

ICGI

Ithaca College Gerontology Institute
Division of Interdisciplinary and International Studies

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The Ithaca College Gerontology Institute newsletter is designed to keep the campus and community informed of institute activities and other events related to the field of gerontology. Our address is ICGI Newsletter, Ithaca College, 407 Center for Health Sciences, Ithaca, NY 14850; phone 607-274-1965; website www.ithaca.edu/aging.

Commencement 2005

Ithaca's Division of Interdisciplinary and International Studies is pleased to announce that three gerontology majors, Jessica McNamara, Andrew Baker, and Dominique Guadalupe, participated in the 110th Commencement at Ithaca College's Butterfield Stadium on Sunday, May 15. Diplomas and gerontology awards were presented at the division's reception immediately following the Commencement ceremony.

Dominique Guadalupe entered IC as an occupational therapy major with a minor in gerontology. In her sophomore year, due to her newfound enthusiasm for the field of aging, she changed her major to gerontology with a minor in sociology. Guadalupe plans to enter nursing school in the fall.

Andrew Baker will spend the summer in Ithaca completing an internship at the Reconstruction Home and Health Care Center. Baker's minor was in health services administration. He plans to pursue a graduate degree in health care administration but will take a breather first. Baker feels that options for gerontology majors are unlimited.

Jessica McNamara is considering two options for graduate study: nursing or health care administration. After taking the Introduction to Gerontology course,



Jessica McNamara, Andrew Baker, and Dominique Guadalupe

she changed her major to gerontology with a minor in psychology in recognition of the variety of career choices available in the field of aging. McNamara has enjoyed the one-on-one relationships with professors and recognizes that the major offers good preparation for graduate school.

The Gerontology Institute presents awards to graduating students in the gerontology program each year at the Commencement reception. This year Dominique Guadalupe received the Gerontology Academic Achievement Award. Gerontology minor and physical therapy major Elizabeth Ruckert was awarded the 2005 Loren Klausner Colbert Gerontology Service Award. Ruckert will complete her master's degree in physical therapy on IC's Rochester campus next year.

We wish our graduates the best of luck and want them to know that their presence will be missed at the institute.

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Notes from the Director

by **John A. Krout**

Director, Ithaca College Gerontology Institute

Welcome to the spring edition of our newsletter. A number of exciting activities have kept us busy during the winter months. We began an evaluation of the impact that participation in the Ithaca College–Longview partnership has on student attitudes and learning and resident quality of life. Institute staff completed a detailed survey of the gerontological education and training interests of health professionals in western New York that will help us plan future training initiatives. Faculty provided students with exciting professional opportunities through the James J. Whalen Academic Symposium presentations, and along with staff, the faculty continued to play key roles in the state gerontological society. Rosemary

Bakker kicked off our visiting scholar program and energized faculty and students to consider more carefully the importance of design features for living long and living well.

This issue begins a new feature entitled “Aging Briefs.” The new section will present brief essays on a gerontological topic that reflect the activities of the institute and that we think will be of interest to our readers. Rural aging, a topic that is central to our outreach and education efforts and of particular interest to me, is the inaugural topic. I hope you will enjoy this new feature. Our faculty, staff, and students send you best wishes for the spring and summer. See you in the fall and, as always, thank you for your interest in the Gerontology Institute.

Ithaca College–Longview Partnership Thrives and Evaluates

After six years in existence, the Ithaca College–Longview partnership continues to evolve. In fall 2004 approximately 300 students, 32 faculty, and five staff members were involved in more than 50 Longview-related activities. A few highlights include a series of gardening workshops offered by occupational therapy students, a Halloween party put on by a Recreation Leadership class, an exhibit of interactive nutrition education displays developed by a Nutrition for the Older Adult class, and a complete update of the Longview website by a Digital Journalism class. In addition, 14 residents audited classes during the fall semester, including Poetry Writing,

Behavioral Neuroscience, Front Page Public Health, U.S. Politics, and Contemporary Women’s Literature.

The Gerontology Institute has initiated an evaluation of the IC-Longview partnership that involves two studies. The first study is an examination of student attitudes and satisfaction before and after involvement in certain activities at Longview. The second study, an in-person survey of residents, will provide information on the impact that partnership activities have had on resident quality of life. Four gerontology students have been trained to administer this survey and will be meeting with resident participants during the spring semester.

Sigma Phi Omega Induction

On March 18, 2005, the national academic honor and professional society in gerontology, Sigma Phi Omega, inducted 10 new student members into Ithaca College's Gamma Nu chapter. The new members are Allyson Benvenuti '05, Christina Berger '05, Joy Bostrom '05, Kristen Fredriksen '06, Heather Henebery '05, Sylvie Kamlet '05, Rebecca Knauer, Stacy Kuzmick '06, Joanna Meinhart '07, and Julie Savage '06.

At this year's installation of new members, Sigma Phi Omega also inducted community member Irene Stein, Ph.D. Stein is the director of the Tompkins County Office for the Aging and the first community member inducted into the society.

Stein was the featured speaker for the evening. In her speech, she emphasized the following to the students: "It makes good economic sense that many of you have chosen to focus on gerontology or in other fields where seniors represent a large percentage of your clients. Demographic trends suggest that there will be a great many of those clients." She also recommended the following: "Focus on expanding your knowledge as widely as possible, regardless of where your first job takes you.



Back: Allyson Benvenuti, Kristen Fredriksen, Heather Henebery, Stacy Kuzmick, and Julie Savage. Front: Joy Bostrom, Joanna Meinhart, and Irene Stein.

The broader your vision, the more opportunity you will identify, and the more you will tailor your career choices to your own needs and talents; but never, never forget that it is the whole individual, not someone with housing repair needs, or cancer, or stroke, or income assistance needs, but a whole individual who presents a unique opportunity for helping maintain independence and a good quality of life." This is good advice for all of us.

South Hill to East Hill

Juliette Ramírez Corazón's four-month assessment of existing interest in training opportunities on aging issues for health professionals in rural New York is complete. Results of this project will help direct the Gerontology Institute's future training programs for health care professionals.

With the completion of this assessment, Ramírez Corazón has left Ithaca College. We are happy to report that she has accepted a position at Cornell University as an assistant dean in the College of Arts and Sciences, working with Latino students.

"Senior Prom"

Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services (INHS) will sponsor a "senior prom" at the Holiday Inn, downtown Ithaca, on Friday, June 17. All residents of Tompkins County born before 1950 are invited.

The prom is being sponsored by INHS as part of National NeighborWorks Week to get people out and about in good weather, so they can renew old friendships and enjoy being a part of the community. INHS hopes to bring attention to their mini-repair program, which provides maintenance and repairs to the homes of low-income seniors and the disabled in order to help them continue living safely in their own homes.

Please contact Kristin Hamill at 607-277-4500 for prom details and ticket information or for details about the mini-repair program.



by
John A. Krout, Ph.D.

Aging Briefs: Rural Elders

Introduction

In 2000, 24 percent of the 65-and-over population—8.3 million people—lived in nonmetropolitan areas. Data on nonmetropolitan counties are very often used to describe and analyze “rural” life. (This practice has a number of drawbacks that cannot be discussed here due to insufficient space.) More rural states have larger percentages of their older populations living in rural places. These more rural areas of the country include midwestern, southern, and a few New England states. Of the states in these areas, the biggest ones—Texas, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina—tend to have the largest number of rural elders. In general, the more rural a community is the greater the percentage of the population that is 65 and over. Nationally, people 65 and older account for 14.7 percent of the population in nonmetropolitan counties and 11.9 percent in metropolitan counties. For New York State, where counties with fewer than 200,000 people are defined as rural, 15 percent of the population, or 450,000 people, are 65 and over.

Who Are the Rural Elderly?

The diversity of rural communities supports an equally diverse rural older population. So, no one profile of this population is accurate or can be relied upon for program planning or practice. However, national data suggest some important observations about who the rural elderly are. In general, rural areas have higher percentages

of people in the 65–74 and 75–84 age groups when compared with nonrural areas. Gender ratios in rural areas are more balanced, especially in farm communities, meaning that the numbers of older men relative to older women are closer to being equal, and rural elders are more likely to be married. Nationally, the great majority of rural elders are white, and over 90 percent of black rural elders live in the South. But these data should not divert us from recognizing that social and racial diversity is an important aspect of rural aging, nationally and locally. Rural elders have lower income levels than their urban counterparts.

Myths and Realities of the Rural Elderly

To understand the needs of the rural elderly, we first must identify and refute the myths of rural aging. The myths are that rural elders

- live on farms and are all alike;
- are healthier and happier because they are more active and live in bucolic settings;
- are better able to make ends meet and take care of themselves;
- are surrounded by large, supportive kin networks that can meet any need that arises;
- live comfortably in the old homestead; and
- have less need for health and social services.

The realities are far different. Rural elders

- generally do not live on farms;
- are very diverse;
- have fewer community-based services available to them and experience more gaps in the continuum of care;

- have to travel farther for everyday basics and rely heavily on themselves, family, or friends for transportation;
- have fewer economic resources and opportunities and lower incomes;
- live in older, less adequate housing;
- are less healthy and have poorer diets; and
- have no more extensive or supportive caregiver networks than their nonrural counterparts.

Programming to Meet Rural Elder Needs

Many factors serve as barriers to meeting the needs of rural elders.

Key barriers include

- access problems (transportation, income) caused by small population size and low densities;
- lack of resources to support a full range of service options;
- lack of qualified practitioners and training programs on the unique skills needed for rural practice;
- lack of information on effective rural service delivery models; and
- lack of adequate and appropriate data for rural planning and policy making.

Despite these barriers, rural community resources are critical to meeting needs. Successful programs take advantage of and support community, social, cultural, and organizational systems, especially indigenous helping networks such as church, family, and neighbors. Flexibility, coordination of resources, innovation, and a good dose of “common sense” are also generally required. Examples drawn from my research include

- caregiver education that involves public health nurses and church parishioners;

- transportation using paid “volunteer” neighbors and family rather than vans with fixed routes;
- partnerships among schools, hospitals, and nutrition programs to lower food costs;
- multiple-county housing coalitions that tap into federal dollars for home repair and modification; and
- partnerships among nursing homes, senior centers, and hospitals to build congregate housing.

Summary

The development and implementation of successful and appropriate program responses to the needs of rural elders are constrained by myths that obscure the reality of aging in rural places. The lack of dollars, health and social service professionals, transportation, and understanding of rural diversity serve as barriers to providing services to this population. Successful program approaches do exist, but little evaluation research has been conducted on their operation, and the training of professionals for rural practice is lacking. Flexibility, innovation, and public and private collaboration are important ingredients for local responses to local needs. Federal and state agencies can serve rural elders best by providing more recognition of rural needs, more dollars, more flexibility, and more education and training resources.

Gerontology Students Present at Whalen Symposium

Five gerontology students from the Division of Interdisciplinary and International Studies participated in the eighth annual James J. Whalen Academic Symposium on April 6, 2005. All five presentations were convened by Patricia Lynott, Ph.D., an assistant professor with the Gerontology Institute.

The James J. Whalen Academic Symposium showcases the collaborative research and creative activity between students and faculty at Ithaca College. The symposium affords students the opportunity to give oral presentations on their senior and honors thesis projects, as well as independent research.

Karisha Wilcox '05 presented “Older Renters: Challenges and Solutions” and was sponsored by Mary Ann Erickson, Ph.D., an assistant professor with the Gerontology Institute.



Jessica McNamara, Bernard Hogben, Emily Kepler, Andrew Baker, and Karisha Wilcox

Other presentations included “Unsung Heroines of Their Institutions: The Work Environment of Rural Nurses Aides” by Emily Kepler '06, “The Snoezelen Method: A New Alternative in Dementia Therapy” by Andrew Baker '05, “Crossing Borders” by Jessica McNamara '05, and “Spirituality and Support Networks: The Ubiquitous Relationship” by Bernard Hogben '05. All four of the preceding presentations were sponsored by Patricia Lynott.

Congratulations to all student presenters and Patty Lynott on a job well done.

Bakker Engages Students

Rosemary Bakker, a certified interior designer and research associate in gerontologic design in medicine at the Weill Medical College of Cornell University visited Ithaca College for four days in March. Bakker was the inaugural visiting scholar at the Gerontology Institute. While in Ithaca, Bakker guest lectured in seven classes, gave a faculty colloquium, and presented a public lecture at Ithaca College on design and environment. She also spent some time with colleagues at Cornell University. Student and faculty found her research and teaching style both engaging and educational.



Rosemary Bakker

Gerontology Major Spends Semester in Sweden

Andrew Baker, one of this year's gerontology graduates, spent the fall 2004 semester at Jönköping University in Jönköping, Sweden. Baker is the first gerontology student to participate in the exchange program between the two schools.

There was no real language barrier as most Swedes speak at least a little English, but Baker had to be aggressive in making connections, as the Swedes tended to be very shy. However, once Baker established a connection, he found them to be very friendly.

Baker learned that Sweden's "baby boom" generation is approximately 10 years behind the U.S. population of baby boomers. Following World War II, Sweden experienced an industrial revolution of sorts and birth rates rose in the mid-1950s. This is just one of the differences between the aging cohorts in the United States and Sweden.

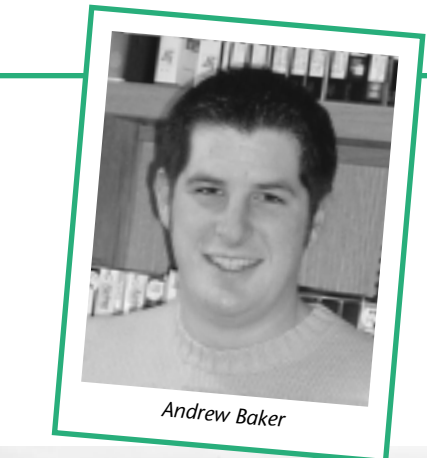
Aging and retirement in Sweden differ significantly from the United States. Foremost is that retirement in Sweden is mandatory at age 65, with rare exceptions. In the United States many retirees are involved in volunteer work, but in Sweden this concept has

not been embraced, as it is felt that volunteers take jobs away from wage earners. Therefore, Swedes travel a great deal in their retirement years, and adult day care centers abound.

Central health care centers are conveniently located throughout Sweden and attend to the physical, mental, optical, and dental health of all citizens. As much as possible, health care issues are dealt with over the telephone. Questions about medications, clarification of a physician's orders, or general health concerns are

answered over the phone by a registered nurse. If an office visit is deemed appropriate, an appointment is made. Central health care centers also arrange for home care services.

Health care aides in Sweden are referred to as "undernurses," and



Andrew Baker



Jönköping, Sweden

they do a great deal more than their U.S. counterparts. For example, undernurses administer medications including narcotic drugs. Baker perceived the pay scale as equivalent to U.S. pay levels. Male nurses in Sweden are more common due to fairly recent regulations stating that all emergency medical technicians (EMTs) be registered nurses. Baker followed a male nurse on three home visits; these visits enabled Baker to glimpse the homes and lifestyles of Swedes.

Joining Baker during the fall 2004 semester at Jönköping University was Megan Anderer '07, an Ithaca College occupational therapy major. During the spring 2005 semester Therese Astbrant, from Sweden, studied at the Roy H. Park School of Communications.

In Print

A recent publication by an Ithaca College Gerontology Institute fellow: "The Volunteer and the Sannyasin: Archetypes of Retirement in America and India," by Joel Savishinsky, Department of Anthropology. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development: A Journal of Psychosocial Gerontology*, Volume 59, Number 1. 2004.

Institute Participates in Roundtable on Long-Term Care

Four institute staff participated in a February 17, 2005, community roundtable entitled "Aging and Long-Term Care: How Do We Make It Better" in Tompkins County. The community event drew more than 100 participants and was organized by the Community Foundation of Tompkins County (CFTC). John Krout, Gerontology Institute director and CFTC board member, made the opening and closing remarks and participated in the roundtable's planning committee. Roundtable participants worked in groups to consider how people define their expectations about aging and how they make decisions and mobilize resources around long-term care issues. They also identified gaps and barriers to receiving appropriate long-term care locally and the steps older people, family members, community organizations, and businesses can take to improve the understanding of long-term care issues and the availability of resources to respond to long-term care needs. More details on the roundtable proceedings are available on the CFTC's website at www.communityfoundationoftc.org.

The Changing Face of Aging

"The Changing Face of Aging" was the theme for the 2005 joint conference of the American Society on Aging and the National Council on the Aging, held in Philadelphia in March. The conference included approximately 4,000 attendees and over 800 presentations.

Four Gerontology Institute faculty and staff and two gerontology students attended this year's conference. John Krout and Chris Pogorzala from the institute presented a lecture titled "Learning Together: An

Intergenerational Partnership between a College and a Residential Facility for Older Adults." Krout and Mary Ann Erickson, an assistant professor at the institute, presented a research application titled "The Relationship between Health and Well-Being and Residential Environments among Older Adults." Karisha Wilcox '05, a gerontology major, and Erickson presented a poster session titled "Older Renters: Challenges and Solutions." Terry Beckley, outreach program coordinator, and IC student Joanna Meinhart '07 also attended.

Caregiving Conference at Ithaca College

On September 22, 2005, the Ithaca College Gerontology Institute's annual conference will be held in Emerson Suites, Phillips Hall, on the Ithaca College campus. This year's conference is going to look at professional and family caregiving.

A committee of aging service professionals from Ithaca has met to narrow down this incredibly diverse topic to what is deemed most relevant to regional caregivers. Topics include the following:

- Professional staff retention
- Caring for the caregiver
- Stress reduction for both professional and family caregivers ("burnout" prevention)
- Crisis and conflict interventions
- Accessing supports and links
- Nursing home placement
- Discharge planning
- End of life

We will be identifying expert speakers throughout the spring to address these issues. Our summer/fall newsletter, which will be published in early September, will provide complete information on the conference. Please mark September 22, 2005, on your calendars and plan to attend.

Annual SSA Conference Close to Home

The State Society on Aging (SSA) of New York's annual conference will be close to home this year. From October 19 to 21, 2005, the Turning Stone Casino Resort located in Verona, New York, will host the three-day conference titled "Aging Today and Tomorrow: The Community of New York State." For additional information contact either Terry Beckley, ICGI outreach program coordinator, at 607-274-1967 or Sarah Panepinto, SSA program chair, at 718-584-9000, extension 3803.



Calendar of Events

- June 15** **Alzheimer's Medical Update and Review**
6:00–7:30 p.m.
Alterra Sterling House
607-256-2580 for information
- September 18** **Central New York Alzheimer's Association**
Memory Walk 2005
Alterra Sterling House and Clare Bridge Cottage
800-272-3900 for information
- September 22** **ICGI's Annual Conference**
Caregiving: Formal and Informal
Emerson Suites, Phillips Hall, Ithaca College
607-274-1967 for information