

AEA CAREERS IN AGING VIRTUAL EVENT

March 23, 2021

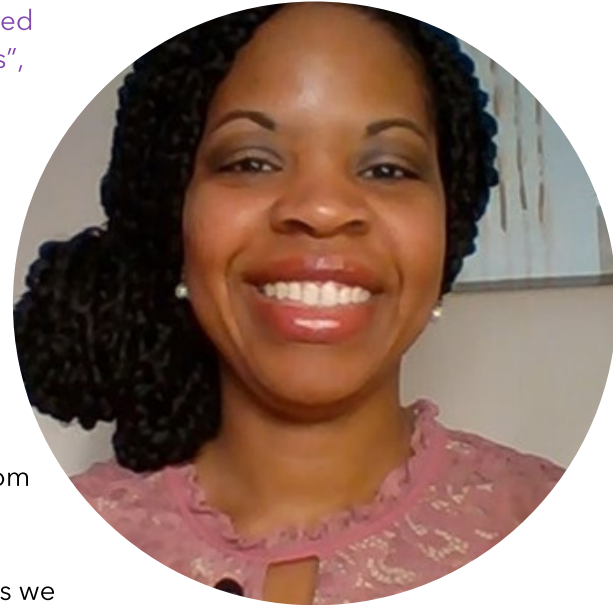


Keynote Presentation Highlights

By Annie Myers, AEA Scholar

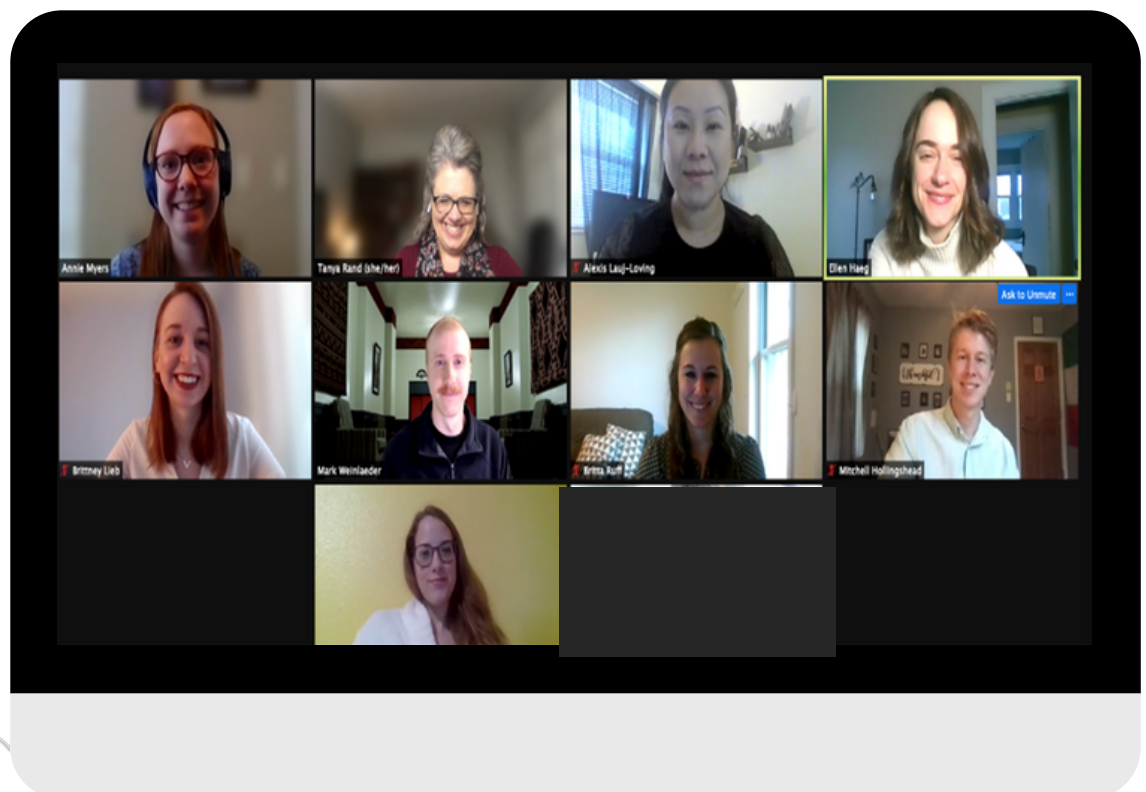
The first workshop of our Careers in Aging event was entitled “The Imprisoned Ones: The Impact of COVID-19 on Older Adults in Long Term Care Facilities”, presented by Kiana Joyner, MSW, LICSW Geriatric Psychotherapist and Diversity and Inclusion Lead at Associated Clinic of Psychology.

Kiana presented the differences between less resourced and more resourced facilities and compared the impact of COVID-19 on differently resourced long term care facilities. She discussed the benefits and challenges of Telehealth, a tool that has been crucial in maintaining social, emotional and physical wellbeing. While there are challenges with telehealth in both resourced and under resourced facilities, Kiana acknowledged that access to technology and staff available to roll out Telehealth is essential in maximizing the benefits. Seeing the comparison side by side from Kiana was surprising and demonstrated the need to advocate for equitable resources among all long-term care facilities. Kiana ended her presentation emphasizing the importance of checking in with ourselves, identifying biases we hold, and taking care of ourselves.



Kiana Joyner, MSW, LICSW

AEA Scholars meet on Zoom before the Careers in Aging event to practice! This was our first virtual event and we were grateful to have the help of AEA Scholar and IT Project Manager Ellen Haeg and IT Consultant Mark Weinlaeder. They were vital in making sure this event ran smoothly.



The second workshop of our Careers in Aging event was entitled, “Working with TBLGQIA+ Older Adults”, presented by Shari Johnson, MSW, ACSW. Shari is both a social worker and an anthropologist by educational training and has previously managed a private practice working solely with older adults coming out later in life. Shari is the sole proprietor of The Traveling Diversity Profession Training & Consultation Services. In 2020, she accepted a clinical faculty position with the University of St. Thomas School of Social Work where she teaches in the MSW field education program. Shari is also the Coordinator for DE&I initiatives and efforts for the Morrison Family College of Health.



Shari Johnson, MSW, ACSW

Shari began the workshop by engaging participants in an opening personal and professional knowledge reflection to consider our understanding of gender, sexual orientation and older adults. She provided a primer on the concepts of gender, sexual orientation and older adults. As the lived experiences of TBLGQIA+ older adults are varied, Shari also shared the joys and challenges of TBLGQIA+ older adults which included specific insurance considerations for transgender older adults. Participants were engaged in discussion prompts around previous practice case studies. As this engaging and informative workshop was concluding, examples of assumptions to avoid were offered as well as better practices and tips when working with TBLGQIA+ older adults. Shari facilitated a closing reflection to encourage participants to develop a plan for continued learning and skill building to effectively work with TBLGQIA+ older adults.



Community Provider Panel Discussion

By Mitchell Hollingsead and Britta Ruff

This year we had a top-notch group of clinical social workers from diverse backgrounds who were able to share insight into the importance of creating a diverse workforce that offers culturally relevant interventions for older adults and their families. Additionally, they were able to offer insights into the unmet needs and opportunities within the diverse organizations they belonged to. On the next page is just a brief snapshot of the amazing work our panelists are engaged in.



Leah Bonine, MSW, LGSW

is a psychotherapist at JustUs Health (soon to be Rainbow Health). At this organization, Leah has clients who identify as a part of the LGBTQ+ community. Older adults from this community who have come out in later life can benefit from the supportive counseling that JustUs Health offers. There are also older adult clients who have been open about their sexuality for years and find counseling at Leah's organization to be supportive and beneficial. Having Leah Bonine on the panel was a pleasure and the audience learned so much about social work in this specific field.



Dorothea Harris, MSW, LICSW

is a licensed independent clinical social worker for the Culturally Responsive Caregiver Support and Dementia Services at Volunteers of America. Dorothea assists elders with hope and resources when needed. Dorothea has a passion for "helping the human race" and enjoys working with older adults. The panel was very lucky to have Dorothea share her wisdom.



Hector R. Matacastillo, MSW, LICSW

is a multilingual/multicultural clinical social worker and Director at Life Development Resources. Hector has specialized training and program development around trauma. Hector's work has helped older adults among other age groups from the Latino culture. Hector's enriched experience provided a valuable perspective to the panel.



Parmananda Khatiwoda, MSW, LGSW

is a program specialist at the Minnesota Department of Human Service as well as an adjunct professor at the University of Minnesota, Augsburg University and University of St. Thomas. Parmanada has served the Bhutanese elder population through his successful aging research and program development. His academic and practice experience with older adults provided an enlightening perspective to a culturally rich panel discussion.

These amazing panelists provided a better view of what it is like to work at different agencies serving older adults across different population groups. One attendee noted "The panelists were very impressive with their background, knowledge, and willingness to share." Beyond learning about the unique needs of older adults, the panel was able to emphasize the importance of clinical social workers reflecting the population they serve.

THANK YOU to all of our presenters and panel members who helped us create an extraordinary educational event!

To attend one of our future presentations, visit our events page.



Conference Reflections

By Annie Myers & Brittney Lieb

Pre-Conference

The pre-conference held on April 28, 2021 highlighted 18 different poster presentations and was attended by over 200 participants. Poster presentations focused on many research areas such as ageism in healthcare, barriers for dementia caregivers, and caregiving for the Somali American Community during COVID-19.

Day 1

Keynote speaker, Toni P. Miles, MD, PHD shared about her experiences working in long term care during the Covid-19 pandemic and how policy, internal operation factors, and uncontrollable factors can influence the outcomes of the long-term care facility. A panel discussion focusing on updates from MN- Age Friendly Network as well as various concurrent sessions were held throughout the day.

AEA Scholar Brittney Lieb was able to attend a session called "Connecting with Others: Understanding Personality for the Sake of Better Care" presented by Steven Atkinson, PA-C, MS. He shared information on how to determine individual personality traits using the Myer-Briggs Type Indicator (MTBI) framework. Brittney found this session very informative due to the emphasis of how the understanding of different personality traits can help improve professional relationships when working with older adults.

As a social work student interested in behavioral healthcare, Brittney was excited to learn about the specific communication skills focused on asking questions to differentiate between the 16 personality types that could be used when interviewing an older adult patient. The presenter highlighted that knowing the personality traits of older adults can help professionals better understand how older adults may behave, which could ultimately lead to greater success outcomes for the older adult's care.

Day 2:

AEA Scholar Annie Myers attended "Health and Social Justice in Long-Term Care". Annie appreciated the fact that this presentation offered a research, provider and aging adult and consumer's perspective. Odi Akosinou, MPH, University of Minnesota, School of Public Health, started out by highlighting research showing that despite Minnesota's high rankings in health and senior-friendliness, we still rank among the highest in health and racial disparities in long-term care. Odi Akosinou stressed the importance of continuous policy and program research, increased and equitable wages and benefits for long term care workers across Minnesota and the prioritization of COVID-19 testing and PPE.

Alana Wright, BSc, Minnesota Leadership Council on Aging, then transitioned into a discussion on the work of the Minnesota Diverse Elders Coalition, developed in 2019 by the Minnesota Leadership Council on Aging. Alana outlined the purpose of this committee as "to create healthy communities where older adults are valued and have improved access to high quality and culturally diverse supports for all older Minnesotans to live well". Based on findings from their Community Forum on Racial Equity in Services for Older Adults, Alana stressed the importance of systems level change, culturally sensitive care training, and more support and resources for staff and nursing homes with a high proportion of BIPOC residents.

The last co-presenter was Gwen Ellis, a Program Participant with Volunteers of America's Culturally Responsive Caregiving Support and Dementia in their Caregiver Support Group. Gwen Ellis provided a compelling narrative based on her own personal experiences and observations as a caregiver and aging adult of enslaved African descendants. Gwen Ellis urged to the attendees "there can be no relationship where there is no trust" and emphasized a person-centered view on policy and program planning that viewed all aging adults as fully human worthy of respect, dignity and honor.

VA Summit 2020

By: Brittney Lieb, AEA Scholar

During the fall, I was presented with the opportunity to partner with my fellow AEA scholar, Annie Myers, Clinical Faculty and Coordinator of Aging Services, Dr. Tanya Rand and my field instructor from Open Circle Adult Day and Support Services Carol Ashwood, MSW, LICSW to review the literature on caregiver mental health and wellbeing during Covid-19.

This past year, the Covid-19 pandemic has brought on many unforeseen circumstances for caregivers. A study conducted by the Rosalynn Institute for Caregiving (2020) highlighted that challenges for caregivers included the increase in being socially isolated, reductions in community support services and medical care, and reduced mental health and wellbeing.

Our review of the literature also brought focus specifically on the effects that Covid-19 has held on veteran (VA) caregivers. VA caregivers already have faced specific challenges to caregiving prior to Covid-19 such as caring for those with dual diagnoses and caregiving for a longer duration of time due the care recipient being wounded or diagnosed at a younger age (Strong, 2018). With the addition of the pandemic, VA caregivers also faced similar challenges as non-VA caregivers including a decrease in perceived caregiver effectiveness, an increase in stress, increased time demands, and an increased need for mental health support (Elizabeth Dole Foundation, 2020).

Our review of the current research also looked at ways to assess caregivers during the time of Covid-19 through the use of specific tools focused on assessing things related to caregiver anxiety, depression, self efficacy, grief, burden, and well being. As a foundational internship student working with caregivers firsthand, I was able to learn and experience these types of caregiver screening tools and assessments through the use of supervision, caregiver consultations, and co-facilitating a caregiver support group. This research also taught me many ways that I can help promote self-care and wellbeing to the caregivers I work with through the four domains of biological, social, psychological, and spiritual care.

One part of the research presentation that I found useful was learning about different coping strategies for caregivers such as validation, reframing, and the practice of self-compassion (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). After learning about these types of coping strategies, I have been able to work with my field instructor to implement them into our biweekly caregiver support group through the Alzheimer's Association.

Caregiver Mental Health and Wellbeing During COVID-19 Presentation for the VA Caregiver Summit November 3, 2020



Carol Ashwood, MSW LICSW
Open Circle Adult Day and Caregiver Support Services and UST Adjunct Faculty



Brittney Lieb, BA
UST MSW Area Emphasis in Aging Student Scholar



Annie Myers, BSW LSW
UST MSW Area Emphasis in Aging Student Scholar



Tanya Rand, MSW LICSW
UST Clinical Faculty and Coordinator of Aging Services

Morrison Family
College of Health
School of Social Work

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Narrative Therapy

By: Mitchel Hollingshead, AEA Scholar

Narrative therapy, by definition, is the therapeutic process of listening to a client's whole story and providing the client strengths through their decisions (Clark, 2021). These identified strengths will help them overcome current and future problems. Narrative therapy has always fascinated me because of the strong connection it builds between social worker and client.

I have been learning more about narrative therapy in my foundation placement, working with high schoolers and their families as a school social worker. During my sessions with high schoolers, my goal is to understand their background. When I have a grasp on their upbringing, I compliment them on their strengths and triumphs. This approach benefits the client and acknowledges their worth. I am excited to use the same modality in my clinical placement with older adults. I can take what I learned working with high schoolers and adapt it to my work with older adults. Older clients will gain a sense of hope and worth when their strengths are identified. As a social worker, listening to an older client's story may take more time, but I am passionate and excited to engage more within narrative therapy.

Clarke, J. (2021). How Narrative Therapy Works. Verywell Mind. <https://www.verywellmind.com/narrative-therapy-4172956>.



AEA Scholar Experience Reflection

By Diana Bjorkman

As my first year in the MSW program comes to an end, I have deep gratitude for my scholar experience. I began this program as a non-traditional student. While I came to St. Thomas with a Bachelor of Science in Alcohol and Chemical Dependency and a Minor in Gerontology, beginning this year, as an older adult learner I felt somewhat intimidated stepping into a rigorous program with such a wonderful reputation. Finding support however within the AEA Program has provided me with confidence, comfort, and a sense of belonging. My peers in the AEA program helped me keep my feet on the ground this year and made sure that I felt both connected and invested.

I pursued becoming an AEA scholar because I passionately believe we as a society need to continue to build a strong infrastructure for our growing older adult population. Our AEA scholars have that dedication and are preparing themselves with the skills needed to better the lives of older adults and their families. The AEA program is a wonderful example of a group of people who are advancing the common good with compassion, creativity and conviction.

In closing, I believe that we are sent to where we belong in life, and I am just thankful I am on this path alongside these amazing people in my AEA Program!



A View From the Field: COVID-19



As we reflect on another unprecedented school year, we continue to emphasize the importance of lifting up our healthcare workers and protecting older adults. We asked a few of our AEA Scholars to reflect on their work with older adults and the impact vaccination clinics have had on their work and the lives of older adults in different healthcare settings.

A Nursing Home Perspective



Molly Stimpert, AEA Scholar:

I am currently in my second year as an AEA scholar. I have worked with the older adult population for the last five years. Most of these years were filled with joy and new learning experiences. However, the last year was a whirlwind of emotions and hardships for the older adults I work with. Working in a nursing home, I have witnessed through my residents the pain and depression they felt for over a year having to deal with the restrictions placed upon nursing facilities. They were isolated from their loved ones and the friends they made within the facility. I heard countless residents say, "Why am I being punished?" and "I feel like I am in prison." It was challenging to explain the necessity of the restrictions being placed upon them. How do you explain a pandemic to a vulnerable population without instilling fear? How do you relay to them that you are simply trying to keep them safe? And yet, you are watching them fade deeper into their depression and dementia state because they are lacking the social and physical interactions they need. As the population that needed protecting the most, they were also the population that suffered the most. Thankfully, the last 2 months have proven to be a turning point. After being vaccinated, my residents have been able to have visits with their loved ones, walk the hallways, socialize, and eat in the dining room with their friends again. It may seem to resemble some sort of normalcy, but it will not bring back the year of experiences and time with their loved ones they missed out on. I can say, however, that when I walk into work now, I see more smiles from my residents and the brightness in their faces has started to reappear. If there is one point I want you to take away from reading this it is, to not forget about the geriatric community and remember the positive impact support from family and friends has on their wellbeing.

A Hospice Perspective



Britta Ruff, AEA Scholar:

There have been so many losses throughout the COVID 19 pandemic. This has only been reinforced to me throughout the academic year through research related to grief and loss, as well as my own experience working in the field. As a hospice social worker, grief and loss is in the forefront of the work with patients and their families. Yet the pandemic has added a whole new layer for people to adapt to. Not only does the patient and family have the heavy, cumulative losses related to end of life, there are now the additional losses related to a pandemic. This past year through bereavement, I have worked with families who have struggled with their grief, whether it be related to not being able to visit their loved one at end of life or being isolated from their typical social supports because of social distancing. Research has shown these factors could increase the risk of complicated grief (Gesi et al. 2020). Yet even amid all this loss and grief I find myself captivated by families' ability to find meaning and resiliency during this difficult time. This has me hopeful but also conscientious of the important work yet ahead.



GRADUATING SCHOLARS'

Closing Thoughts



Alexis Lauj-Loving

AEA Scholar Co-Leader

My internship this year was at Associated Clinic of Psychology (ACP) in their Community Based Program, where clients of all ages are served. I provided Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services (ARMHS), therapy services, and completed diagnostic assessments.

My experience at ACP has taught me how to build relationships with clients who are struggling with their mental health. Typically, ACP's Community Based Program provides services to clients in their homes but due to the pandemic, services were completed via tele-health. It was a different type of experience from face-to-face, but I appreciated learning new ways to engage with clients.

Currently, I work as a program supervisor at Catholic Charities, in their Aging and Disabilities department. After graduation, my goal is to pursue my LICSW and focus my clinical practice working with BIPOC older adults and their families.



Annie Myers

AEA Scholar Co-Leader & Research Assistant

I was so grateful to have my clinical internship with Catholic Charities in their Homeless Elders Program. Working with older adults in emergency shelter hotel programs brought on by COVID-19 has showed me how impactful having a dignified place to sleep, bathe and get three meals a day is on client's motivation and capacity to find housing.

My experience providing clinical case management for older adults experiencing homelessness taught me that clinical social work is a lens and can take place in many settings. In my setting this lens placed an emphasis on honoring choices, preserving wisdom, protecting dignity, and ensuring this population is not forgotten.

After graduation, my goal is to pursue my LICSW while providing eventually clinical services to older adults within their homes. I am thankful for all of the networking and leadership experience I have gained as an AEA scholar and for getting the opportunity to be with an amazing group of individuals who are equally as passionate about clinical practice with older adults.



Congratulations Annie and Alexis on graduating and best wishes in your future work with older adults!