

Robert Gillette of
the American House
Foundation distributes
food to older adults.

transitions

INSTITUTE OF GERONTOLOGY

Promoting Successful Aging in Detroit and Beyond

Spring 2008

New American House Foundation Provides Relief for Detroit Area Seniors

The Gillette family, founders of American House Senior Living Residences, has created the American House Foundation (AHF) to help older adults in the Detroit community and to fund research at the Institute of Gerontology. AHF kicked off its giving on December 20 by distributing

100 bags of food and 100 gift certificates to low income and homeless seniors identified by the Detroit Citizens for Better Care. The organization also surveyed recipients to identify and help those who will need additional assistance.

The Gillettes' goal for the charitable trust is to raise \$500,000 within five years. AHF's initial fund drive conducted over the Christmas holidays yielded \$50,000 in corporate and individual donations. The mission of the foundation is to subsidize local companies to assist older adults in need; to fund education and outreach programs run by local organizations; and to endow research

continued on page 2

"We've raised \$50,000 in just four months, but the need is great and growing."

- Rob Gillette

IOG Students Explain Latest Brain Research

Karen Rodrigue and Kristen Kennedy love to look at brains. For seven years, they've analyzed hundreds of them, meticulously outlining brain structures to chart changes to their size and shape. Thirty years ago, participating brains would have come from people no longer needing them. Today, subjects in brain research sacrifice only a few hours of time and make a trip through an MRI machine. "Technology has opened a big door for brain research," Dr. Kennedy said. "We follow the MRI advances wherever they lead."

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) allows the delineation of structures deep within the brain; functional MRIs show brain activity as the person is completing a task. "We can compare changes in the brain's structure against changes in how the brain solves problem or retrieves information," said Dr. Rodrigue. This has yielded important results. "We've learned, for example, that a smaller hippocampus correlates with memory problems," she.

continued on page 4

research
education
outreach
partnerships



Healthier Black Elders Event Expands To Eastern Market

Detroit's annual health reception hosted by the Healthier Black Elders Center (HBEC) of Wayne State University and the University of Michigan has a new home this year. Bert's Warehouse Theater, in the heart of historic Eastern Market and flanked by vendors of fresh foods and live flowers, will house the event and its estimated 1,000 attendees this June. "We've found an excellent fit for our event that continues to attract increasingly larger numbers of Detroit seniors," said HBEC Director Olivia Washington, Ph.D.

"HBEC teaches older adults the primary factors needed for healthy aging: eating well, community involvement, appropriate exercising such as walking, socializing, and regular check-ups. Eastern Market reinforces these values. We walk through the market; we buy fresh, nutritious foods; we meet friends, we support the community. This venue amplifies our message."

The 2008 program, "Enhancing Soulful Living by Remaining Healthier," features brief speeches by Dr. Robert Chapman, director of the Josephine Ford Cancer Center and Mr. Jay Butler, radio personality and WLQV program director. Both speakers will inspire the audience to make healthy choices and embrace preventative medical care to insure a good quality of life. All attendees are eligible for free health screenings to detect high

blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. The Visiting Nurses Association of Southeastern Michigan will distribute free vouchers for a Falls and Balance assessment in the home, and for a shingles vaccine. "Fresh Farmers" will offer produce that day at an adjacent shed.

Former Detroit Lion Ernie Clark will lead heart-pumping chair exercises to work up an appetite for the hot lunch of soulful and healthful foods. Legendary saxophonist Charlie Gabriel – with special guest Marcus Belgrave will serenade the diners. Afterward, the Two Left Feet Dancers, will teach simple yet fun hustle steps to improve strength, balance, rhythm and flexibility. The glamorous Stubbs Girls close the day with hits from the 1940s through 90s, complete with singalongs.

Music has been integral to the annual HBEC event since its inception six years ago for good

reason. Research has shown music to be so beneficial to the health of older adults that Congress enacted the Music Therapy for Older Americans Act in 1991 to promote its benefits. An ongoing 2001 study, funded in part by the National Institute of Mental Health and AARP, found that older adults involved in musical programs reported better health, fewer falls, increased social interaction, less need to increase medications, and improvements in depression and loneliness.

"Music speaks to all ages in a language that penetrates and renews," said Dr. Washington. "If we are serious as a culture in wanting to improve the health of our urban elders, we must creatively expand our approach and relate in ways that touch everyone. The musical component of our HBEC reception reaches deeper than even the most eloquent words to touch the spirit of all who attend."

Enhancing Soulful Living by Remaining Healthier
FREE to persons at least 55 years old and their immediate family or caregivers
 Tuesday, June 3rd, 10 am - 2:15 pm
 Bert's Warehouse Theater, 2727 Russell St., Detroit, 48207
FREE Parking in the open lot across from the theater

Guests who need assistance may be dropped off directly in front of the theater. For more information contact Karen Daniels: 313-871-0735 or visit, www.iog.wayne.edu/outreach.php.

American House Foundation Provides Relief for Detroit Area Seniors

continued from page 1

at the IOG to improve the mental and physical health of diverse groups of older adults.

Rob Gillette is vice-president of American House Senior Living Residences whose 31 facilities currently house approximately 3,300 seniors. He has long been concerned about the quality of life for older adults who are not in appropriate housing and have few financial or personal resources. "Many elderly persons are alone with no one to help them get what they need to thrive," Gillette said.

"I want every business and service organization to be our eyes in the community," he said, "to spot the older person in need and help us to help them." Whether it's a wheelchair, an access ramp, a mental health evaluation, or a ride to the doctors, AHF will consider all requests.

The foundation returns 70% of all monies raised directly to older adults in need. The remaining 30% goes toward IOG research aimed at helping Detroit's elderly prevent health, transportation, housing and disability problems. Their motto is: "Resources for today. Research for tomorrow."

The IOG has a 42-year track record of researching important issues that translate to real benefits to the older community," said Institute Director Peter Lichtenberg, Ph.D. Potential research projects include identifying depression in the elderly, comparing aging-in-place with moving to a care facility, and improving the health of African Americans and Hispanics as they age. The Institute has named AHF its first Legacy Sponsor in honor of the size and perpetual nature of this gift.

Persons interested in applying for aid or donating to the AHF should phone 313-875-6834 or e-mail Terri at tbailey@wayne.edu for forms.

Older Adults Gamble Away Good Health

Detroit is the largest city in the U.S. with casino gambling, making gambling an easily accessible activity for older urban adults. Each day hundreds of thousands of adults, age 60 and older, gamble in what is thought to be a harmless pastime. Casino gambling also continues its rapid expansion nationwide, with the number of older adults who visit casinos doubling since 1975.

IOG Director Peter Lichtenberg, Ph.D., published research in January involving a random sample of 1,410 seniors. The results verified that one of every five older adults who enter a casino display problem gambling behaviors. Urban elders, especially are vulnerable to these problems because a higher percentage of them are of low income, have few social supports, and are in poor mental and physical health. Often other serious problems such as depression, personality disorders and even suicide, are found along with pathological or addictive gambling.

Health may be the key factor in predisposing an older adult to a gambling problem. Older adults with minor physical disabilities that make it difficult for them to walk, exercise or engage in interesting activities may be drawn to the casino atmosphere, since gambling is a physically passive activity that provides an exciting adrenaline boost.

Persons in poor health have few options for activities that excite the senses, so gambling can quickly become a preferred pastime.

"We also found that older adults who don't have a social support network are at higher risk of problems with

gambling," Dr. Lichtenberg said. "Gambling may fill that social void in their life. Sitting in a casino with hundreds of other people nearby can give a sense of being socially connected, even though each person plays separate games. Older adults with other choices for social interaction become less dependent on gambling as their only outlet."

Former Howell attorney, Michael Burke, 62, knows firsthand the destruction that problem gambling can wreak. In fewer than five years, he lost his law practice, his freedom and nearly his life. To support his gambling habit, he embezzled millions of dollars from his legal clients, lied to his wife and two daughters,

and fell so low that one night he put a gun to his head. Fortunately he did not pull the trigger. But he did go to Jackson Prison for three years. "It starts innocently," he said. You buy a scratch-off ticket. You take a seniors trip to a casino for a little fun. You win. Then you want to win again. You don't even register all the losses. You're obsessed with the win. "Some people can walk away," he added. "But many of us can't."

Dr. Lichtenberg and Burke believe that as the casino industry expands in the U.S. and gambling becomes more socially acceptable at all ages, casino owners and the government have a responsibility to understand these problems and try to prevent them. "Additional research would help us determine the extent of the problem and how to protect those who are most vulnerable, such as our urban elders," Dr. Lichtenberg said.

If you, or someone you care about, seem to have trouble controlling the amount of time or money spent at casinos, call the 24-hour, toll-free Gamblers Helpline at 1-800-270-7117 (also able to assist the hearing impaired). For website information, please try www.GamblersAnonymous.org.



"Gambling may fill that social void in their life. Sitting in a casino with hundreds of other people nearby can give a sense of being socially connected, even though each person plays separate games."

- Dr. Lichtenberg



IOG Co-Chairs David and Esther Howell Win Community Champion Award

CHAMPION – (1) one who strongly supports a person or a cause. (2) preeminent.

Esther and David Howell, co-chairs of the IOG's board of visitors, won the 2008 Community Champion Award for Volunteerism from Molina Healthcare of Michigan. The coveted award recognizes superior effort and achievement in improving the health and well-being of under-served people in the community. The Howells will receive a trophy and special recognition at Molina's April awards banquet. The IOG receives a \$1,000 grant as their sponsoring organization.

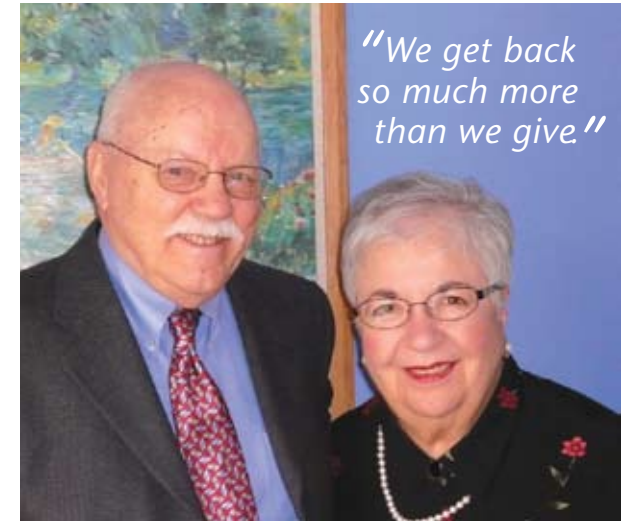
"We were surprised by the award," said David, "but most pleased by Peter's of us nomination. One of the best things about working with the IOG is the people, including faculty, staff, and especially Peter. The biggest reward is knowing we're appreciated."

David, 79, had a successful 37-year career as a certified public accountant before becoming an active volunteer in aging issues. "Esther is

the expert in aging," he offered readily. "She's got all the training and experience. I learned about it by driving her to meetings, waiting in the audience and listening." Though not a gerontologist, David's business and accounting experience are precious assets on the IOG board. He once worked on Wayne State budgets and knows how universities operate.

Esther, 77, served as commissioner for the Michigan Office to the Service of the Aging for 14 years. Almost 40 years ago, she introduced a social gerontology curriculum to Wayne County Community College -- well ahead of its time. "When I first started talking to administrators about the need for this coursework, she said, "they'd never heard of gerontology."

Esther credits her success to the tenacity she inherited from her Armenian father. He immigrated to America as a boy and worked himself through the Detroit College of Medicine (now WSU School of Medicine) to become a physician. "He had Herculean drive," she said. "Sometimes



that's what it takes to get things done."

This dynamic duo has led the IOG board in new and fruitful directions. They oversaw the creation of a partnerships approach to fund-raising, a rarity in academic circles but now garnering nearly \$500,000 in donations each year. The Howells hands-on leadership ensures that IOG expenditures support its core values: educating students, conducting research that is relevant in design and meticulous in execution, and improving the health of Detroit's seniors.

Post-doctoral Students Explain Latest Brain Research

continued from page 1

Drs. Kennedy and Rodrigue, who received their doctorates in 2007 in the cognitive neuroscience area of psychology, work in the laboratory of IOG faculty member Naftali Raz, Ph.D. Dr. Raz is internationally recognized as an expert in brain structure. In 2005, the National Institutes of Health recognized Dr. Raz's abilities with a five-year, \$3 million MERIT award to fund his study into brain changes as we age, especially the effects of vascular health.

Drs. Rodrigue and Kennedy are honored to be an integral part of Dr. Raz's unique approach to brain research. The goal is a 10-year study of the brains of 300 healthy persons, age 18 to 85. Each person will have follow-up testing every two years. Though all subjects begin the study in good health, researchers expect that illness will strike at least a few persons over the course of the study. This will allow researchers to study changes to the normal, healthy brain over time, and how a significant cardiovascular event affects the structure and function of a previously healthy brain. A stroke, heart attack, or the onset of high blood pressure are known to adversely affect brain health.

"The value of understanding the brain's response to these kinds of illnesses,"

said Dr. Rodrigue, "is that they are modifiable. We can give people ways to avoid these problems and protect their brains." Everyone's brain tissue decreases with age, but persons with cardiovascular fitness show significantly less loss. "We've learned so much working with Dr. Raz," Dr. Kennedy said. "We are trained to expertly conduct brain tracings by hand. This is extremely time-consuming but more accurate than computerized tracings, and gives us a strong foundation in neuroanatomy. There are no shortcuts in brain research if your goal is good science."

They hope to increase their knowledge of brain function, because the most effective cognitive neuroscience research requires expertise in both structure and function. As technology advances, more brain frontiers open. To stay at the leading edge of their field, Drs. Rodrigue and Kennedy must continuously master new technologies.

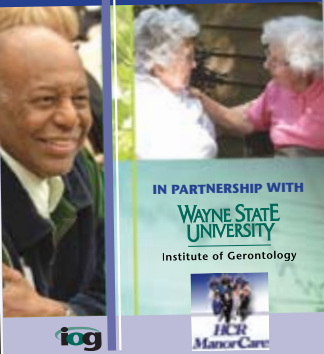
A daunting task for most, but both women embrace their need to be life-long learners. "A good way to keep your brain healthy is to stay intellectually active," Dr. Kennedy said. "One of the best ways to stay mentally stimulated is to be a psychology professor specializing in cognitive neuroscience."

Dr. Rodrigue agrees. "We will never stop learning."

MiOTA
Michigan Occupational Therapy Association
CONTINUING EDUCATION CONFERENCE
May 3, 2008

**Aging and Mental Health
Training Program:**

Enhancing
Occupational Therapy
Practice



Supported By:
Michigan Occupational Therapy Association (MiOTA)
and grant funding from the Retirement Research
Foundation to WSU's Institute of Gerontology

New Occupational Therapy Training Program Premiers at Annual MiOTA Conference

Occupational therapists (OTs) in Michigan will soon add a new teaching tool to their arsenal: a DVD training program that explains how OTs can help with common mental health issues faced by older adults.

“Integrating Mental Health into OT Practice with Older Adults” takes a fresh approach to training that includes video segments of actual patients being assessed and treated by

health practitioners. The assessment tools focus on cognition, depression, medical treatment adherence, alcohol use, caregiver well-being, and falls and balance. A full-day conference for OTs in Troy on May 3 will present the training program worth six continuing education credits for participants.

“The chance to see how therapists relate to patients in real situations adds a dimension of relevance that other training modes lack,” said Dr. Lichtenberg who headed this project with IOG faculty member, Cathy Lysack, Ph.D. The program is divided into six sections that allow occupational therapists to integrate mental health and treatment into their existing practice. The Retirement Research Foundation funded the development of this training series and HCR ManorCare sponsored the conference.

The six DVDs include expert commentary by rehabilitation experts, physical and occupational therapists, a geropsychologist and a pharmacist. They also include a documented presentation and video clips of patient/therapist interactions to illustrate the curriculum. A seventh DVD includes the full-length video assessments for persons in-

terested in more detailed observation. The training package also includes a CD-ROM of resource materials, such as tests, assessments, bibliographies and references that OTs can quickly access for patient treatment.

The materials have already been successfully tested on several smaller groups of OTs in the Detroit area. Therapists found the material new and relevant, said they would use it in practice, and felt it gave them more confidence in dealing with mental issues in their older adult patients. Follow-up evaluation revealed that after receiving the training therapists were changing their practices, including giving more mental health assessments. The boxed set of materials is designed for self-administration and pacing but can also be used in group teaching situations.

Drs. Lichtenberg and Lysack are proud to partner with the Michigan Occupational Therapy Association (MiOTA) to put on their May 3

conference approximately 200 MiOTA members and non-members. The full-day program will combine live presentations with excerpts from the DVDs to closely follow the packaged training curriculum. “OTs who work closely with older adults know that mental health problems can pose a significant challenge to physical functioning and overall well-being,” said Dr. Lysack. “This training is ideal since it will strengthen the ability of OTs to identify problems before they escalate.”

The program takes place at the Management Education Center, 811 W. Square Lake Road, Troy, MI, 48098, from 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. To attend, please call 313-577-5883 or e-mail af7880@wayne.edu for a registration form. Cost for MiOTA members is \$25; non-members pay \$114. Lunch is included. The complete training package can be purchased at the conference.

PARTNERSHIP CORNER

Molina Offers Special Medicare Programs

The IOG is proud to have renewed its partnership with Molina Healthcare of Michigan. As a managed healthcare company, Molina distinguishes themselves with their service to patients who have traditionally faced barriers to quality healthcare, including individuals covered under Medicaid.

In the past year, Molina has enrolled over 1000 new members in a program called Molina Options Plus which provides insurance to patients who are eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid benefits. By going out into the community and working to identify these vulnerable individuals, Molina has been able to lower medical costs and provide additional much-needed medical aid (including free generic prescription drugs) to Michigan's under-served seniors.

As part of their commitment to correcting health disparities, Molina invests in community outreach, low-literacy and other educational programming. They were recently named among the 100 Best Corporate Citizens by *Business Ethics Magazine*.

To learn more about Molina Healthcare options for older adults, call 1-800-665-3072.



AWARDS to IOG STUDENTS & FACULTY

The Wayne State University **Distinguished Graduate Faculty Award** to IOG faculty member **Mark Luborsky, Ph.D.**, for teaching excellence and the national and international impact of his work in such diverse areas as spinal cord injury, HIV outcomes, hip fracture, and minority health disparities.



Dissertation Research Award to **Kristen Kennedy, Ph.D.** Dr. Kennedy receives \$1,000 toward costs for her dissertation research plus an announcement of the honor in the journal *Psychological Science Agenda*.

The **Julie A. Thomas Endowed Scholarship in Psychology** to pre-doctoral student **Andrew Bender** to acknowledge his excellent academic and research progress, and service to his department.

The **Elizabeth A. Olson Gerontology Education Memorial Award** to post-doctoral

fellow **Diane Adamo, Ph.D.**, for her outstanding poster on the influence of age on hand preference and physical activity.

A WSU Grant Award of \$10,000 to **Kay Cresci, Ph.D.**, of the IOG faculty toward her research into "Understanding Urban Elders' Interest and Ability to Use Information Technology to Manage Their Health."



SAVE THE DATE!

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Healthier Black Elders Center Annual Health Reception

Bigger and better than ever at its new Eastern Market venue.

Free and open to all persons at least 55 years old. See pg.2 article.

Tuesday, June 3, 10 am – 2:15 pm

Bert's Warehouse Theater

2727 Russell Street, Detroit, MI 48207

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Issues in Aging Two-Day Conference

May 12-13, 2008

Management Education Center

811 W. Square Lake Road, Troy, MI 48098

Day One – Alzheimer's and Dementia Treatments

Day Two – Maximizing Health in Older Adults

CE credits for physicians, nurses, nursing home administrators, and social workers.

\$200 for two days. Call 313-577-1180 or email dcme@med.wayne.edu to registration.

Editor/Writer - **CHERYL DEEP** • Graphic Designer - **CATHERINE BLASIO** • Photographer - **RICK BIELACZYC**

WAYNE STATE
UNIVERSITY

Institute of Gerontology

87 East Ferry Street

226 Knapp Building

Detroit, MI 48202

313.577.2297

www.iog.wayne.edu

Non-Profit
US Postage
PAID
Detroit, MI
Permit # 3844



Promoting Successful Aging in Detroit and Beyond