

The USC Student Gerontology Association Newsletter

Volume 3, Issue 2

October 2005

President's Message

Greetings everyone! I hope your semester is going well. I would like to thank all of the students and supporters of the Memory Walk. I would also like to thank the students who helped out with our bake sale at the Andrus Volunteers White Elephant sale. We raised money to help out with publicity for our student alumni dinner. I think a bake sale in conjunction with the White Elephant sale would be a great thing to have as an SGA fundraising event in years to come. First years, I would like to see more of you at the colloquiums. This last week we had Dr. Andrew Achenbaum. He was amazing and I encourage you to come to more of these talks. Don't forget that lunch is included! Also, please come to the Internship Information this Monday at 2:30 in room 219. Dr. Wilber and I will help clear up any confusion and answer any questions you may have about the program. Finally, I just wanted to say that I know this has been a very rigorous semester and adjusting to a graduate level of work can be hard. I hope you can keep in mind the passion that initially brought you to the field of gerontology. I also think at our next meeting we should plan to do something fun and relaxing for all of our hard working students. So keep this in mind and keep up the good work!



Good luck!
Theresa Schindler
SGA President



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A Message from the Dean

Dear SGA members

This fall has been a whirlwind for me, and probably for you, too. I have been busier than ever and I do miss having time to interact with all of you. But some of the events we've had have given me some happy memories. The State of the Center back in September was a beautiful and touching tribute to our scholarship donors and to you. Nothing is more impressive than to hear your achievements as we announce your scholarships. The donors tell me how much it means to them to have a chance to know people with such amazing credentials and dedication to aging. I know how they feel, because that's how I feel too.

The Davis School's contribution to the USC 125th anniversary celebration in early October is one of those unique events that will stay with me for a very long time. Seeing Genaro Molina's glowing photographs of centenarians on our walls, and having that party for all of us—students, faculty, alumni, people in the aging network—I was struck by how the theme of aging has touched us all. We have so many different backgrounds and career paths—we are (or are going to be) administrators, advocates, biologists, business owners, demographers, health care professionals, policymakers, psychologists, sociologists, you name it—so diverse in interests and talents and yet, we are all committed to the improving the quality of life for older people. This opening was our second foray into how aging shapes art, and I hope that we have many more of these events. Art really brings us together.

This week, our doctoral students showcase their long hours of work in the presentations of the GSA @ Andrus day on November 4, starting at 10 am. I hope that those of you in the masters' and undergraduate programs join us as the students practice for the GSA meeting. Last year we had an impressive 35 presentations by students and faculty at that meeting, certainly more than any other PhD program, but it isn't quantity that is as important as the quality. I am proud to tell you that our students really lead the way in the depth of their work.

I am so excited to be a part of our School and, despite the long hours and workload, I find being dean extremely rewarding. It is my pleasure to serve you and as always, I really enjoy hearing from you.

Dean Liz Zelinski

P.S. Congratulations to Theresa Schindler and all of you on your fundraising efforts for the Alzheimer's Memory Walk! You make the Davis School shine!



American Society on Aging Conference

[The Autumn Series on Aging](#) (formerly the Summer Series on Aging), hosted by the American Society on Aging (ASA), is an annual series of regional training events designed for professionals in many different sectors of society who work with older adults, their caregivers, and their families. It was held in West Coast in San Francisco and in East Coast in Philadelphia on Sep 26-29, 2005. Titled, "Continuing education for professionals who work with older adults and their families", this conference provided very hands-on and practical training with discussion of issues of professional and personal importance.



Many of the sessions were interactive, wherein the participants got a chance to interact and work with professionals from their field. Particularly insightful were sessions such as "Memories in the Making" -a fine arts program for dementia clients which offers an alternative means of communication for Alzheimer's patients by stimulating their brain through art-therapy. This pilot program is directed by Toni Morley, Director of Alzheimer's Association in Northern California. More information about this program can be obtained in AA newsletter: <http://www.alznorcal.org/pdfs/newsletterfiles/GSBA/wintergsba2004.pdf>.

Other intensives included a wide range of topics from behavioral health care and aging, care management, dementia care, end-of-life issues, legal and ethical issues, and creative aging.

ASA's educational programs provide the highest level of training to strengthen the skills and knowledge of those working in the field of aging. ASA membership is offered at a discounted rate of 60 dollars for students. In addition to the great networking experience at their conferences, ASA provides a wealth of knowledge for students aspiring to be professionals in the field of aging.

[The ASA-NCOA Joint Conference](#) is the upcoming ASA conference to be held on March 16-19, 2006 at Anaheim, California. It is an annual collaboration between the American Society on Aging and the National Council on the Aging. To register, visit: <http://www.agingconference.org/agingconference/jc06/index.cfm>.

-Swamini, Masters VP, 2005

2005 Alzheimer's Association Memory Walk

Our involvement in the Memory Walk was amazing! We had 25 walkers along with multiple people there helping our team and supporting us. Our team raised over \$3,500, which was such a wonderful accomplishment! Even though we all met up at 7:30 AM on a Saturday morning, it was well-worth the effort. We cheered as loudly as we could and were VERY spirited (hopefully we will retain our title as the "most spirited" team from last year). We even got to see celebrities that were supporting the event! It was a great cause to be supporting and a perfect time for our team to bond. Fight on!



Careers in Aging: Student Panel



In honor of USC's 125th Anniversary, the Leonard Davis School of Gerontology joined with the other schools of USC to celebrate, hosting a weekend of programming including speakers, events, and of course, the USC-Arizona football game! As part of the gerontology program, Gretchen Alkema and Dawn Alley hosted a discussion on Careers in Aging.

We were delighted to see so many friendly faces, as current students, prospective students, parents, and business professionals talked about career options in gerontology. We recapped some of the accomplishments of alumni from our undergraduate, masters, and doctoral programs and specifically discussed careers in health research and care, social services, and policy.

Aging issues are relevant to nearly every field of study. Our graduates work in careers as diverse as medicine, long-term care, urban planning, architecture, and business. If you're interested in learning more about careers in aging, check out www.careersinaging.com, a service of the Association for Gerontology in High Education. Also, be sure to check internship opportunities on DocuShare regularly and look at Ageworks, a service of the Gerontological Society of America, for jobs in aging.



A Century of Memories

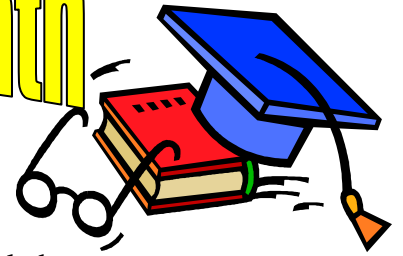


As part of the festivities for USC's 125th Anniversary, the Andrus Gerontology Center hosted an exhibition of portraits by LA Times photographer Genaro Molina. The exhibit was entitled "A Century of Memories". Fittingly, the subjects of the photographs were centenarians: extraordinary individuals who have, in their lifetimes, witnessed the unfolding of the past 100 years of human history. These individuals, as evidenced by their diverse portraits, have each traveled, and continue to travel, unique and remarkable life courses. For instance, a tribal elder, an entertainer, and a poultry geneticist were but a few of the people exhibited at the event.

In all, the exhibition was a great success. Students, faculty, and guests were all profoundly touched by the depth and meaning of the photographs. For example, Liza Cherney, a gerontology undergraduate noted, "I found the exhibit to be very uplifting. It was also great that so many people including undergraduates, graduate students, PHD students, professors, and researchers came. I felt like we had an amazing sense of community there that day and it only added to the wonderful exhibit". In addition, Fah Vasunilashorn, a gerontology masters student, expressed that, "the exhibit transcends the basic assumptions of photography. We're accustomed to seeing mere snapshots of a moment, but each of these photos magically captures all the in between moments of 100 years (or more) of life".

The photographs can still be viewed at the Andrus Gerontology Center in the lobby next to the auditorium.

PhD Student of the Month



Sarah Ruiz

Meet Sarah Ruiz, PhD student of the month. She is from Lititz, PA located in the heart of Pennsylvania Dutch Amish country. But don't be fooled, Sarah has traveled all over the world including Japan, Denmark, and Austria. During her undergraduate years she studied at University of Delaware Center for Family Policy & Community Policy.

Sarah studies diversity in families and grand parenting and is especially interested in using international research to provide "a reorientation that helps us approach questions from a new and exciting position."

Sarah got interested in aging because of a personal relationship with a sweet Polish woman named Mary Barbara. She witnessed how aging individuals have a "complicated intersection of long term care choices, family, and adaptation from cognitive losses." Sarah believes that those of us who are fortunate to have living grandparents should make the effort to establish relationships and find similarities between older adults and ourselves.

Sarah is a great resource to her peers, has a great fashion sense, and is an interesting person worth getting to know. Sarah recently finished the dreaded qualifying exams and is now ready to move on to the dissertation stage of her education. Congratulations Sarah!

Graduate Student of the Month

Lisa Casman

By now, we all know and feel that our Gerontology School at USC strives to nurture a sense of family in us from the very moment we decide to become 'The Eternal Trojans'! It gives me great pleasure to know such a diverse group of people and to develop a bond with them. It gives me even greater pleasure to be given the responsibility to introduce them to new and old students, faculty and staff.

While we enjoyed knowing about Katy-the Multi-Tasker in our last rendezvous, I can guarantee that you would equally adore Lisa Casman-The Bloomer, as I know her. I first bumped into Lisa during the Spring semester of this year when we were trying to put together a power-point for our Sociology Class! She is a very calm and composed person when it comes to work and a very bubbly girl when it comes to having fun. You wouldn't go without a treasure of smiles and giggles when you come across Lisa. She has this soothing aura about her that she would befriend you in no time and you would begin to have the time of your life! And this hubbly-bubbly friend of ours is a mother of two grown children! Now that was something I was recently enlightened with!

Lisa earned her Bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of New Mexico, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. While there she was involved in research studies of memory recall where she tested participants in a clinical setting.

So how did she end up pursuing a dual degree in Gerontology and Public Administration? Destiny! She began working with elders as a teenager. Additionally, she worked part time in her Bachelor's days as a companion/home health aide to housebound elders needing help with their



activities of daily living (ADLs). Through the years, she realized her unique ability to enjoy and communicate well with elders. A natural affinity became evident.

Being broad-minded and able to decipher the bigger picture, she realized that, as a ratio, the world was focused on marketing to the youth of society and little was geared toward the elderly population. As an historical perspective, this disparity was glaring at her. She says, “The disposableness of today’s society seems to have encompassed the elderly as well.” A keen observer that she is, Lisa wants to creatively improve the living situations of the elders and the differing levels of abilities they must deal with. She is mentally designing either individual responses to ease their functioning or designing an item to be mass produced in an effort to increase the quality of life!

Her passion is to facilitate those who want to work directly with elders in providing the services and care that the elders wish to have or need. Her interest in Public Administration stems from her intention to use a position of authority to enhance the lives of elders. She emphatically believes, “Individual cases should not be considered in a cookie cutter fashion. There are services and guidelines that interfere with the needs of elders forcing them to compromise in order to get the help offered or sought.”

Striving to be the much needed advocate for a ‘Graying America’, Lisa is also driven by a desire to design mechanisms that will aid in daily living activities. Home-Modifications are of great interest to her. She says that, “Some of these modifications are cheap and easy to install, others, of course, require a more complicated effort. I am interested in the more complicated issues, as a rule. Housing is, after all, designed for the young and nimble in the population.”

She is very modest in saying that she has no hobbies or extracurricular activities and that school is keeping her busy! Yet, she is helping a Korean engineering student with his English and plays racquetball. She likes to run, escape to a beach, smell the air and think back at her youth. She reminisces about her family beach house in Long Island (wow!) where she used to spend her summer days.

Time for a fun fact about Lisa! Born in New Rochelle, New York, She spent her formative years on a farm in rural New York and Connecticut. She was always surrounded by animals both at home and on the farm and had her own horse beginning in the 3rd grade. Ain’t that great! She inherits her artistic and creative genes from her family with a graphic artist and a painter among them. Her mother has some of her work posted on the internet and a link can be found on www.casman.com.



Here you can see a picture of part of the barn. The big space is what was originally called the Haymow; the place to store the baled hay. Yes, that is a trampoline in the middle of the room. In addition to having an artistic bent, many in my family are athletically inclined with sports such as ice hockey (Mom and Brother), golf and cycling (other brothers) and horses (sister-in-law). Another fun fact about her is her tryst with Phi Beta Kappa. One fine day she gets a letter from them saying that she was nominated to join this organization due to her academic efforts. She finally accepts it after some thought and has been very satisfied with her association with them.

So people, this is Lisa! Warm, friendly, cheerful, conscientious, humble and ambitious! She exudes happiness that is so addictive! I am looking forward to bumping into her again and so are all of you, right?!!

-Swamini, Masters VP, 2005



Undergraduate Student of the Month

Ana Alvarez

Ana Alvarez is a senior majoring in Gerontology with an emphasis in Health Policy and Management. Ana's interest in Gerontology began when she wanted to find a major that would allow her to combine both the hard sciences and the social sciences. And after taking Dr. Pynoos' policy and aging class, she was hooked.

Ana is currently getting experience for the health administration side of the degree. She is currently the director of a patient safety initiative at UCLA Medical Center that is directed toward preparing the hospital staff for the next accreditation audit by the Joint Commission. Ana took over the program about three months ago, and so far it's been a lot of work for her, but also a great learning experience. In addition, Ana is an intern at the USC office of Admission, working with prospective student and families telling them how wonderful USC is.

Before she graduates, Ana would like to pursue a gerontology policy internship because she is really interested in politics and policy issues, particularly healthcare policy. Ana loves learning more about managed care, the current healthcare system, and the possible ways to fix it. Eventually, she would like to obtain a master's in Health Administration. In order to get into the program, she hopes to obtain the experience she needs by entering the managed care industry, or working in a hospital setting.

Ana spent last summer in Moscow learning Russian and she longs for the day that she can go back. In her spare time she works as a peer health educator at the health center, and she is a member of the USC Helenes. Ana doesn't have much free time, but when she does it's divided between movies, USC football, and Yankees baseball.

Alumnus of the Month

Christopher Lee

Similar to last month's featured alumnus, Christopher Lee is also from the National Resource Center on Supportive Housing and Home Modification headed by Dr. Jon Pynoos. Christopher is from Malaysia, and has been living in Los Angeles since he started the program in the 90's. His interest in the older population started early. While growing up, he was anticipating his own aging experience. By entering the USC MSG gerontology program, he thought it would give him a head start with an early preparation in facing older age. Below is an interview about his current work position and his recommendations to current students in the gerontology program.



Enna Lee (EL): What are you currently doing with your MSG degree? What skills and/or training does it require? How did you find this job?

Chris: After graduating with the MSG in 1998, I continued working with Dr. Pynoos, Dr. Liebig, Ms. Henke, and Ms. Overton at the Andrus Center's Division of Policy and Services Research. The first big project I was involved in as a graduate assistant was the Home Modification Action Project. That three-year project was followed by the five-year National Resource Center on Supportive Housing and Home Modification. I became a full-time USC employee under the National Resource Center. I am currently working on a recently funded project called the Fall Prevention Center of Excellence, another five-year project.

An important skill that has been helpful is that of planning ahead and being organized. Putting in some extra effort ahead of time will save a person tons of time (and headaches!) further up the road.

EL: When did you receive your MSG degree? What did you enjoy the most about your experience as a student at the Davis School of Gerontology?

Chris: I graduated in 1998 with the MSG. The best thing that the Davis School of Gerontology helped with was to put me in contact with a retirement home that had a student-resident program for students in the field of aging. Subsequently, I went into "retirement" for the time that I was pursuing the MSG. In return for 16 hours of volunteer work, I received free room and board. After I graduated, I moved into an apartment in the same neighborhood and still volunteer my time on the weekends. ("Thank you Dr. Pauline Abbott!")

EL: In your opinion, what are some key items a student in our program should take advantage of?

Chris: The internship can be an invaluable experience. Unfortunately, many students do not realize its importance and see it only as a graduation requirement to fulfill. A carefully chosen internship can open doors after graduation and lead to employment possibilities

EL: Would you like to share other recommendations with gerontology students?

Chris: Try to form study groups for your classes if you are able to.

You can email Christopher Lee at homemods.usc.edu

To learn more about home modification or the National Resource Center on Supportive Housing and Home Modification, go to: <http://www.homemods.org>

To learn more about how to prevent falls among older adults, or the Fall Prevention Center of Excellence, to to: <http://www.stopfalls.org>

Know an USC gerontology alumna with an interesting job that you would like to see featured? Contact Enna Lee at enpeilee@usc.edu if you have questions, suggestions, or comments.

Events & Important Dates

Event Dates:

- **November 2nd:** Third SGA General Meeting at Noon (12:00-12:45 PM), Held in Student Lounge, Lunch Provided
- **November 18th-22nd:** 58th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Gerontological Society of America
- **December 1st:** Colloquium(12:00pm), “Older Workers, Older Workforce”

Academic Dates:

- **October 31st-January 4th:** Registration for continuing students
 - **November 22nd –January 4th:** Registration for new, returning and continuing students
 - **November 24th -26th:** Thanksgiving
 - **December 2nd:** Classes End
 - **December 3rd -6th:** Study Days
 - **December 7th -14th:** Final Exams, (6 days)
 - **December 15th-January 8th:** Winter Recess (25 days)
 - **January 5th-6th:** Registration for spring semester continues
 - **January 6th:** Last day to register and settle without late fee
 - **January 9th:** Spring semester classes begin
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Contributing Writers:

President’s Message: Theresa Schindler

Dean’s Corner: Dean Liz Zelinski

American Society on Aging Conference: Swamini Wakkar

2005 Alzheimer's Association Memory Walk: Liza Cherney

Careers in Aging: Student Panel: Dawn Alley

A Century of Memories: Chris Nguyen & Pat Halliwell

Student Features: Amber Watts Hall, Swamini Wakkar, Julie Thomas, Enna Lee

Upcoming Events and Dates: Victoria Tsai

Edited and Compiled by: Chris Nguyen



If you would like to make comments or contribute to the SGA Newsletter, please contact Chris Nguyen at sga@usc.edu.