

# Transitions



Street photos taken by research participants when asked, "What in your neighborhood impacts your stress?"

An urban mural provides unexpected beauty.

## Picture Imperfect: How Neighborhoods Impact Stress

Activity and participation are key words for Dr. Heather Fritz, the IOG's newest faculty member and an occupational therapist by training and passion. "How do the mundane activities of daily life promote, or reduce, health and

wellness?" she asks. "And how does a person's environment affect those activities?"

Dr. Fritz's current research put her deep into Detroit's most dire neighborhoods to ask people who live there about stress. The interviews are part of a larger look at the relationship between daily activities, neighborhood stressors, and stress response in African Americans 55 and older, with an average age of 79. One hundred people participated, all taken from the Participant Resource Pool created through the IOG's Healthier Black Elders Center.

Each participant gave a hair sample, completed measures of stress and coping, and took samples of their own saliva four times a day for

see page 2

*"The components of anxiety, stress, fear, and anger do not exist independently of you in the world."*

– **Dr. Wayne Dyer**

WSU alum, author and philosopher

## Grief and Healing: Against the Odds



IOG Director Peter Lichtenberg has published his deeply moving story of being widowed twice before age 55. "Grief and Healing" appeared online at Open to Hope and will soon be available in paperback. His honest reflections are both unique to his situation and universal to those who have experienced intense loss. Dr. Lichtenberg welcomes the chance to help others by sharing his story with interested groups. Call Donna at 313-664-2605 for information.

research  
education  
outreach  
partnerships



*Promoting Successful Aging  
in Detroit and Beyond*



Captions in quotes were provided by the photographers.



“Dumping in Neighborhoods”

Meeting Needs

## Neighborhoods

seven days. The hair and saliva will be tested for cortisol, a hormone manufactured in response to stress.

Recruits were also given a smartphone for the week to input details of what they were doing at the time. “Does the who, what, when, where, why and how of daily activities protect you or exacerbate your stress?” Dr. Fritz said. This approach, connecting behavior with biologic samples, is *quantitative*, the systematic investigation of observable phenomena by statistical, mathematical or computational techniques.

Dr. Fritz wanted another dimension.

“What was going on under the surface?” she wondered. “How did these people feel about the situations around them?” This required a *qualitative* component, sometimes overlooked in neighborhood stress and health research. Dr. Fritz wanted to know *what* Detroit’s older adults considered stressful and *how* they experienced daily life. They already had a smartphone as part of the study; why not take some photos?

Her team identified a stratified sample of 20 persons from the original 100 and asked them to take at least 20 photographs in their com-

munity while going about their usual activities. The photographs could be anything in their neighborhood (other than people) that they found important to daily activity or stress. The project defined stress as things that are irritating, frustrating, make you feel unsafe, or just bother you. After a little cell phone training, the 20 older adults started snapping.

Personal interviews followed, talking to each person about their photos, then hours of transcription and coding to analyze the text. What emerged was a model of neighborhood change that encompassed four dimensions: environmental, institutional, knowledge and social. The core characteristic connecting all these? *Loss of trustworthiness*.

Houses in ruins, neighbors gone, sidewalks broken, crime on the rise, and slow police response, all can trigger fear in older African

American residents. Many restrict their activity, such as not going out at night, in response to these perceived risks. They no longer trust the neighborhoods they call home. (See *Older Adults Carry Guns*.)

The good news is that actions can be taken to restore trustworthiness across the four dimensions. The repair of street lights in dozens of Detroit neighborhoods has reduced crime. Demolishing abandoned houses has improved the aesthetic and removed potential crime spots. Older adults themselves are showing resilience by taking action to preserve and protect their neighborhoods, like organizing clean-up committees and block club meetings.

“The City of Detroit should pay attention to the voices of these older adults,” said Dr. Fritz. “Most of them own their homes and are incredibly invested in their neighborhoods.

“What was going on under the surface?  
How did these people feel about the  
situations around them?”

- Dr. Heather Fritz



Assistant Professor of Occupational Therapy, jointly appointed to the IOG and the Applebaum College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences



“Municipal Inadequacy”



“Babies Need Peace”



“Business Owner Killed”

They understand what they need.” Follow-up research by Dr. Fritz and her team will examine these and related issues in a larger sample of older African Americans.

Within the next few months, results from the larger study correlating neighborhood experiences with cortisol levels will be released. The combined qualitative and quantitative information will draw a detailed picture of Detroit’s older African Americans navigating a complex urban environment filled with change.

“We did find another silver lining,” Dr. Fritz said. “There is a perception among researchers that older adults can’t participate in technologically sophisticated studies. That perception is wrong. Older adults could use all the technology we gave them, cell phones, photos, alarms. With the right training, we had incredible success with technology.”

This type of resilience will help Detroit’s older adults survive and thrive.

## Older Adults Carry Guns to Ease Fear

Dr. Fritz’ interviews revealed that several older African American women have concealed carry permits for handguns or are considering getting one. The following excerpt illustrates an older woman’s fear, panic, frustration, and regret about needing a gun to feel safe.

*“I was out there in the yard, and a couple, I had seen them walking around, a man and a woman, looked like they could have been in their 30s. And I was pulling weeds. And I just happened to look up and before I know it, they were right here, almost to me. And I panicked. . . . And so it looked like they were coming toward me. And I start coming in the house. And so she said [to participant], “Wait a minute, wait a minute, do you need some help?”*

*I said, “Do I look like I need help?” So, because then I got pissed you know. I got mad that I had to be scared. And so . . . maybe they weren’t going to do anything. But I didn’t know.*

*And so I wasn’t like that before. So I came in the house and put my gun on my hip and went back there and start working in the yard, and I thought, come on and [laughter] do I need some help? That’s just anger, but it’s frustration, because you see the stuff on the TV [media images about criminal threats]. They, you know, suppose they were decent and wanted to help you?”*

# Research



An enthusiastic Nasim Ferdows explains her research on the effects of childhood on aging.

## Lifespan Research Competition *And the winner is...*

Once a year, WSU students gather from opposite ends of the lifespan to share their research and compete for prizes. These bright undergrads and graduate students train at the Institute of Gerontology and its sister center, the Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute for Child & Family Development. They spend their time scanning brains, analyzing large data sets, investigating sexting, and mapping memory. The Lifespan Competition, held in February in the Freer House, lets them face off in both poster and podium presentations, judged by faculty experts from multiple disciplines.

“My students get a lot out of this,” said Dr. Noa Ofen, whose lab was well represented in the Winners Circle with two top awards. “Learning how to talk about your research is an important skill for students and all researchers to develop.” Dr. Ofen is a tenure track professor in the Department of Psychology with joint appointments to the IOG and Mersee back page

### NEW & HONORS

**Accepted!** – The work of two IOG predoctoral students was accepted for publication recently. **Brad Kendall’s** review of the effects of aerobic exercise on mobility in stroke patients will appear in the *American Journal of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*.



BRAD KENDALL

**Rajendra Dulal** is studying nursing home quality as part of his dissertation research. His manuscript, “Cost Efficiency of Nursing Homes: Do Five-Star Quality Ratings Matter?” has been accepted by *Health Care Management Science*. Getting published is a difficult process. We congratulate Brad and Rajendra on this stellar accomplishment.



RAJENDRA DULAL

**Fulbright Fellow** – IOG Alumna **Allison Kabel** (2007) won a \$25,000 Fulbright Fellowship to study how the lack of appropriate clothing for spinal cord injured persons contributes to their sense of disablement. Dr. Kabel is an assistant professor in Health Sciences at the University of Missouri and completed her four-month fellowship at Concordia University in Montreal. “This has been such a great opportunity to learn new things, challenge previous assumptions and think about my research in new ways,” she said. Fulbright grants are highly regarded and highly competitive.



ALLISON KABEL

**Fund-raiser Shatters Record** – The IOG’s Graduate Student Organization is known for its hard work and generous spirit, but the group out-did itself this past holiday. These busy scholars and researchers raised a record \$1,535 for the Senior Alliance Holiday Meals program, providing a hot, home-delivered meal to 307 older adults in need on Christmas Day.

**Road Trips** – Several IOG students won awards of \$300 to help with travel to major conferences to present their research. **Lingfei Tang** will attend the Cognitive Neuroscience Society meeting in New York City in April to talk about memory formation in the prefrontal cortex.

**Nasim Ferdows** (*Effects of childhood on health aging*) and **Rajendra Dulal** (*Do five-star ratings in nursing homes matter?*) will present at the Midwest Economics Association near Chicago in April. Rajendra also presented his research at the Southern Economic Association meeting in New Orleans in November.

**Qijing Yu** and **Muzamil Arshad** presented at the Society for Neuroscience in Chicago. (Qijing’s poster took First Place at WSU’s psychology department competition.) **Brad Kendall** (*Physical activity among older African Americans*) will present in March to the Society for Behavioral Medicine in D.C.



NASIM FERDOWS



QIJING YU



MUZAMIL ARSHAD

## New Ciena Health Chats

Want an easy way to learn more about your health and safety? Attend Ciena Healthcare's new Health Chats this spring. They're free, they're interesting, and there is bound to be one near you. "Ciena is dedicated to empowering seniors through education and resources," Outreach Director Donna McDonald said. "The IOG's mission is very similar, so this partnership seamlessly enhances both our organizations while benefiting greater numbers of older adults."

Ciena has partnered with the IOG for several years, providing the lunches for our popular Lunch & Learn Healthier Black Elders programs. As the need for health education among older adults continued to grow, Ciena wanted to do more. They formed a special educational partnership with the IOG to sponsor the four additional programs below. Ciena will also host its "How to Talk to Your Doctor" workshop at our Art of Aging conference on April 21.

### CIENA ♥ C.A.R.E.S

Community Awareness and Resources to Empower Seniors

**Tuesday, April 12, 10 am – Noon**  
*Keeping You and Your Future Safe*  
St. Matthews & St. Joseph Episcopal Church  
8850 Woodward Ave., Detroit, MI 48202

**Tuesday, May 24, 10 am – Noon**  
*One Stop Healthcare & The Dementia Umbrella*  
Messiah Baptist Church  
8100 W. Seven Mile Rd., Detroit, MI 48221

**Wednesday, June 8, 2 – 3:00 pm**  
*Medication Management & How to Talk to Your Doc*  
Novi Senior Center  
25075 Meadowbrook Rd., Novi, MI 48375

**Tuesday, June 21, 11 am – 1:30 pm**  
*Brain Health and Memory*  
Farwell Recreation Center  
2711 E. Outer Dr., Detroit, MI 48234

*Register by calling 313-664-2621 and leaving your name and phone number on the voicemail.*

**FREE.**  
*Refreshments provided.*

*The need for reliable, up-to-date information on aging continues to grow as we work hard to fill it.* Receive e-announcements about our programs through a quick sign-up at <http://www.iog.wayne.edu/forms/subscription.php> or simply email Cheryl Deep at [cheryldeep@wayne.edu](mailto:cheryldeep@wayne.edu) with your first and last name, preferred email and type of programs desired.

## "Innovations" in Aging Conference

### 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Issues in Aging

Experts from around the country, new technologies and treatments, and humane interventions that honor the person in person-centered care – these are the hallmarks of the IOG's annual Issues in Aging conference. We've educated about 6,000 professionals at this two-day conference over the decades that we've hosted it. We've also built an unassailable reputation for quality and relevance to all who care for older adults. This year will not disappoint.

Outreach Director Donna MacDonald has planned Issues in Aging for nearly a decade. "This year's program has many highlights," she said, "from Telehealth to ethics to caregiving. Professionals consistently evaluate our conference as one of the best they attend. It's a must for everyone working with older adults."

What else is new with Issues? We've moved. Issues in Aging will be held in Livonia this year at the VisTaTech Conference Center on Schoolcraft College's campus. As in the past, the first day examines Alzheimer's and dementia and the second day looks at frailty care. Experts will discuss the latest non-amyloid causes of dementia; emerging treatments and prevention in Alzheimer's; the difficulty of the solitary older adult making medical decisions; telehealth; anxiety disorders; and protection from abuse. All presentations include time for questions.

Attend one day for \$75 and 6 CEs or both days for \$150 and 12 CEs. Students and non-professional seniors receive a \$15 discount per day. Lunch is included and provides a comfortable time to connect with colleagues. Issues in Aging takes place on May 16-17. Registration ends May 10, so don't delay. Register online through the [www.iog.wayne.edu](http://www.iog.wayne.edu) website calendar page.

## It's Raining Training

2010  
attendees  
1,600

2015  
attendees  
8,100

Whether you are a senior with health questions, or a professional working with older adults, the IOG is the go-to place for reliable, easy-to-understand information. We built our education programs from 20 in 2010 that reached 1,600 people, to a whopping 114 last year that reached 8,100 people. This year will surpass that record, and we couldn't be prouder. We train nurses, doctors, social workers, caregivers, residents of Detroit and all the surrounding neighborhoods, therapists and students, all at no or low cost.



Promoting Successful Aging in Detroit and Beyond

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Got Brains?

Just remember to bring yours and we will train it, strain it and entertain it. **BrainStorm** is a series of free educational workshops on brain health. Draw, puzzle, write backwards, laugh and learn in these light-hearted and well-researched sessions. Join the IOG's Donna MacDonald and Cheryl Deep in one, two or all three sessions.

**FREE**

**Dearborn Henry Ford Centennial Library**  
16301 Michigan Avenue, Dearborn, MI 48126  
All at 6:00 – 7:30 pm

**Wednesday, June 22** – *BrainStorm: A Workout for the Mind*

**Wednesday, July 20** – *BrainStorm: Memory Tricks*

**Wednesday, August 24** – *BrainStorm: The Joys of Socializing*

For more info call the  
**Dearborn library at 313-943-2330**



from page 4

rill Palmer Skillman. Her busy lab currently supports one postdoctoral fellow, four graduate students and more than 12 undergraduates.

Ofen Lab winners were **Lingfei Tang** for Best Graduate Student Podium Presentation; and **Priya Sam** for Best Undergraduate Poster. Lingfei's research is on the contribution of the prefrontal cortex to the formation of memory. He is a third-year student in the Cognitive Development and Social Psychology program at WSU. Priya's project looked at how memory strategies impact the brain's ability to recall words. She is a junior majoring in psychology and planning a medical career in pediatrics.

The third IOG winner was **Christina Wong** for Best Graduate Student Poster, *Equivalence of the Semantic Clusters in the HVLt-R Alternate Forms*. HVLt-R is a 12-item learning task used to assess higher order organizational strategies and to help in a diagnosis of dementia. Christina is a student in the Psychology Department and currently holds the prestigious Rumble Fellowship.

Winners (from top): Lingfei Tang and IOG Board Chair Carol Edwards. Priya Sam (right) with Faculty Mentor Dr. Noa Ofen.

Editor/Writer - CHERYL DEEP | Graphic Designer - CATHERINE BLASIO

#### Wayne State University Board of Governors

Gary S. Pollard, Chair	David A. Nicholson	Kim Trent
Paul E. Massaron, Vice Chair	Sandra Hughes O'Brien	M. Roy Wilson, <i>ex officio</i>
Marilyn Kelly	Dana Thompson	