



THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT CENTER ON AGING

Welcome

This month we highlight the work of the **VT-BRIDGES** cohort during Careers in Aging Month, April 2024. **VT Broadening Resources In Developing Gerontological Education and Social work and services** is a pilot project which completed its first year training MSW students who will specialize with older adults.

Careers in Aging Month

The VT-BRIDGES cohort of Cory Froning, Sara Levesque and Ethan Stein created and successfully delivered a Careers in Aging Month (CIAM) activity that engaged nearly 200 students and professors in departments throughout the university, ones that offer aging-related coursework and whose graduates will be ready to accept competitive, challenging jobs in the field of aging. The cohort chose an innovative way to reach out to students and professors where they learn, in their own classroom.

The cohort, along with its program coordinator, Audrey and the Associate Director for Education of the Center on Aging, Janet Nunziata, actively participated in the Traveling Careers in Aging Fair by presenting for approximately fifteen minutes at the start of each class. The cohort brought their unique experience of working with elders to students in disciplines including sociology, anthropology, psychology, clinical mental health, public health, nutrition, nursing, communication science and disorders, human development, family studies, physical therapy and the college of medicine.

VT-BRIDGES took the initiative to visit the classroom, providing firsthand insights into the cohort's experiences in gerontology. The traveling career fair activity sought to enhance student engagement in and eliminate the need for students and faculty to travel to a separate location on campus.

As reported by the cohort, "We shared anecdotes, highlighted the advantages of working with older adults, and tailored our presentations to each profession. We researched employment opportunities for graduates within their specialized field of practice, providing each class with a list of current openings. This way the students could envision *(Continued on next page.)*"

Grand Friends



The Hoehl Gallery of the Larner College of Medicine was the location for the first Grand Friends Celebration. More than 50 students, Grand Friends, faculty and staff gathered to mark the occasion.

Social Work students participating in Theory and Integration Seminar (SWSS 163) met with Grand Friends to foster intergenerational learning and friendships. Students and older adults met several times during the semester by video conference or in-person to exchange wisdom and experiences.

"Thank you" to the Grand Friends for giving your time and energy to the social work students!

Grand Friends is part of the Center on Aging's Age-Friendly University Initiative.

Grand Friends Opportunity

This fall, we have two classes to be matched with Grand Friends. Seventy volunteers are needed for students in these Human Development and Family Science courses:

- Psychology of Aging (meet up to 8 times with a senior student)
- Aging: Change & Adaptation (meet 5 times with a student)

To volunteer, register in the Older Adult Research Registry and indicate your interest in working with students. Or, email aging@uvm.edu with GRAND FRIENDS in the subject line.

(Careers in Aging...)

themselves working with elders, in interdisciplinary teams and having a work-life balance that we all seek. We demonstrated the need for having a welcoming and age friendly community that views aging well as a personal goal as well as a public health issue.”

The idea of meeting the students in their own classroom proved to be very effective. This initiative yielded several notable successes. Our presentations generated considerable interest and engagement among students and faculty alike. Several presentations extended well into the first full hour of class. Many participants expressed newfound enthusiasm for exploring careers in aging-related fields, demonstrating the effectiveness of our outreach efforts. By researching and presenting employment opportunities specific to each discipline, we provided invaluable insights into the diverse pathways available within the aging sector while tailoring the information to students' individual interests and career aspirations.

Students and faculty expressed gratitude for our efforts in raising awareness about the opportunities and challenges in the aging field, highlighting the relevance and timeliness of our presentations.

We, the VT-BRIDGES team, in partnership with the Center on Aging, the Dementia Family Caregiver Center, and the Department of Social Work at UVM are grateful for the grant we received from the Gerontological Society of America (GSA). We look forward to working with you again next year as we seek to further develop and promote the field of aging in a state like Vermont, where over 30% of our population is 60 and older and the workforce shortage continues to be of major concern.



Cory Froning, Sara Levesque, Ethan Stein

Research Corner



Dr. Katharine Cheung, Associate Director for Research and Interim Director for the Center on Aging, and her mentee, Susanna Schuler LCOM Class 2026, presented their research findings at the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine State of the Science, March 23, 2024 in Phoenix, Arizona. Dr. Cheung conducted a two-year pilot clinical trial of tele-palliative care for rural dialysis patients funded by the National Palliative Care Research Center. Susanna received an LCOM Summer Research Fellowship to study connectional silence using human and machine learning in the recordings of palliative care conversations with dialysis patients. Her results demonstrate that connectional silence, which is associated with quality communication, can be found in telehealth similar to in-person visits but there are differences in the types of silence detected by humans compared to the machine learning algorithm. Her work was supported by the UVM Center on Aging.

Center on Aging

The University of Vermont Larner College of Medicine
The Courtyard at Given, N208
89 Beaumont Avenue
Burlington, VT 05405
(802) 656-0292
aging@uvm.edu

To Subscribe or Unsubscribe
email aging@uvm.edu

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