

GERONTOLOGY TODAY



UNCW
Gerontology
Department

First Annual Careers in Aging Event

The Master of Science in Applied Gerontology program at UNCW held a free-to-the-public Careers in Aging event at the Wilmington Family YMCA, located on Market Street on April 15, 2009 from 9am to 2pm. Partnering in the event were aging service providers, business professionals, and of course Gerontology students. The event was two-fold. The first focus of the event was to showcase career opportunities for Gerontologists and perspective Gerontologists. The second point that this event showcases is what our community has to offer to our older adult population, as well as positions available to those seeking second careers or volunteer opportunities after

retirement.

In addition, community leaders spoke at the event and a health and career fair took place. The fair included local businesses set-up booths to educate our community on what they have to offer to the older adult population and their caregivers. Student organizers identified their goal as to provide awareness of programs for the elderly and to advocate for what our community can do to increase these programs and to increase career opportunities in aging. To ensure an educational and enjoyable event for all, there was also food served, recreational activities, and entertainment.



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Special Points of Interest in this Issue

- *First Careers in Aging Event, April 15, 2009*
- *Sigma Phi Omega Spring Inductions*
- *Gerontology Generations created*
- *Spotlight on current Gerontology Students*

Dr. Eleanor Covan works with Vietnam Veterans

Eleanor Krassen Covan has been conducting life history research for several years to study of the impact of personal attributes, social stratification, cohort effects, and historical period effects on life history. Her current focus is on a sample of Viet Nam combat veterans and their significant others. In particular, Dr. Covan is working with this study population to investigate the impact of period effects (Viet Nam combat experience) on subsequent life history.

For this group of veterans, experiences in combat from 1966-1971 were so profound that they have shaped all subsequent lived experience. There is no quick fix for PTSD as coping with combat-induced stress affects the entire life course.

Interviewees volunteered at a social gathering to have their life stories

recorded in the hope of helping other combat veterans. Group members are just beginning to learn how to live with chronic post-traumatic stress disorder, having recently completed in-patient treatment for PTSD at the Hefner VA Medical Center in Salisbury, NC. Data collection and analysis are occurring simultaneously as Covan administers video-taped semi-structured life history interviews conducted in the homes of the veterans, and analyzes them employing the constant comparative method of grounded theory.

As veterans begin to tell their stories, it becomes apparent that in most instances, the horrors of war for them have not been shared previously, even among family members who are closest to them. Theoretical sampling thus reveals the need for follow-up interviews with family members and those in charge of

treatment. Data collection includes video-taped focus-group discussion on the impact of treatment which was delayed for 40 years, post-combat. Despite the long passage of time and suffering (three of the veterans have died since August of 2006), this is a resilient group, sharing high morale with most of them reporting that now is the best part of their lives. Covan expects to produce a documentary as one means of disseminating research results. Dr. Covan will also be leading a peer support group for wives and significant others who wish to share experiences connected to living with someone who is struggling with the aftermath of combat.

For more information, or to learn how to contribute to this project, Dr. Covan can be reached at 910 962-3435.

Sigma Phi Omega

2008-9 has been a busy year for UNCW's Delta Omega chapter! In the fall three new graduate student members joined the chapter. Members also participated in the "A Day To Remember" Volleyball tournament held at *Capt'n Bills*. Khara Bost and Chet Saunders were instrumental in gaining 'official student organization status' for our chapter from the University as well. We held our spring initiation ceremony and business meeting March 18, 2009. The chapter welcomed two new undergraduate student members and four new graduate members.

Officers for the 2008-9 academic year are president: Khara Bost (Fall 2008) and Chet Saunders (Spring 2009); secretary: Daisy Kiley; and treasurer: Kirsten

Larsen. The chapter is currently planning our third annual Senior Games at Elderhaus event and activities for "Careers in Aging" week.



Delta Omega chapter, 2009 Inductees: (Left to right) Chet Saunders— President, Elizabeth Fugate-Whitlock— Chapter Advisor, Kirsten Bolender, Jessica Horne, Lauren Segur, Daisy Kiley— Secretary, and Lindsey James. Not pictured: Sharon Bundick, Casey Turner

Gerontology Generations

Gerontology Generations is a newly created student organization open to undergraduates pursuing a degree in gerontology or aging studies that maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.3 or better. The organization is also open to graduate students pursuing the M.S., certificate, or concentration in gerontology who maintain a GPA of 3.5 or better.

The purposes of the organization are to promote

scholarship, research, professionalism, and excellence in gerontology and aging services and to recognize high attainment in the pursuit of academic and clinical excellence in these areas. There will be an opening meeting in the fall in order to induct members and elect officers for the academic year. The members of this organization will decide on an annual service project for our community.

Spotlight: Lindsey James, Masters of Science Program

Lindsey James graduated from UNCW in May of 2008 with a BA in Recreation Therapy and a minor in gerontology. After completing her minor in gerontology, she wanted to go back to school to get her masters in gerontology. When asked why she decided to go back for this program Lindsey replied, "because I enjoyed the program so much when I was an undergraduate, when I saw that the MS in Gerontology had been approved, I decided to come back and get my masters. I love the professors in the program, and the hands on application that is experienced in the Wilmington community throughout the different courses."

Through different course requirements, Lindsey is staying involved with the area Senior Center as well as Davis Healthcare and some of the other local senior community organizations. She hopes to complete her practicum and thesis in the area of social policy for older adults.



Lindsey James

When asked what advice she has for students interested in gerontology, Lindsey responded, "I would tell those interested in gerontology that it takes passion and a desire to be an advocate for older adults. Working with older adults can at times be challenging, but if you truly have the heart to work with them, it is amazingly rewarding. I would also tell people interested in the master's program at UNCW to be prepared to work hard. Graduate school, regardless of the program is much different from undergrad and requires self-motivation and strong work ethic."

Lindsey was inducted into the Sigma Phi Omega, UNCW Chapter in March 2009. She plans to graduate from the Master's Program in May 2010.

Spotlight: Jessica Horne, Post Baccalaureate Certificate Program Student



Jessica Horne

Jessica Horne is a gerontology post baccalaureate certificate student at UNCW. She is in her second and final semester of the certificate program. Jessica works in the gerontology office as a graduate assistant and interns at Elderhaus, an adult daycare/day health program in Wilmington.

Jessica decided to enroll in the Gerontology program during the spring of 2008. After graduating from Meredith College with a bachelor's in biology, she knew she would be returning home, in Wilmington and applying to medical school. When asked why she applied to the gerontology program, she replied, "I wanted to further my education to become more competitive in applying to medical school, and so I began looking for programs related to medicine".

She discovered the Gerontology program at UNCW. As a C.N.A., she had the opportunity to work with older adults, and fell in love with working with this kind of work and discovered how it would be applicable to medicine. She became more aware of the aging process and all that it entails biologically, psychologically, and sociologically.

Eventually, Jessica's ultimate goal is to become a family physician in a rural area practice, saying, "I know that as a family physician a large percentage of my patients will be older, so I think this program will better equip me for caring for the aged population in whichever community I settle down". When asked what kind of advice Jessica would tell other students interested in the path that she took, Jessica says, "My advice to other students is to be disciplined and determined. Higher education is rigorous and at times seemingly never-ending, but you can't lose faith in yourself and in your dreams."

Jessica was inducted into the UNCW chapter of the Gerontology Honor Society, Sigma Phi Omega in March 2009, and she will graduate from the Certificate program in May of 2009.

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Senior Games 2009



Elderhaus Senior Games



April 22,
2009

Give to the Gerontology Program

The continued success of the Gerontology Program depends on your support. Volunteers are needed to assist in service learning activities.

We also need your financial help! Donations are used to fund service-learning activities, general program operation, and community activities. All donations are tax deductible.

Checks to assist us should be made out to the Gerontology Trust Fund and mailed to:

**Gerontology Program
Trust Fund
C/O UNCW Advancement
601 S College Road
Wilmington, NC 28403-
5905**

