinent reflection questions for planning. In addition, Dr. Valadares explained Respecting Choices, a facilitator-led session that helps create conversation and consider the decisions in advance care planning. Amanda Overby from [Amedisys](#) explained advance care planning from the perspective of hospice and the importance of having support throughout the dementia journey. The week wrapped up with a final discussion on Community Resources by community organizations. The Week 3 recordings are located at [Caregiver Month Recordings](#).

The GWEP Team thanks all the facilitators, participants, and viewers of the workshop sessions. Dementia, a leading cause of death according to the Alzheimer's Association, impacts everyone. It is important for all of us to learn more about dementia as well as dispel the myths that surrounds it. Join a Dementia-Friendly Community and become a Dementia Friend to help break the stigma!

WHAT IS HAPPENING AT THE MINKA

THE RUTH SCENARIO

By Maggie McNeely, Intern

The Minka Learning Lab for Living Well aims to showcase the various smart home technologies to the public, so they can experience the practical uses to keep people living-in-place for as long as possible. One way to do this is through the scenarios we perform for tours. Our most recent scenario is called "Ruth". Ruth goes through her daily living tasks thanks to the help provided by the technologies in the Minka, her smart house.

The scene starts with Ruth entering her home in a gray mood. She begins interacting with the Minka smart home. The technologies she engages help to brighten her day. These include the artificial intelligence system, Josh, who turns on the lights and opens the blinds to let in natural light on command. The SmartBoard is used to show Ruth pictures of her family and other happy memories. A feature that has gained popularity during the scenario is when Ruth's daughter is able to visit Ruth virtually via the Telehealth robot, Shuri. Her daughter is able to move around the house with Ruth and help sort out some problems she is facing, as well as check up on her health.



"Ruth goes through her daily living tasks thanks to the help provided by the technologies in the Minka, her smart house." - Maggie McNeely, Intern

After the scenario has concluded, we ask our visitors their opinions about what they just witnessed. For example, their thoughts on the technologies used in the house, their usefulness to a person living-in-place, the possible consequences or concerns with the technology, and their ideas of what to add in the house in the future. All of this feedback is especially useful. It informs how we alter our scenarios going forward and what technology we purchase for the house. In addition, we hope it encourages others to consider the benefits, challenges and opportunities for living-in-place for as long as possible.

LIVING WELL

HEALTHY EATING FOR A HEALTHY MIND

By Elizabeth A. Ramos, Registered Dietitian and Instructor of Food and Nutrition

In honor of National Family Caregivers Month, a demonstration titled, “Healthy Eating for a Healthy Mind” took place in the MINKA. The focus of the demonstration was to describe risk reduction of cognitive decline in brain health and dementia by means of food intake through healthy food choices. The MIND Diet (Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay) was described as an important risk reduction for overall health and wellness. The commonalities of the Mediterranean Diet, the Blue Zones diets, and the DASH diets were reviewed to explain the MIND Diet.

We discussed the Mediterranean Diet and Blue Zones diets. These diets are part of a healthy regimen that includes eating plant-based foods and small amounts of olive oil. Animal proteins are very limited, with seafood to be eaten at least once per week. Exercise and social interaction with a little wine sometimes are encouraged. The DASH diet has been promoted for the past two and a half decades as a healthy way of eating. Research shows there is a strong link to lowering blood pressure and reducing bad cholesterol along with demonstrated better management of diabetes and obesity. Salt or sodium and sugary drinks are to be avoided, however.



"The focus of the demonstration was to describe risk reduction of cognitive decline in brain health and dementia by means of food intake through healthy food choices." - Elizabeth A. Ramos, RD, MS, LDN, LD. Registered Dietitian and Instructor Food and Nutrition

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To put all the food recommendations into play, a quick lunch meal was assembled. Safety and sanitation in the kitchen are paramount and begin with personal hygiene. Additional food safety measures mentioned were washing all fresh produce, cooking all food to the proper temperature, preventing cross-contamination of raw and cooked foods, and promptly refrigerating perishables to include any cut fresh produce and cooked leftovers.

To demonstrate “Mindful Eating,” a part of mind-based stress reduction philosophy to purposely pay attention to our food by using our senses and enjoying every bite to savor the moment. Three lunchtime items were assembled with the cooked chopped carrots, broccoli, onions, and celery in a reduced-sodium chicken broth, microwaved in the MINKA oven. Next, a salad on a mayo spread whole wheat bread slice awaited tuna salad or sardines on the other whole wheat bread slice. Finally, for a sweet treat, a yogurt parfait was assembled in a large goblet. It contained raspberries, nonfat vanilla yogurt, blueberries, cranberries and a final topping of chopped walnuts.

This healthy eating topic and demonstration are a facet of the many strategies presented this November for Dementia Caregivers to better their own lifestyles and provide comfort and support for those in their care.

Elizabeth A. Ramos, RD, MS, LDN, LD is a registered Dietitian and Instructor of Food and Nutrition at the University of Southern Indiana

"To demonstrate “Mindful Eating,” a part of mind-based stress reduction philosophy to purposely pay attention to our food by using our senses and enjoying every bite to savor the moment." - Elizabeth A. Ramos, RD, MS, LDN, LD. Registered Dietitian and Instructor Food and Nutrition

PAST NEWSLETTERS

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SOCIAL MEDIA



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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.