



# THE MINKA MONTHLY

Official Newsletter for the Minka Learning Lab for Living Well



## ENGINEERING SENIOR DESIGN PROJECT AT THE MINKA

By Jake Simmons and Logan Hunt, USI Engineering Students

As part of our engineering capstone senior design project, we are working on a system that will be able to detect falls in a shower or bathtub. In theory, when a fall is detected, the system will turn the water off and alert a care partner, loved one or an emergency medical service.

The idea for this project was inspired by the rising trend of fatal falls occurring in home bathing areas. We also possess a drive to help individuals live more independently while feeling safe and confident doing everyday activities themselves without the assistance of another individual. This technology will also help decrease the number of deaths associated with falls as well as the issues associated with the continued output of water that will continue to pour over an individual who may be unconscious or unable to move.

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# EDITOR CORNER

## MY FAREWELL

By Maggie McNeely, Intern



As I type my last article for my last edition of the Minka Monthly as editor , I find myself experiencing multiple emotions at once. I am filled with joy to have graduated with a double major in marketing and sociology and to start my new career using the degrees I worked tirelessly for. However, I am also sad about closing this chapter of my life. I am not just done with classes, my internship and editing this newsletter, but I am also completely done with college. This is a difficult transition for me because college is where I first discovered my passions and goals in life. I came to college thinking I would go straight into the medical field, I would never get anything below an A in a class and juggling extracurriculars, school and social life would have its challenges but not be impossible. However, I went through a dramatic change of major my junior year, switching to the College of Business and Liberal Arts, I have received two Bs despite countless hours of studying and tears of frustration, and there were times when I was not able to juggle all of the aspects of life. In a weird way, college taught me how to fail and make the best of it, and that your original plans don't always need to come to fruition. I am thankful to have been able to attend a university, as I know not everyone is able to have this experience. I am grateful to have been offered this internship as it has truly given me all the real-world experience in business and marketing which I lacked. I am also appreciative of all the staff here at USI who guided me along the way, the friends who have helped me make some of my favorite memories and the experiences I will carry with me throughout my life. So, above all my other emotions, I am experiencing a heart full of gratitude.

# HISTORY OF THE MINKA

By Mary Scheller, Communications Associate-Gerontology

What if everything you've been told about aging is wrong? That was a question Bill Thomas, MD, posed to his keynote audience during the 2017 Mid-America Institute on Aging and Wellness (MAIA) at USI. Little did I know that following this presentation, a seed had been planted to grow the Minka at USI.

Thomas is best known for his healthcare system innovations, but in addition to being a Harvard-trained physician, he is also an author, entrepreneur, musician and farmer. So, it wasn't a huge surprise his MAIA keynote was innovative, humorous and very lively – and he definitely challenged us to reject ageist stereotypes and common misconceptions related to growing older.

Thomas and his team took this message a step further by bringing his Changing Aging Tour to the USI Performance Center on November 6, 2017. The performance blended myth and science with live music and visuals to present a new and highly disruptive understanding of aging. I can still remember watching this international authority on geriatric medicine and eldercare singing and playing the guitar on stage, barefoot! Talk about disruptive!

When the curtain fell after the last Changing Aging performance at USI, Thomas told us his next big idea: he was designing a new type of compact home – the “Minka” – with a goal to foster health, well-being and independence for people of all ages and abilities. Minka, he explained, was a Japanese word meaning “house of the people.” Then came the big question: Would USI consider having a Minka model home built on campus?

What followed was the development of a year-long pilot project called Multi-Ability, Multi-Generational, Inclusive Community (MAGIC), funded by USI, the USI Foundation and supported by AARP. Starting in January 2018, Thomas and his Minka team held several meetings with USI faculty and community members to build the MAGIC project around three pillars—innovation, , education and evaluation/research.

Flash forward to November 2018, and the Minka house was built in less than a week using components made in upstate New York with a robotic fabrication system similar to 3D printing. Here is a video to watch if you are interested in the construction process: **Minka Build**

Today, the Minka house has been renamed the “Minka Learning Lab for Living Well,” and it is part of the USI Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) showcasing innovations for living-in-place with integrated technology.

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Communications Associate-  
Gerontology



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Communications Associate-  
Gerontology

**Continuation from page 3** It's been an interesting ride, seeing this idea for a new type of housing pitched to us in 2017 by a physician from upstate New York transform into a unique campus laboratory for researching and testing smart-home technology to help people of all abilities maintain independence. There may be no place like home, but there's truly no place like the Minka home we have at USI!

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## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

### TAYLOR'S GOODBYE

By Taylor Goffinet, Intern

This past semester working for the GWEP at USI has been very beneficial and fun for me. It not only gave me experience, but I also made some great friends along the way. I enjoyed doing things outside of my comfort zone while also getting to work with various members of the USI community. Before this semester, I never would have imagined myself hosting events, let alone planning them. However, now I can say I have been the leader/coordinator for several GWEP events both online and on USI's campus. This job taught me so many things I will carry with me into the workforce, no matter which career route I choose. I will be forever grateful for the time I got to spend working for the GWEP. This internship gave me a better insight into what I want to do in my future career, and it gave me connections for future opportunities. I want to say thank you to everyone at the GWEP for allowing me to work with them while also gaining experience. I will miss working with you all!



"This job taught me so many things I will carry with me into the workforce, no matter which career route I choose." - Taylor Goffinet, Intern

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## WHAT IS HAPPENING AT THE MINKA

### THE MINKA FULLY FURNISHED

By Maggie McNeely, Intern

Our new furniture has arrived at the Minka, and it checks all the boxes in regard to being elder-friendly. Of course, an added bonus is how well everything looks together in the room. In order to make the wisest consumer choices possible, we partnered with an interior designer when it came to planning the layout and customizations for all the pieces. It can be challenging to find furniture that is elder-friendly because it prohibits any sharp corners or glass and requires armrests and non-slick fabric. Our new dining room table suits our everyday simulation needs, as well as having a leaf so it can be used for meetings or larger gatherings. Our couch and chairs are all made of materials that are non-slick as well as stain repellent. The new couch has firmer cushions to prevent sinking and difficulty upon rising. The Minka also elected to have end tables in addition to a coffee table to eliminate reaching to set items down. This will also create space for a lamp for added lighting. Finally, the barstools are taller and created in accordance with the height of the kitchen island. Everyone who has worked on this project of ordering new furniture, including myself, is excited to hear feedback about the purchases. So make sure to stop by next semester and give us your thoughts.



"In order to make the wisest consumer choices possible, we partnered with an interior designer when it came to planning the layout and customizations for all the pieces." - Maggie McNeely, Intern

# SPOTLIGHT

## INTRODUCING HALEY

By Katie Ehlman, PhD, Professor of Gerontology, USI Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program Director, Center for Healthy Aging and Wellness Director

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Maggie McNeely on her graduation from the University of Southern Indiana. She has been an amazing undergraduate student and writer and editor of the Minka Monthly during her time at the GWEP. Congratulations to Maggie on graduating! We wish you all the best in your future endeavors, Maggie. We know you will do great things.

While Maggie is moving on in her life, we will not be without an editor of our newsletter. As we move forward with our newsletter, we plan to expand the Minka Monthly to a quarterly publication which would detail the GWEP as a whole and expand our readership. I am pleased to inform our readers we have a USI graduate assistant who is prepared to assume Maggie's role as newsletter editor. Her name is Haley Fowler and she is currently studying at USI to obtain her Master of Arts degree in English. Haley also has an extensive background in writing. She attended DePauw University, majoring in English Literature and German and minoring in Japanese, History and European Studies. She then attended the IUPUI Robert H. McKinney School of Law. She passed the Indiana bar exam in 2018, and she is licensed to practice law in the state.



"I am pleased to inform our readers we have another GA who is prepared to assume Maggie's role." - Katie Ehlman, PhD, Professor of Gerontology, USI Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program Director

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## GERO 101

### SUPPORTIVE DEMENTIA TECHNOLOGY

By Kris Izzi, Community Outreach Coordinator, Alzheimer's Association, Greater Kentucky & Southern Indiana Chapter

One thing I've learned in my professional career is that there are so many kind-hearted people that want to offer support to someone in need. Anyone who has ever provided any direct care support in their professional or personal life has likely been educated on the importance of being empathetic to help be more supportive to the person they are trying to help. Being able to try and put yourself in the position of the person you're trying to help to understand their feelings goes a long way in being able to be more supportive. The USI Minka Learning Lab has certainly embraced this concept in their tours by allowing the touring person to experience the limitations someone living with dementia may be experiencing. After my tour, I found myself changing the way I would interact with someone living with dementia to better accommodate their needs. A phrase I encourage people to take away in any caregiving education I've done is "caregiver education is not about learning to control someone else, it's about learning to control yourself." The USI Minka Learning Lab tours absolutely help a person take a moment to reflect on what they might do and say in the future when being supportive to someone living with dementia.



"Caregiver education is not about learning to control someone else, it's about learning to control yourself." - Kris Izzi, Community Outreach Coordinator, Alzheimer's Association

**Continuation from page 5** My second take away from my experience with the USI Minka Learning Lab came from interacting with the supportive home technology that is being developed for those living with dementia. I have heard the critique that technology can be a barrier to seniors, and especially those living with dementia. Although I think that this can be true in some cases, much of the technology we see coming out is not technology that we need to learn to change to interact with, but technology that changes to better interact with us. This concept is something that is especially important for individuals living with dementia whose challenges increase over time. Most families living with dementia have a plan of keeping their loved one living with dementia in their home for as long as possible. Technology such as artificial intelligence that learns some of our habits, our likes and dislikes and being able to make our environment more comfortable for us, will go a long way in helping keep someone living in their home. At the end of the day, I honestly feel the USI Minka Learning Lab is taking the critical concept of empathy and putting it at the center of multiple concepts of support when it comes to dementia technology.

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## TECH & U

### THE INTEGRATION OF MULTIPLE DEVICES IN ONE SMART HOME

By Maggie McNeely, Intern

One of the jobs of the marketing intern for the Minka is to create scenarios in which the technology is demonstrated for viewers in a way that clearly depicts the ways in which the technologies work together to accomplish activities of daily living. To give our readers a better idea of how this is done, I will describe the process of creating one of these scenarios using the recent technology purchases as the focus. Three new pieces of technology we have at the Minka are a smart lamp, an automatic pill dispenser and a smart tea kettle which all could easily be used in the morning routine of a person living-in-place.

In the scenario, the scene opens in the morning and the individual is in bed being awoken by their smart lamp which has a sunrise setting. This setting begins at the programmed time via the app and slowly increases the amount of warm light that simulates waking up with a sunrise. They hear an alarm going off in the kitchen, coming from their pill dispenser. Once they take their medication, only one pill pocket is unlocked because the whole dispenser is on a time-of-day lock system. The individual fetches a cup because their morning tea is ready thanks to another app setting that brews the tea to the desired temperature at the same time every morning. End of scene. Now, instead of telling visitors how each piece of technology works, they can understand how they all work together to help maintain the routine of an older person living in a smart home alone.

"At the end of the day, I honestly feel the USI Minka Learning Lab is taking the critical concept of empathy and putting it at the center of multiple concepts of support when it comes to dementia technology." - Kris Izzi, Community Outreach Coordinator, Alzheimer's Association



"Three new pieces of technology we have at the Minka are a smart lamp, an automatic pill dispenser and a smart tea kettle." - Maggie McNeely, Intern

# ANNOUNCEMENT A NEW NEWSLETTER

By Katie Ehlman, PhD, Professor of Gerontology, USI Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program Director, Center for Healthy Aging and Wellness Director

Along with a new editor, we at the GWEP have a big announcement for the newsletter that we are excited to share. The Minka Monthly will transition from a monthly newsletter to a quarterly publication. The new newsletter will be longer and cover more topics than the Minka Monthly. We envision the newsletter discussing a variety of subjects that revolve around USI's GWEP. Along with a broader focus, we anticipate the newsletter will reach a broader audience. The expanded newsletter will keep in the spirit of the Minka Monthly newsletter while also providing more information about USI's GWEP program overall. This newsletter's first issue is scheduled for release in August, with a new issue coming out every three months thereafter. We believe that Haley Fowler will be a great aid in this transition, and we are excited to have her working with the GWEP.

"This newsletter's first issue is scheduled for release in August, with a new issue coming out every three months thereafter." -

Katie Ehlman, PhD,  
Professor of Gerontology,  
USI Geriatrics Workforce  
Enhancement Program  
Director

## 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)



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

## 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.



**FREE**

for RETIREES and  
FAMILY CAREGIVERS

from Gibson, Perry,  
Posey, Spencer, Daviess,  
Dubois, Greene, Knox,  
Martin and Pike counties



**August 11 and 12, 2022**

at the University of Southern Indiana

Space is limited.

Register Now: [USI.edu/rural-maia](http://USI.edu/rural-maia)

**Click Here For  
more Information  
about this event!**

**Our Keynote Speakers**



**Pauline Boss, PhD**  
Caregiving Through  
Uncertain Times



**Erin Ramsey, MPA**  
Paving a Positive  
Path Forward



**Greg Jicha, MD, PhD**  
Normal Brain Aging  
University of Kentucky



**Heidi Holt, MPA**  
CDC's Strategies for  
Brain Health

The USI Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP) is offering this opportunity for a LIMITED NUMBER of retirees and family caregivers\* from rural areas. Free one or two-day registrations include optional transportation to and from the USI campus, breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack!

**August 11 and 12, 2022**

**Schedule for Retirees and Family Caregivers  
from Rural Areas**

*All times are in the Central Time Zone*

**Board shuttle at Deaconess Clinic Reo (6:45 am)  
or Deaconess Clinic Petersburg (6:30 am)**

- 7:30 am - Arrive at University of Southern Indiana
- 7:30-8:15 am - Registration, Breakfast and Yoga/Tai Chi
- 8:15-10 am - Welcome and Keynote Speakers
- 10-10:30 am - Break and Visit Exhibit Tables
- 10:30-11 am - Concurrent Sessions
- 11:30 am-12:30 pm - Lunch and Visit Exhibit Tables
- 12:30-1:30 pm - Concurrent Sessions
- 1:30-1:45 pm - Break and Visit Exhibit Tables
- 1:45-2:45 pm - Concurrent Sessions
- 2:45-3 pm - Break
- 3-4:30 pm - Keynote and Closing
- 4:45 pm - Shuttle Leaves USI

**Register Now:**  
[USI.edu/rural-maia](http://USI.edu/rural-maia)

