Dear Readers,

It is my pleasure to provide you with an update on what is happening at the MUSC Center on Aging and the Senior Mentor program. Welcome to a fall of Healthy Aging Events!!! As you can read in this Newsletter, the Memory Walk for dementia and Alzheimer's disease is coming up, and we hope that a record number of supporters join this important fundraising and awareness event. If you are interested in research, the Aging Research Day will be held at MUSC again next spring, March 27-28; please block those dates in your calendar! The overall Theme for the conference will be "Stroke in South Carolina" and one of the special organizers for the conference is Dr. Robert Adams, the Director for the MUSC Stroke Program & Dr. Mark Kindy. As in every Newsletter issue, we have included a complete list of the Senior Mentor assignments and due dates, so that mentors and students can prepare for the upcoming assignments. Many of you have already started working with your mentors on assignments, and we hope this year will bring many happy moments and that mentors and students get to know each other very well. If you are a mentor, please talk to your friends about participating in this program; in the back of the newsletter, you will find a form that can be separated and sent in if they are interested in participating. If you already have a set of students, but would like to sign up for another pair of students, that is also possible; this way you can meet more young people who are eager to work with you!

With Halloween and the Holiday season around the corner, we wish you a happy and eventful fall! Please contact the Center on Aging if you have questions about our fundraising or educational programs or would like more information how you can participate in clinical trials or other programs featured here!

Thank you for being our supporter and working with our students!

Lotta Granholm
Director
What is the Senior Mentor Program?

The Senior Mentor Program is a volunteer program that connects medical students from the Medical University of South Carolina with people aged 65 years and older living in the greater Charleston, SC area. The goals of the program are:

- To encourage medical students to have positive attitudes about caring for older adults.
- To help reduce stereotypes about aging.
- To improve the way future doctors care for older persons.

Senior Mentor News

- The Senior Mentor Program is currently in its fourth year. This year is monumental as we are about to experience having our first graduating class that has successfully completed the entire program!
- With the edition of two new staff to the program, the Senior Mentor Program is in full swing and all of the modules for all 4 years also have been developed.
- Currently Dr. Kathleen Wiley serves as the Program Director, bringing years of knowledge and experience to the program. Dr. Wiley has a strong interest in medical student education. She served as Director of the Introduction to Clinical Medicine courses for several years. From 1993 to 2000 she served as the Medical Director of the Parallel Curriculum, a problem-based learning track for 18-24 students. She received an Excellence in Teaching Award in 1990 and was a Golden Apple nominee in 1990, 2000, 2004, and 2005.
- Alyssia Barnes is the new Program Assistant insuring that the day to day functions of the program are being handled and making sure that the mentors as well as the students are aware of what is expected of them.
- To date, we have approximately 494 students and about 225 mentors enrolled in the program. When the program starts in January for the incoming 1st year students of 168 students, it will be the first year of such a large class.
- We have updated the modules for the Senior Mentor Program. The modules are as follow:

  First Year: Physiology of Aging Medical History
  Second Year: Nutrition and Pharmacology
  Third Year: Fall Risk and Life Review - Fourth Year: Advanced Care Planning

- The program modules have evolved over the last four years as we catered the modules to fit the needs of the medical school as well as the feedback from our mentors and students.
- Recruiting for the program will be underway beginning October 20, 2008. Some of the sources for recruitment are: Franke Home, Canterbury House, James Island Senior Center, as well as the Senior Ministries at local churches.
Mrs. Linda Gilstrap & Ms. Sandra Watson - Mother and Daughter Senior Mentors—Franke Home

Mrs. Gilstrap and Ms. Watson are mother and daughter senior mentors—who live together. They are a family of teachers. Both are thoroughly pleased with their students. Ms. Watson (the daughter) joined the program because as a teacher, she understands the importance in participating in the education of people. She sees her participation as one last lesson she can do. They both enjoy their students company. They think their students have learned that “old isn’t as old as they thought”. Their students are more relaxed than their initial visit, and they believe this program offers more experiences in learning to communicate with the senior population. Mrs. Gilstrap is active in water training and walking on the beach. Although her water training has decreased a little bit because of falling, Ms. Watson stays active by swimming four or five days a week and practicing tai chi.

Mr. Walter Melfi—Canterbury House

Born in here in Charleston, Walter Melfi and his wife, Ann are both Senior Mentors. He is the son of a World War I veteran. Overall, Mr. Melfi is in good health. He suffered a massive heart attack in 1991, and now is proactive in staying healthy by following a good diet and following doctor’s orders on his heart medication. Mr. & Mrs. Melfi stay active and interested in all Catholic concerns. Mr. Melfi joined the Senior Mentor Program to share his experiences to help students working with senior mentors. Mr. Melfi would like to advise medical students to avoid having presumptions about the elderly. He would like to see the physicians of the future to be open to each patient they encounter because everybody is a unique individual and has their story to tell. He advises medical students to “practice their medicine on senior citizens starting now.”

Mrs. Mary “Chance” Scranton-Bishop Gadsden

Mrs. Scranton is an active senior mentor. She attended College of Charleston. She has 3 children and 4 step children. She joined the Senior Mentor Program because it gave her something to do, not that she doesn’t stay active. She is involved in many activities around her home, even going to the gym four times a week. She was able to go everyday until recently, and now has some rotator cuff problems. Mrs. Scrantom thoroughly enjoys her students. Coming from a family of doctors, she advises that future physicians remember that they are not just healers, but should also be compassionate and personal. She believes the Senior Mentor Program is a very worthwhile program and will lead future doctors to be more personable with the elderly.

Requirements to be a mentor:

♦ Agree to be a Senior Mentor for two MUSC medical students through-out their four years of schooling
♦ Meet in your home with the students several times per year (usually seven or eight visits).
♦ Have transportation to meet with the students (generally twice a year).
♦ Agree to share information about yourself with the students.
♦ Give feedback and personal comments to the students.
♦ Be 65+ and live in Charleston.

To sign up or receive information on becoming a mentor contact:

Alyssia Barnes
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792-5721
barnea@musc.edu

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792-3699
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Creative Fundraising

Sally Smith

Local artist and author Sally Smith has donated her manuscript, *The Circle*, to MUSC to raise awareness and support for research into Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s diseases, dementia, vision and hearing loss and other age-related illnesses. Smith’s inspiring personal account—closing the family home and moving her mother into an assisted living facility—resulted in this journal-style book that critics have called: “healing, hilarious and very helpful to those of us sharing similar experiences.”

To obtain a copy of *The Circle* from MUSC, contact the Center on Aging at www.musc.edu/aging or call 843.792.5721

Have You Heard? - MUSC Podcasts on Aging, Geriatrics and Caregiving

Come visit www.musc.edu/aging to listen on your computer or to download to your Ipod award-winning podcasts with thousands of hits.

Age related podcasts include discussion of topics such as:
- financial and legal matters
- use of hospice
- long term care and geriatric care

Podcasts are hosted by Sally Smith, local author and artist.
Charleston Memory Walk:
Hampton Park—
October 25, 2008

Sign up today for the Alzheimer’s Association Memory Walk, the nation’s largest event to raise awareness for Alzheimer’s. You can sign up at www.alz.org/sc or call 1-800-860-1444.

Senior Mentor Sign Up Sheet

Name

Address

DOB

Phone number

Please mail to:
Senior Mentor Program
ATTN: Alyssia Barnes
19 Hagood Ave—Ste 806
Charleston SC 29425

Or call 843-792-5721

Senior Mentor Program Assignment Due Dates

Class of 2009—Advanced
Care Planning Due 2/20/09

Class of 2010—
Life Review—Due at end of Psychiatry Rotation
Falls Risk Assessment due at end of Internal Medicine Rotation

Class of 2011—
Nutrition due 10/05/08
Pharmacology due 4/25/09

Class of 2012—
Medical History Due 3/23/09
Mental Status due 4/27/09
Research findings for 2008

- **High Fat Diets and Memory Loss**
  Researchers in the Department of Neuroscience (Drs. Granholm & Sambamurti) have recently shown that a high fat diet leads to memory loss and inflammation in the brain of laboratory rats, suggesting that even short-term ingestion of trans-fats could have detrimental effects on your memory and also your nerve cells! The work was presented at the Society for Neuroscience conference, and was recently published in the Journal of Alzheimer's disease. Dr. Granholm’s group has also shown that **fruit and berries that are high in antioxidants can protect you brain from memory loss.**

- **Drug Abuse & Aging**
  A program project grant from the National Institutes on Aging to MUSC researchers is focusing on what happens long-term when the brain is unable to produce sufficient amounts of “brain Vitamins” or Growth Factors. The investigators found that mice with reduced growth factor levels were vulnerable to drugs and developed Parkinsonian-like symptoms when they were middle-aged or aged. The work was recently published in the prestigious Journal of Neuroscience and demonstrated that drugs can have damaging and chronic effects to vulnerable individuals, which may develop Parkinsonism with aging. The work was first-authored by Dr. Heather Boger in the Department of Neurosciences.

- **Down’s syndrome and Alzheimer’s disease**
  Down’s syndrome is a developmental disorder, which has not been researched extensively, but which will increase in numbers due to increased mean age of mothers, and advances in medical care. We have utilized the condition, and compare findings for Alzheimer’s disease and Down’s syndrome to determine if there are common pathways, and therefore also possible drug development, which would apply to both disorders. Our findings show that Vitamin E can prevent many of the problems which occur in Down’s syndrome individuals as they grow older, and also prevents memory loss and brain inflammation from occurring. Our findings were recently presented at an international conference on Brain Repair mechanisms in Freiburg Germany (Jason Lockrow, Department of Neurosciences).
Our Staff

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