



THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT CENTER ON AGING

Welcome

This is the first issue of a monthly communication from the Center on Aging. Each month we will highlight some of the people and programs that make up the work of the Center. The cornerstones of the Center are Research, Education, Policy and Practice. This month we highlight VT-BRIDGES.

VT-BRIDGES

Amidst the ongoing increase in Vermont's aging population and the shortage of gerontological social workers, a unique educational opportunity has emerged for students at the University of Vermont. The VT-BRIDGES first cohort model has been introduced. Vermont Broadening Resources in Developing Gerontological Education and Social Work (VT-BRIDGES) is a pilot project developed in collaboration with The University of Vermont Medical Center's Dementia Family Caregiver Center, the University of Vermont's Center on Aging, and The University of Vermont's Social Work Department. The cohort model includes a total of three MSW students: two first-year MSW students and one second year MSW student. First-year MSW students are interning at Age Well and the Department of Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) for a full semester each, while the second year MSW student simultaneously works at The UVM Medical Center's Frederick C. Binter Center for Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorders and The UVM Center on Aging. The wide array of organizations and field placements is designed to help students gain better insights into the available resources for older adults and to provide them with a sense of what the gerontology field may entail. Students will also have the opportunity to meet with local leaders in the field through weekly supervision and monthly cohort meetings where they will collaborate on ongoing projects and assignments.

-- Sara Levesque



Sara Levesque

Sara Levesque is a second year MSW student, with advanced standing, in the VT-BRIDGES program. Sara comes from a small town outside of Quebec City. When asked, Sara calls Montreal home. There have been two constants in her collegiate life: social work and hockey. Sara says of herself, "I'm an old soul." John Abbott College is where her love of caring for older adults was nurtured with experiences working in assisted living, skilled nursing and hospital settings caring for older adults, especially those with dementias.

UVM recruited Sara, a Defenseman on the John Abbott "Islanders" to play for the Catamounts. Sara completed her BSW spring of 2023.

Continued on the next page, Levesque



Faculty Dinner to Honor Jeanne Hutchins

The Faculty Advisory Board of The Center honored Jeanne Hutchins, Executive Director, for her many years of service and her upcoming retirement. Thank you Jeanne for all you have done for The Center and the people of Vermont!

(Pictured from left and going around the table: Nancy Gell, Steele Taylor, Kat Cheung, Maija Reblin, Julie Dumas, Jeanne Hutchins, Bill Pendlebury and Chris Proulx)

Research News

Congratulations to Julie Dumas, PhD! Dr. Dumas and her team received a 5 year R01 grant from the National Institutes of Aging entitled, "Fatty Acid Modulation of Brain Function in Older Adults." This study will examine the role of saturated fat compared to monounsaturated fat in cognition, brain functioning, mood, and physical activity in healthy older adults. Dr. Dumas states "We were awarded the Center on Aging Pilot Grant, The Armin Grams Award, in 2014 and now we have converted that pilot grant support to an R01 award. We are very grateful for the initial support from the Center on Aging."

Levesque...

As part of the first cohort of the VT-BRIDGES program, Sara is grateful to all who have made the program possible. Through her work at the Binter Center, the Dementia Family Caregiver Center and the Center on Aging, Sara is using her skills in Transformative, Strength-based practices and Narrative Therapy to care for patients and their families. With The Center, Sara is working on public policy with the Burlington Aging Council. Sara is investigating the role that End-of-life Doulas play enhancing the knowledge and comfort of death, grief and loss in our society that has difficulty with mortality. Sara looks forward to graduating in the spring, working with older adults and pursuing licensure as a social worker.

The Center is glad to have Sara with us this year!

Coming Events

January 2024

Announcement of the new Center on Aging Research Grant

April 16, 2024

18th Annual Vermont Geriatrics Conference
The DoubleTree

May 7, 2024

Gerontology Symposium
The DoubleTree

Center on Aging

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