



THE MINKA MONTHLY

Official Newsletter for the Minka Learning Lab for Living Well



WINDOW SHOPPING

By Barbara George, Minka Advisory Board Member

If my aging memory serves me correctly, as a young woman many years ago, I recall standing outside the department stores windows and viewing their displays with a sense of admiration and desire. I find myself looking upon the Minka Project in much the same way with its desirable, amazing and alluring features. I am feeling like a kid again as I re-experience that feeling of desire to own and live in such an inviting and well-planned space.

Perhaps 30 years ago, I prepared a research paper on Senior Independent Housing and came across the idea of Intentional and Co-Housing Communities. This led me to be aware, from afar, of the Communal Studies Department hosted by USI. As I was young then, and not in need of Senior Independent Housing, I was drawn down other paths.

A couple of years ago, as I now am more intent, and in need, of securing adequate support and housing as I age, I once again was drawn to USI and the GWEP Program.

Continuation on Page 3 ...

IN THIS EDITION:

- Window Shopping - Page 1
- One Intern's Experience - Page 2
- My Role as a Grad Assistant - Page 3
- Dementia Awareness Event- Page 4
- A Love Letter to the GWEP - Page 5
- GERO 215 Explores the Minka - Page 6
- Introducing JOI - Page 7

EDITOR CORNER

One Intern's Experience

By Maggie McNeely, Intern



Having worked at the Minka for a year, I can honestly say it has been a rewarding experience, not only in regards to my future careers, but also just in my newfound knowledge of artificial intelligence, people living with dementia, and the concept of living-in-place. When I first applied to be the marketing intern at the Minka, I was just looking to run the social media pages so I could put digital marketing experience on my resume. When asked in my interview how I felt about technology, I said I loved it and embraced it in my everyday life. However, that might have been an exaggeration to help me look more appealing as an intern for a smart home. I am by no means tech savvy, and nothing gives me a headache more than reading an instruction manual. Nevertheless, I was thrown into giving tours about smart houses and how to operate all the devices inside them. I helped integrate artificial intelligence into the Minka through the creation of realistic scenarios that older people living alone might find themselves in. I was suddenly the one creating instruction manuals for the next interns on how to use the devices I had to train myself to use thanks to the guidance of YouTube videos.

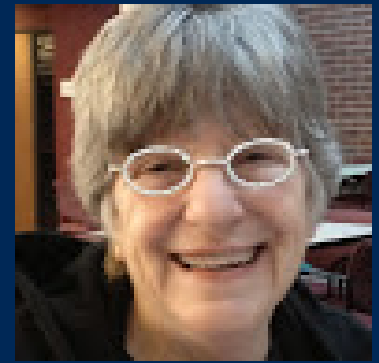
I became Dementia Live certified and began conducting simulations for entire classes on campus for students to be able to simulate what it is like to live with dementia. I had the privilege of gaining tremendous leadership experience by hosting bi-monthly meetings for our Advisory Board members. Despite my reluctance when it comes to reading and writing, I became editor of the newsletter you are reading right now! The list of amazing opportunities and knowledge I have acquired through this role goes one and on. I am so grateful for this job, and it truly makes me sad to have to leave. My experience at the Minka has been one of growth and I cannot wait to see all the opportunities it provides for other students.

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

Continuation from page 1: When I emailed Dr. Katie Ehlman, USI Professor of Gerontology, she recommended I check out the MINKA Project, and so it was that I became very interested in the learning lab.

When I first experienced the Minka Learning Lab for Living Well last year, I was overwhelmed by its inviting and well-considered layout and interior designs. The living space, while sounding limited in square footage, was spacious upon viewing. It has more than adequate outdoor/indoor lighting via the windows and door. The kitchen area looks to be efficient in its layout and features, and more than adequate for the needs of someone in my age bracket.

The designers' thoughtfulness and consideration of our future limitations, needs, and desires as we age were apparent in the features and the technology. I am now looking for a Senior Independent/Interdependent Co-Housing Community which has similar features to the Minka Model as I gain traction into elderhood.



"When I first encountered the MINKA Experience last year, I was overwhelmed by its inviting and well-considered layout and interior designs." - Barbara George, Minka Advisory Board Member

MY ROLE AS A GRAD ASSISTANT

By Baylie Peter, GWEP Graduate Assistant

One staggering statistic that brought me aboard this project is the number of older adults who have Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia: Over 5 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's and by the year 2050, 16 million Americans will be living with the disease. That means nearly one in three older adults are living with Alzheimer's or some other form of dementia (Alzheimer's Association, 2018). I have been a part of the Center of Healthy Aging and Wellness and the Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) for three years now, two years as an undergraduate student and one year as a graduate assistant. The joke around the office is they can't get rid of me, but the truth is I just can't get away from this project's mission and the people working on it! My favorite thing about this project is the awareness of healthy aging and dementia we bring to students, healthcare workers and the general public alike.



"The joke around the office is that they can't get rid of me, but I just can't get away from this project's mission and the people working on it!" - Baylie Peter, GWEP Graduate Assistant

As far as the Minka goes, I witnessed it being built in 2018 and how it has transformed into a smart home technology learning lab. I would love to see the Minka used more widely across academic disciplines at USI (nursing, occupational therapy, engineering, social work and nutrition, etc.). My role in the Minka has gone from observer to a simulation role player. The wonderful editor of this newsletter and fellow GWEP intern, Maggie, is teaching me and my other coworker, Macie, how to conduct a simulation of an older adult using smart home technology. As a graduate assistant next semester, I hope to be more heavily involved in the Minka and its innovative technology.

Source: Alzheimer's Association. (2018). Alzheimer's statistics. Retrieved April 29, 2022, from <https://www.alz.org/media/documents/indiana-alzheimers-facts-figures.pdf>

LET'S TALK ABOUT DEMENTIA

Dementia Awareness Event

By Taylor Goffinet, Intern

On Monday, April 25, the University of Southern Indiana's Dementia Friendly Community held a promotional event to bring awareness to their group and Dementia as a whole. The DFC community considered it to be successful as there was a great turnout. There was a table at the Breezeway where anyone who stopped by their booth could grab a granola bar with a dementia statistic attached to it while also entering to win gift cards. The booth also offered stickers, pens, notepads and stress balls as well. Once someone visited the booth, they were told they could stop by the Minka Learning Lab to take a tour and grab a free T-shirt while supplies lasted! The people who chose to visit the Minka entered their names a second time for the giveaways. We had three gift cards to give away as prizes including one Azzip Pizza gift card, and two Target gift cards.

In the end, there were 48 total people that signed in at the booth located at the Breezeway on campus, however, we predict there were more attendants who visited but didn't sign in. Ten of the attendants went on to take a tour of the Minka. There were many smiles that day despite the rainy weather. It was a great turn out and USI's Dementia Friendly Community members would like to thank everyone who helped make the event possible and everyone that attended!



"It was a great turn out and USI's Dementia Friendly Community members would like to thank everyone who helped make the event possible and everyone that attended!" - Taylor Goffinet, Intern

WHAT IS HAPPENING AT THE MINKA

The Technology Arrival!

By Maggie McNeely, Intern

The Minka Learning Lab for Living Well is a smart house that uses smart technology and artificial intelligence to promote living-in-place for older adults. In order to do this, it is important the Minka continuously order and integrate new devices to showcase even more ways technology is evolving and can be used by older adults. Nineteen new pieces of technology were ordered including a smart scale, a Bluetooth coffeepot, a phone sanitizer, many telehealth devices, and much more.

Telehealth devices are especially important to the Minka's mission of rural outreach when it comes to telemedicine. The devices that aid in that mission are an otoscope, a stethoscope, a blood oxygen meter, an ECG machine, and a blood pressure cuff. The aspect that makes all of the listed devices telehealth is each of them has the ability to record, store, and share this data with the individual's healthcare providers. So, you can use the stethoscope to record the sounds of your heart, they will sync automatically with the app, and you are able to share them from there. The individual doesn't need to be knowledgeable about how to use any of the machines, or how to read them, because the app gives you instructions on where to put the stethoscope on your chest, when to breathe, etc. If you are interested in testing out any of the devices mentioned, or our many other technologies then feel free to drop by the Minka for the hands-on experience!



"If you are interested in testing out any of the devices mentioned, or our many other technologies feel free to drop by the Minka for the hands-on experience!" - Maggie McNeely, Intern

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

A Love Letter to the GWEP

By Leah Flake, Intern

I had phone anxiety. This was a great source of contention in my job as a telefundraiser in 2019. It was my first internship, and I loved the cause I was working for but every morning, walking into the building, I would mentally prepare myself for that first phone call. "Just don't accidentally say 'I love you' at the end of the phone call and you will be okay."

It may have been agonizing at the time but making these phone calls pushed me out of my comfort zone not only professionally but personally. I knew nothing about producing a podcast when I first started as the Producer for bOLDER People, so I was very out of my comfort zone. I was equipped for some parts of the position because of my experience in communications and some industry-specific software applications but, nonetheless, the first few months were spent teaching myself how to use audio equipment and software. Somedays, I would spend whole days just watching YouTube tutorials on how to use simple functions of the software.

I can't lie, these months were uncomfortable and frustrating, and I wasn't always satisfied with the results. But, this struggle allowed me to grow. I am about to release the fourth episode of bOLDER People, "Ms. Sheila Huff and Finishing the Race", and I could not be more excited. I have refined my skills in the recording, editing, and formatting processes of podcasting and I think it really shows in this episode. bOLDER People has taught me how worthwhile the payoff is when you push through those uncomfortable days and don't give up, even when you accidentally tell a stranger that you love them over the phone.

I love the bOLDER People and the Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program and will miss both very dearly when I graduate this semester. However, I am ready for the next exciting and scary chapters in my life and I know I will be prepared for them thanks to my time as the bOLDER People Producer.



"bOLDER People has taught me how worthwhile the payoff is when you push through those uncomfortable days and don't give up, even when you accidentally tell a stranger that you love them over the phone." - Leah Flake, Intern

GERO 101

GERO 215 EXPLORES THE MINKA

By Baylie Peter, GWEP Graduate Assistant

Recently, Dr. Katie Ehlman's GERO 215: Introduction to Global Aging and Healthcare class visited the Minka and explored the smart home technology available to an older adult aging in place.

Continuation on Page 6 ...

Continuation from page 1: After touring the Minka, the students completed an activity in which they listed the advantages of the Minka design and smart home technology for older adults, the areas in which the Minka design or technology could be improved, and whether they would want to live in a Minka community of people of all ages and all abilities (instead of a dorm or an apartment).

The student responses to the activity were notable. Some of the advantages of the design and smart home technology the students focused on were the capability of older adults and those living with dementia to live more safely and independently in place. The students also mentioned the elimination of fall risks, since older adults would not have to travel far to reach any part of the Minka house. The students suggested some areas of improvement for the Minka design and smart home technology. The students recommended lowering the high cabinets, adding power alarms on kitchen appliances and the shower, adding technology for food preparation and shopping and generalizing the voice commands for the smart technology (phrases are too specific).

When the students were asked if they would want to live in a community of Minka homes instead of a dorm or apartment, 20 students agreed with the reasonings of a private space, innovative technology and the simplicity of the living space. Fifteen students did not want to live in a Minka community, with many believing it would be too expensive for a college student, or they did not want to take away living space from an older adult who might need it.

TECH & U INTRODUCING JOI

By Maggie McNeely, Intern

In the last edition of the Minka Monthly, there was a teaser about what the third tier of artificial intelligence at the Minka Learning Lab for Living Well could be capable of. Well, it is my pleasure to introduce JOI! JOI is a prototype, not a product. This means JOI is not on the market, and she is unique. JOI was designed to be artificial intelligence that would aid a person living with dementia by acting as a sort of memory box. She is able to practice reminiscence therapy through her functions of music, pictures, and reports. In her music function, JOI will have playlists that order the songs in a way that builds up energy and then brings the energy back down through slower songs. The songs would be entered by the care partner so the individual is listening to songs from their adolescent and early adulthood life. JOI uses her camera to follow the individual and record how much movement each song receives. This information is stored in the "Reports" section for the care partner to look at later.



"Some of the advantages of the design and smart home technology the students focused on were the capability of older adults and those living with dementia to live more safely and independently in place."
- Baylie Peter, GWEP Graduate Assitant



"JOI was designed to be artificial intelligence that would aid a person living with dementia by acting as a sort of memory box." - Maggie McNeely, Intern

Continuation from Page 6: If JOI detects that there isn't a sufficient amount of movement through clapping, snapping, swaying, etc. she will verbally encourage the individual to clap along. The photos function works similarly in that all the photos are downloaded for JOI to display on her screen by the care partner. JOI will flip through the photos on her screen and strike up conversations about the photo using keywords she keeps on each one. For example, there is a picture of a beach on the screen, and JOI will ask about what the individual liked about the beach. The individual will respond by saying, "We used to collect seashells there!" JOI will remember those new keywords for that picture and respond using them. For example, "Collecting seashells is so fun!" If you would like to see JOI in person and get to interact with her, make sure to visit the Minka next semester!

"JOI will flip through the photos on her screen and strike up conversations about the photo using keywords that she keeps on each one." - Maggie McNeely, Intern

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.