

Winter 2003

Silverwire Newsletter

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Silverwire

Vol. 1, No. 2 Winter 2003

NEWSLETTER OF THE UMAINE CENTER ON AGING

National Osteoporosis Initiative Underway at UMaine, Other Locations

Josefina G. Carbonell, Assistant Secretary for Aging in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, visited the University of Maine on Friday, October 18, to announce three new federal grants to be used to develop a National Osteoporosis Awareness and Prevention Action Plan. As noted in the Fall 2002 issue of *Silverwire*, the Center on Aging has received one of these grants, together with the National Osteoporosis Foundation in Washington, D.C., and the Foundation for Osteoporosis Research and Education in Oakland, California. Work is now well underway on our portion of the project.

Len Kaye, director of the Center on Aging, and Dr. Clifford Rosen, director of the Maine Center for Osteoporosis Research and Education, are co-principal investigators for the one-year, \$138,000 grant. Hired as project manager was Marjie Harris, a graduate instructor in the UMaine School of Social Work. In December and January she organized and led focus groups around the state with older women of diverse backgrounds. Eventually, more than a hundred women in Maine will have met and shared their ideas. Concurrently, other professional facilitators are running groups with diverse populations in San Francisco, Philadelphia, and New York City. The purpose is to gather information about how older women get health information and what types and methods of information provision are most like to influence their personal health practices.

Also part of the project is a review of existing osteoporosis education programs around the country to determine the most effective approaches to informing older women about osteoporosis. The next step in the project will be to use the research findings to develop, test, and refine a national strategy and action plan to reduce risk-taking health care practices of older post-menopausal women. The action plan will be delivered to the U.S. Administration on Aging for implementation in the fall of 2003.



Josefina G. Carbonell, Assistant Secretary for Aging in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, visited the University of Maine and Freese's Assisted Living Center on October 18, 2002. Carbonell (center) is shown here with Center on Aging fieldwork interns Christine Martel (left) and Daryne Sandford (right).



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Silverwire

Vol. 1., No. 2

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Lenard W. Kaye, Director

Elizabeth Johns, Editor

Daryne Sandford, Asst. Editor

Silverwire is published three times a year, in the Fall, Winter, and Spring.

The Center on Aging is located within the School of Social Work in the University of Maine's College of Business, Public Policy, and Health. Our mission is to promote and facilitate activities on aging in the areas of education, research and evaluation, and community service, in order to maximize the quality of life of older citizens and their families in Maine and beyond.

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From the Director

BREAKING DOWN THE WALLS OF THE IVORY TOWER

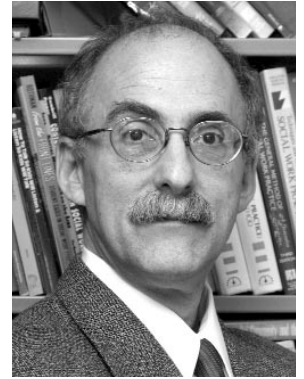
Two thousand and three will be an important year for the Center on Aging. Having celebrated our first birthday late in 2002, we must now focus on program initiatives with a longer-term agenda. Consistent and recognizable program traditions are an important part of an organization's presence, and ours are already in the making. They include the Professional Excellence in Geriatrics Series (PEGS), the Geriatric Organizational Leadership Development (GOLD) series, May Festival, Penobscot Valley Senior College (PVSC), and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)—all reported on elsewhere in this issue.

A noteworthy feature of these programs is that they all extend the reach of the Center beyond the University campus and into the larger Maine community, where we offer a range of education, entertainment, training, and volunteer service opportunities for older adults and the health and human service professionals who serve them.

Making Maine increasingly accommodating to a rapidly aging populace is at the core of our efforts. This will entail insuring the preparation of greater numbers of students entering careers in service to older adults and the retooling of professionals who currently work with older persons. But it will not stop there. We are going to make a major break with tradition: Unlike many academic centers on aging throughout the United States, we intend to marshal the resources of a great university system and translate them into cutting-edge services and programs that have immediate benefit to this state's older citizens and their families. We will not take up residence in the ivory tower of academe. Our work is in the community. Our research will have immediate application value in the lives of older adults and their families, our training will alter the way the workforce interacts with older citizens, and our service projects will enrich the lives of elders and their communities.

To be honest, when I first arrived in Maine three years ago I did not expect that the work of a university-based center on aging could be so closely connected to citizens and communities. I now recognize that community connections can indeed be at the core of our successful programs. And we pledge to nurture those ties here in Maine where community is so highly valued.

So I want to issue an open invitation to community groups, organizations, and individuals to help us create a seamless tie between the expertise of the University and the needs of Maine's older citizens. Work with us to formulate innovative program initiatives and secure the resources necessary to make that happen. Together we can redefine the relationship between "town and gown" for the benefit of everyone concerned.



Lenard W. Kaye

Successful Aging among Gay Men: What Does It Look Like?

J. Michael Cruz

As a relatively new researcher in the field of aging, I have been struck by the narrow range of scholarly discussion of the aging process. I was a graduate student when I first became aware just how strong is the literature on aging's emphasis on white heterosexuals. Hoping to contribute to research on underrepresented populations, I focused my dissertation on gay men and their experiences with aging.

My research sample consisted of self-identified gay men over the age of 55 from four Texas cities: Austin, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio. The study comprised two parts: an eight-page survey, completed by 125 respondents, containing both open- and closed-ended questions, and in-depth interviews with twenty Dallas men who had completed a survey. For the purposes of this article, "successful" aging relates to their responses to four questions: Have you experienced stigma associated with aging? What makes a gay man adjust well to growing old? What are the best aspects of aging? and What are some of its worst aspects?

Because research on homosexuals presents unique challenges, the findings from this study cannot be generalized to the wider gay male population. For example, because one's sexuality is socially constructed and rooted in such things as self-identity and romantic/emotional/sexual desire and practice, I argue that one can never achieve a representative sample of persons within the gay/lesbian/bisexual community. That being said, this sample had several biases. Respondents were primarily white and socially engaged. They were located through snowball, purposive, and convenience sampling, and most were linked directly or indirectly with a social organization for aging gay men or with a gay/lesbian church.

Among the men I surveyed, 45 percent had experienced aging-related stigma. Regarding the question of what makes a gay man adjust well to growing old, the top four response categories were: friends (21 percent); accepting life and aging (13 percent); self-acceptance (13 percent); and a relationship (8 percent). For the best aspects of aging, the top three response categories were: experience/knowledge/wisdom (13 percent); retirement (12 percent); and free time (8 percent). As for the worst aspects of aging, the men's top three response categories were biological changes (26 percent); failing health (22 percent); and the loss of friends and family (7 percent).

While this study has limitations, it is valuable for generating dialogue rooted in empirical evidence about a population that is not well represented in the gerontological literature. More research is needed to explore whether homosexual and

heterosexual persons have similar aging experiences, or if some needs are particular to one group and not another. Uncovering such differences will enable us as practitioners, researchers, and policy makers to promote a more satisfying and healthy aging process for all individuals, inasmuch as aging is a biological and social phenomenon that is not specific to a particular sexual orientation.

J. Michael Cruz is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Southern Maine.

www.mainecenteronaging.org

Please visit our website for full descriptions of Center on Aging programs and other aging-related information.

UMaine Center on Aging
"Forging Partnerships for an Aging Community" MAINE

Welcome

The Center on Aging is a university-wide, interdisciplinary center specializing in aging education, research and community service. Its academic home is the University of Maine School of Social Work and the College of Business, Public Policy, and Health. The mission of the Center is to serve the state by maximizing the quality of life of Maine's older citizens and their families. Through its state-of-the-art training, research and service initiatives, the Center, in direct partnership with elders and community agencies, works to prepare professionals and the lay community in "best practice" approaches to serving older adults and better appreciating the resources that elders bring to our communities.

UMCoA News

SENIOR CORPS
Center New Sponsor of RSVP

Will serve Penobscot and Piscataquis counties

New generation volunteer placements available to persons 55 years and older

Contact Jane Harris-Bartley, Project Director at 207-581-4418

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CENTRAL MAINE RSVP MOVES TO CENTER ON AGING

It is the perfect pairing—older adults with expertise and time to help their communities, and charitable groups in need of volunteers and advice. In Penobscot and Piscataquis counties, these groups are now being brought together by the UMaine Center on Aging.



Jane Harris Bartley is director of RSVP for Penobscot and Piscataquis Counties.

The Center was awarded a \$90,000 grant in November 2002 to administer the region's Retired and Senior Volunteer Program. RSVP is a decades-old federal project that pairs active adults over 55 with organizations in need of volunteer services. The funding, renewed annually, comes from the Corporation for National and Community Service and the Maine Bureau of Elder and Adult Services. The UMaine School of Social Work and the College of Business, Public Policy, and Health also provide support as do generous community benefactors.

The Center on Aging has taken over administration of RSVP from the United Way of Eastern Maine,

the program's former sponsor. Currently over 600 seniors volunteer at 100 sites throughout the two counties.

Under the university's stewardship, the program is expected to move in new directions. For example, Jane Harris Bartley, the new program director, and Center on Aging director Lenard Kaye plan to enlist volunteers in supporting grassroots security initiatives by working with the Red Cross to staff shelters, provide counseling, and assist the agency's emergency response teams.

Those interested in volunteering may call RSVP at 581-4418, send an email to: rsvp@mainecenteronaging.org, or visit the CoA web page at www.mainecenteronaging.org.

UMCOA DEBUTS AT GSA

In November 2002, UMaine's new Center on Aging took part in the 55th annual meeting of the Gerontological Society of America (GSA). Staff and students of the Center traveled to Boston for the conference and participated in symposia, poster presentations, and the Center's first-ever GSA exhibit.

Highlights of the Center's participation in the conference included a presentation on the Maine Primary Partners in Caregiving research project by investigators Lenard Kaye, Sandra Butler, Roberta Downey, and Amy Cotton. Dr. Kaye, Center on Aging director, was also the discussant for the symposium on older men's

relationships and chaired a session on clinical decision making.

CoA Resident Scholar Sandra Butler presented her research on the Senior Companion program as part of the Rural Health and Service Access symposium. Program Associate Elizabeth Johns presented a poster on retirement-age working women. Center on Aging field interns Christine Martel and Daryne Sandford helped design and staff the CoA exhibit, and attended several scheduled presentations.

The GSA conference proved to be an excellent vehicle for introducing the Center on Aging to gerontology experts from around the world.

UMAINE FITNESS SWIM PROGRAM SERVES OLDER ADULTS

Since the early 1990s, the University of Maine has sponsored a little publicized swim program for adults age 50 and older. Led by instructor Anne Skalski, the class meets on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings, in the Memorial Gym. Participants come to the classes with various skill levels, but all take their swimming seriously. The pool sessions feature fitness swimming for stamina, muscle tone, and flexibility, lap swimming, and full-body workouts. For more information, call UMaine Aquatics Director and CoA Faculty Associate Jeffrey Wren at 207-581-1076.

PENOBSCOT VALLEY SENIOR COLLEGE BEGINS 2ND SUCCESSFUL SEASON

The first semester of the Penobscot Valley Senior College (PVSC) was a great success with over 150 students attending classes in fall 2002. The 2003 spring semester runs March 7 through April 14. This semester's offerings are: Exploring Cultural Diversity through the Hudson Museum, Stuff about Energy, Wildlife Ecology and Management, History and Geology of the Maine Coast Downeast, Mysteries of the Universe, Healthcare Then and Now, Write NOW! Technology for Non-Techies, Plays for the Wise II, and Getting More from Microsoft



In Fall 2002 members of this Senior College class read and discussed Rachel Carson's *The Sea Around Us*.

Word and Introduction to Excel. For more information and to register, contact the PVSC message line at 581-1947, or the Center on Aging website at www.maine-centeronaging.org.

UMCOA RESEARCH EXPLORES LOCAL HOUSING NEEDS

In the summer of 2002, the UMaine Center on Aging began a study of older adult housing needs in partnership with the town of Bucksport, Maine, a small working-class community located on the Penobscot River south of Bangor. Utilizing written surveys of older residents, focus groups, and telephone and key-informant interviews, the project will provide useful data to those charged with developing town housing policies and programs. Funding for the study was provided by the Bingham Group.

Following strong expressed support from Bucksport town officials, over 40 percent of Bucksport's 800 older adults returned written surveys asking about their housing and service needs. In-depth interviews were conducted with selected respondents to explore such questions as, To what extent do you think about your future housing needs as you grow older? Focus groups have also been conducted with five community groups: older adults; caregivers; local officials and housing experts; business people; and service providers. Key-informant interviews are now being conducted, and the results of the housing assessment are expected by the spring of this year.

FACULTY ASSOCIATES ENHANCE COA PROGRAMMING

Many of the most ambitious goals of the Center on Aging will be accomplished through the contributions of a broad-based collective of individuals and organizations who partner with us in preparing for an aging society and an aging Maine.

These are the UMCoA Faculty Associates, a select roster of educators, researchers, and administrators drawn from UMaine schools and departments as well as other University of Maine System institutions and organizations.

Faculty Associates have the opportunity to participate in Center-sponsored programming and have access to technical and administrative support, resources, and a sponsorship base for their aging-related professional activities. The Center also functions as a clearinghouse and organizational nucleus, announcing to the larger community the Associates' work in the field of aging. UMCoA Faculty Associates come from four campuses of the University of Maine System.

From the University of Maine, they include Marc Baranowski, Jane Harris Bartley, Evelyn Beaulieu, Elizabeth H. Bicknell, E. Michael Brady, Sandra S. Butler, Margaret Cruikshank, Nellie M. Cyr, Elizabeth Depoy, Debra J. Eckart, Nancy J. Fishwick, Stephen French Gilson, Susan F. Greenwood, Laurie Elizabeth

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JOHN HARTFORD FOUNDATION CHANGING SOCIAL WORK STUDENT EDUCATION

Students are at the very core of what the Center on Aging is all about. Without them we would not have recorded many of the accomplishments of the past year. Their presence has been made possible in large part by the vision of the John Hartford Foundation. The Foundation has made an unprecedented commitment to improving the quality of gerontological education in U.S. schools of social work.

The UMaine School of Social Work is a recipient of one of those grants, administered through the Council on Social Work Education and the University of Washington. Known as the Gero-Rich Project, this initiative is working to increase the emphasis on issues of old age in the education of all social work students, both at the B.S.W. and M.S.W. level.

The Hartford initiative is providing faculty in the School with the curriculum resources related to social work practice with older adults. It is also creating field trip opportunities, a student listserv, and incentives for students to pursue research on aging-related topics. A four-member Hartford student learning team is at the Center this year honing their skills in program planning and implementation, conducting community research, and participating in grants development. Judy Anderson, Sarah Denis, Christine Martel, and Daryne

Sandford make up the Hartford field work team. Each is preparing for a career in gerontological social work practice. Additional social work students at the Center with special interests in aging are Milja Brecher and Carol Solinger. They are pursuing research assistantships and work with their fellow students and staff on a daily basis. Taken together these students bring impressive talent, creativity, and a willingness to work exceedingly hard to mount Center programs and engage their fellow students in the School of Social Work in the mission of serving older adults.

HARTFORD SCHOLAR PROGRAM SUPPORTS RESEARCH ON SENIOR COMPANION PROGRAM IN MAINE

Sandra S. Butler



In 2001, I was selected as a Hartford Geriatric Social Work Faculty Scholar. This program has provided me with two years of funding to carry out a major research project in the field of aging. My research has focused on the Senior Companion Program (SCP), one of three programs in the federal Senior Service Corps which also includes the Foster Grandparent Program and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). Initiated in

1973, the SCP offers stipends to low-income volunteers age 60 and older who provide companionship and assistance to frail elders in their communities.

My naturalistic inquiry seeks to understand the impact of this program in a rural region by examining its meaning to the Senior Companion volunteers, their clients, and other community members. I chose Washington County as the site of my study both because of its rural nature and because about half of SCP volunteers and clients in Maine reside there—a historical phenomenon due in part to Washington County's being one of the original national pilot sites for the SCP.

During the past year, I have interviewed nearly one hundred people about their experiences with the program and its impact on the community at large. I am currently analyzing the vast amount of qualitative data obtained from my lengthy interviews. Additionally, I am calculating scores on several standardized scales (measuring such things as depression, loneliness, and social networks) incorporated in the volunteer and client interviews. Preliminary findings indicate that the SCP reinforces existing community bonds, reduces isolation, and facilitates frail elders' ability to remain in their own homes. For volunteers, the program provides structure and meaning in their lives and the stipends are essential for their basic living expenses. Volunteer visits appear to lessen client anxiety and to provide a positive regular event to which clients look forward.

Sandra S. Butler is Associate Professor of Social Work at the University of Maine.

Spring 2003 Programs Planned

PEGS EXPANDS IN 2003

The Center on Aging is proud to announce the second annual Professional Excellence in Geriatrics Series (PEGS). Scheduled for March and April, the PEGS 2003 continuing-education series will feature ten sessions in four different locations: Lewiston, Bangor, Belfast, and Caribou. This year we are also excited to be able to use interactive television to broadcast some sessions to the University of Southern Maine in Portland and the University of Maine in Farmington. Topics scheduled for PEGS 2003 include pharmacotherapy, advance directives, long-term-care planning, chronic illness in families, aphasia, geriatric rehabilitation, mental health services for older adults, and advances in treating Alzheimer's disease. See our website or call the Center on Aging for details about each session, information about professional continuing education credits, and registration information.

GERIATRIC ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT (GOLD) SEMINARS SCHEDULED

Offered at various locations throughout Maine in May 2003, these state-of-the-art continuing education seminars provide tools for health and human service administrators, managers, and planners in maximizing their organizations' effectiveness and efficiency in serving older adults. Each expert-driven seminar offers the most current strategies for achieving organizational excellence and is locally sponsored by highly respected elder-service agencies.

This year the GOLD Seminars will be led by Professor of Management John F. Mahon of the University of Maine Business School. His series entitled "Leadership in Uncertain and Turbulent Times" will be held May 13, 15, and 16, 2003 in Belfast, Augusta, and Presque Isle respectively. For more information about the GOLD Seminars, contact the Center on Aging.

PLANNING UNDERWAY FOR SECOND ANNUAL MAY FESTIVAL

Planning has begun for the second annual May Festival, a two-day celebration of older adults in our community. Scheduled for May 9-10, May Festival 2003 will take place in the newly remodeled Norumbega Hall and several other venues in downtown Bangor, and will feature many special events for area elders and their families. Among these are a banquet luncheon with entertainment, the showing of a classic film, a scavenger hunt, a folk concert, an evening dance, and more. The cost of admission to all events will be modest, thanks to generous support from a number of community sponsors. Volunteers to help plan and put on May Festival are very welcome.



I/ we want to make a gift in support of the UMaine Center on Aging and its programs in service to Maine's older adults, their families, and their communities.

Enclosed please find a check for \$ _____ Please charge my account for \$ _____

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Please send information about:

- Making a gift of securities, other appreciated assets, or a bequest to the Center on Aging
- Making a gift that will provide a lifetime income for another person or myself
- Establishing a scholarship or endowment to provide annual support

Return to: Center on Aging, University of Maine, 5770 Social Work Bldg., Orono, ME 04469-5770

FACULTY

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Hicks, Deborah B. Killam, Carol H. Kim, Dorothy Klimis-Zacas, Judy Kuhns-Hastings, Bill Kuykendall, Owen J. Logue, Robert M. Milardo, Jay Peters, Pat Pierson, Mickey R. Pike, Michael A. Robbins, Valerie C. Sauda, Susan S. Sullivan, Judy P. Walker, and Jeffrey Wren.

Representing the University of Maine at Farmington is Bertram H. Jacobs. Kim-Anne Perkins represents the University of Maine at Presque Isle.

Faculty Associates from the University of Southern Maine are E. Michael Brady, J. Michael Cruz, Bonnie Cashin Farmer, Margaret A. Fournier, Tara C. Healy, Jane Marie Kirschling, Kali Lightfoot, Nancy E. Richeson, and Romaine Turyn.

Additional information about the Faculty Associates' departmental affiliations and professional interests is available on the Center on Aging website.

Recent Publications by UMaine Faculty Associates

- Butler, S. S. (2002). Guest editor's message: Geriatric care management with sexual minorities. *Geriatric Care Management Journal* 12(3), 2-3. Butler was guest editor on this issue of the journal devoted to elder GLBT issues.
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- Cruikshank, M. (2002). *Learning to be old: Gender, culture, and aging*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Orr, N., & Dooly, C. (2000). The effects of a university-based employee health promotion program on cardiovascular risk profiles. *Medicine and Science in Sport and Exercise*, 32(5), 126.
- Richeson, N. E., & McCullough, W. T. (2000, Fall). An evidence-based animal-assisted therapy protocol and flow sheet for the geriatric recreation therapy practice. *American Journal of Recreation Therapy*, 25-31.
- Richeson, N., & Thorson, J. A. (2002). The effect of autobiographical writing on the subjective well-being of older adults. *North American Journal of Psychology*, (4)3.



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