New Director Named for the CSAAR

After an extensive nationwide search process, Coastal Carolina University’s College of Natural and Applied Sciences proudly announces that Dr. Janette L. Bowman has accepted the position as new Director of the Center for the Study of Aging and Active Retirement (CSAAR). She will begin her duties in August, 2005.

Dr. Bowman comes to CCU from her most recent position as Professor of Economic and Community Development at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, and brings an extensive and rich background of training and experience to the Center. She has been responsible for obtaining over $9 million in externally funded grants, has directed continuing education and gerontology programs at major universities, and has demonstrated very effective entrepreneurial and innovative leadership across disciplines and between the public and private sectors. She has a strong sense of mission and commitment in promoting productive aging and active retirement programs and services, and has research expertise in elder abuse, policies affecting older workers, financial planning for older adults, and retirement and pension issues. Dr. Bowman has also successfully taught a number of university courses, including Aging and Public Policy, Economics of Aging, Elder Abuse, Social Gerontology, and International Aging. She will share more of her vision and plans for the CSAAR in the next issue of Prime Times, due out in October.

Dr. Bowman replaces Dr. Reid Johnson, a retired professor and psychologist who took the director’s position on an interim basis in the fall of 2003 to help get the Center started on a sound footing. Some highlights of Dr. Johnson’s term of service include conducting a study of the limited role played by older adults and retirees in the life of the University, producing an extensive needs assessment survey of over 1,000 older adult residents of the Grand Strand, designing and collaborating with Horry-Georgetown Tech and a dozen other senior-related organizations on the establishment of the excellent online Grand Strand Senior Services Directory, and originating and writing the CSAAR’s newsletter, Prime Times. During Dr. Johnson’s tenure he also taught undergraduate courses on the Psychology of Aging and Gerontology, presented numerous seminars, workshops, and consultations to older adult and professional audiences, and worked with the CSAAR Assistant Director, Mr. Rocco Cartisano, to collect and organize a myriad of scientific research results and media articles on a wide range of quality of life issues for older adults and retirees. This had the summative effect of transforming the CSAAR from a fledgling operation into one of South Carolina’s premier resources for services and information on senior citizens and their needs, interests, and activities.

Dr. Johnson will be re-retiring after August 1 to work on a book and serve as a consultative resource to the Center and other agencies, businesses, and organizations that serve older adults in this area. He will also be teaching occasional courses for Coastal Carolina (See “Gerontology Course…” on pg. 7) and its non-credit Academies of Lifelong Learning at the Litchfield Higher Education Center in Pawleys Island. To contact Dr. Johnson after August 1, you can call or fax him at (843) 237-7262, e-mail nandrj@sc.rr.com, or snail mail him at 1001 Crooked Oak Drive, Pawleys Island, SC 29585.

Contact the CSAAR at New Address

To submit a letter to the editor, raise a question, or make a comment on any of the content of this issue of Prime Times, contact the Center for the Study of Aging and Active Retirement (CSAAR) at its new snail mail address: CSAAR, Foundation Center 315, Coastal Carolina University, P.O. Box 261954, Conway, SC 29528. Our phone numbers (349-4115 and 349-4116), fax number (349-4122), and e-mail addresses (csaar@coastal.edu, rjohnso1@coastal.edu, and rockdot@coastal.edu) remain the same. The new CSAAR Director’s e-mail address will be announced in the next issue of Prime Times.
10 Keys to Smart Aging  Part IV

[NOTE: This the fourth in a six-part series of articles on maintaining and even enhancing one’s intellectual abilities despite advancing age, based on very encouraging scientific research. Your questions or comments on this or any other Prime Times article are always welcome via the contact information for the CSAAR Office listed on page 1.]

Review

By way of a brief review of the first three articles on smart aging, we initially noted that “common knowledge” and most research up until the end of the 20th century held that an inevitable and irreversible part of living beyond age 60 was the gradual loss of one’s cognitive – formerly called “mental” – abilities; i.e., those brain functions that enable us to think, process information, learn, remember, problem solve, and make intelligent decisions in our daily lives. (If you’re not familiar or comfortable with the term “cognitive”, think “intellectual” every time you see it here.) This cognitive loss in old age was known as senescence, and when the loss became major, one was called senile.

In Part I we learned that better and more recent research challenged those long held beliefs about the inevitability of senescence, pointing to the fact that some older adults stay cognitively sharp into their 80s and even 90s, and beyond. Further research told us how they did it, and showed the way for most older adults to postpone and minimize the effects of senescence. We’ve summarized the results of that research in our “Ten Keys to Smart Aging”, and for each key, we state the scientific principle involved, then specify recommendations for every day smart aging activities.

Principle 1 was to remain engaged in productive and purposeful activities in one’s community. Don’t let all the skills and knowledge accumulated throughout one’s career – whether outside the home or within – go to waste just because you’ve retired. Work part-time, consult, apply your competencies to meaningful volunteer work, or change directions completely and try your hand at the arts. Your brain will love you for it!

Principle 2 was to keep both the quantity and quality of one’s daily activities high. Inactivity is to the brain what laziness and a lack of exercise is to the muscles; both are just asking for trouble. Watch intellectually stimulating TV, read challenging books, play complex games like chess or bridge, work difficult crossword puzzles . . . do anything to keep the higher executive functions of your forebrain working hard. Remember; you can’t backslide cognitively if you keep your brain forging ahead!

Principle 3 was to socialize with new people. Not only are such interpersonal interactions often rewarding in and of themselves, but regularly stimulating your brain with different people who hold different attitudes and interests and ideas helps keep it clicking on all cylinders and prevents senescence from gaining a foothold.

Principle 4 was to seek out educational and training experiences. Whether it involves getting your GED, or finishing your bachelor’s degree, or doing graduate work, formal education is probably the best single activity one can pursue in order to age smartly. Taking formal courses for credit, or auditing courses, or pursuing less rigorous educational activities like lifelong learning experiences or short courses online, or even undergoing training for a new vocation, or avocation, or volunteer role; applying your cognitive abilities to structured learning activities like these keeps our brainpower growing and developing new knowledge and skills. Plus, it’s fun to show “young whippersnappers” what we old folks can do when we put our minds to it!

Principle 5 was a logical extension of Principle 4; that is, to maintain and increase your competencies. Education may be the best way, but it’s not the only way for us “old dogs to learn new tricks.” Mastering new areas of knowledge or skills enhances one’s “self-
Your Friendly Neighborhood Gerontologist

by Dr. Sara Brallier, Director, CCU GCP Program

Q: What is a gerontologist and how are gerontologists trained?

A: In the first two issues of Prime Times, reference was made to “gerontology.” The first issue defined gerontology as the “subject of psychosocial development in older adulthood,” and noted that there are several members of the Coastal Carolina University (CCU) faculty with expertise in gerontology. In the second issue, the subject of Alzheimer’s disease was discussed in this “Ask Your Friendly Gerontologist” column. In this fourth issue we would like to highlight how CCU is preparing students to address the needs of an aging population by offering a program concentrating on the broad subject area of gerontology.

Coastal Carolina University is proud to be the only university in South Carolina offering a Bachelor’s Certificate in Gerontology. The Gerontology Certificate Program (GCP) is designed to provide students with knowledge and skills in the study of aging. It is multidisciplinary and allows individuals of different interests and backgrounds to develop a specialization in line with their unique needs that are applicable in a rapidly growing segment of the employment market.

The mission of the GCP is to offer a curriculum that integrates multiple disciplines – psychology, sociology, biology, and economics. These disciplines selectively contribute to the body of knowledge attendant to a comprehensive and informed view of aging in today’s human society (e.g., psychological and sociological studies, biological and health analyses, and economic, legal, cultural, and political investigations). The final part of the certificate program is completing an internship in a service setting addressed to older adults.

The objectives of the Gerontology Certificate Program are:
1. to address the mission of the university by offering courses that complement a liberal arts education;
2. to provide enhanced career opportunities for students by providing basic knowledge and skills applicable in a rapidly growing market segment;
3. to attract and retain students at CCU by providing a functional program for new students and for students who have degrees and wish to return for gerontological studies;
4. to address the local, state, and national need for knowledgeable professionals trained to work effectively with and for the aging population;
5. to enhance coordination of CCU with local health care providers, governments, and selected elements of the business community; and
6. to increase the visibility of CCU among older adult and retired residents of the Grand Strand. The GCP program is open to all CCU degree-seeking students (of any major) and any individual holding a Baccalaureate degree that desires specialized studies. It is a 21 semester hour (7 course) program. These courses include: Gerontology, Biology of Aging, Sociology of Aging, Aging and Social Policy, Psychology of Aging, Economics of Aging, and an Internship.

Since its inception in 1994, 1233 students have enrolled in the six foundation courses of the GCP, 43 students have completed the Gerontology Internship (PSYC 495), and 36 students have received their Certificate in Gerontology. Enrollments are expected to increase in the future as the “graying of the Grand Strand” creates more needs for gerontological competencies and job openings.

For more information about the Gerontology Certificate Program, especially if you know students with an interest in gerontology and working with older adults as a career - or if you are interested yourself – contact Dr. Sara Brallier, (Director of the Gerontology Certificate Program and Assistant Professor of Sociology) by calling 843-349-2470 or e-mailing brallier@coastal.edu.
With the ever increasing population of people 65 and older there also comes a need for better healthcare options. The continuum of care consists of Assisted Living Facilities, Independent Living Facilities, Nursing Homes, Adult Day Care Centers, and Hospices. Grand Strand Active Day Center fills one of these important roles. Our Active Day Centers are day programs for those 18 years and older with cognitive and functional issues that provide mental and social stimulation, along with nursing, therapy, transportation and more. A client’s day could consist of singing, reading, current events discussion, crafts and taking local trips. Adult Day Centers are a cost effective alternative for long term care and allow the client to remain at home with loved ones. Equally important, family caregivers can feel confident that excellent medical and therapeutic care will be provided by our experienced staff of healthcare professionals in a safe and nurturing environment.

Physical and Occupational therapy are a natural addition to our facilities by further promoting our clients’ ability to remain independent and by improving their overall health status and level of functioning. When medically necessary, these services are provided to help our clients overcome or compensate for the effects of an illness or disability. All of our therapists are specialists in working with the elderly and are uniquely qualified to provide our Active Rehab Services.

Active Nursing Services includes specialized programs and activities of in-home care. We help our clients with their recovery from disabling conditions, assist clients to regain the skills needed to care for themselves and promote their independence and social interaction. Our Certified Nursing Assistants and Personal Care Assistants provide friendly and dignified help with personal care, hygiene and grooming, and post hospitalization care. Companion aides are available to sit with clients suffering from social isolation and provide mental stimulation, meal planning and preparation, and light housekeeping. Active Nursing is exceptional because we employ quality staff who are experienced and dedicated. They participate in ongoing educational training and are supervised by a registered nurse. Before hiring, we conduct thorough background checks and drug testing on each aide.

There are a number of funding options which can assist in paying for our services. Our staff can help to evaluate each individual’s situation and determine which option best meets the specific needs of the family. Let our friendly and knowledgeable staff help you to coordinate the care you need.

Active Day Center, Active Rehab and Active Nursing all collaborate to provide a comprehensive approach to care for chronically ill individuals. Our goal in utilizing the variety of programs provided by Active Services Corporation is that each of our clients and family caregivers will notice a marked improvement in their overall quality of life. In many cases, our clients’ caregivers rekindle the personal relationship with a loved one which was affected previously by the stress of their caregiving situation. We have received numerous testimonials relating that the caregivers deeply appreciate our help with caring for their loved one and thus they find themselves better able to provide care themselves.

Caregivers also reap tremendous benefits by enrolling their loved one in our programs. They gain greater flexibility so that they can resume a normal work schedule, improve their own health by the reduction of stress, peace of mind and a guilt-free experience of accepting help in keeping their loved one at home. Let us help you obtain the care that you know your loved one deserves. Return the love…do something wonderful and contact the Administrator today. You can reach Lesley Bess, R.N. or Jennifer Hibbert at 445-6230 or 626-8501, or check us out online at our website: www.activeservices.com.
SCAMWATCH: 
Counterfeit Postal Money Orders Can Cheat Consumers and Businesses

You cannot believe your luck! Someone has just offered to pay you more than the purchase price for merchandise you are selling on the Internet. All you have to do is accept a postal money order as payment; keep the price of the item and a bit extra as a “gift” for your help; and, wire the remainder of the funds to your customer. Is this deal “too good to be true?”

Yes, advises the Better Business Bureau, who warns consumers and businesses to exercise caution when approached by eager buyers requesting “help” cashing domestic or international postal money orders. The “buyer” often claims to be living in a foreign country. These scam artists target private citizens, as well as small Internet retailers and classified advertisers located in the U.S. Sometimes the scam artists use e-mail and online auctions to perpetrate this fraud; other times, the telephone.

In any case, the scammer expresses an interest in purchasing the merchandise and offers to send a money order through the mail. Sometimes the victim is told upfront that the money order will be for more than the purchase price and that he or she should keep the extra funds as payment for their assistance. Other times, the “purchaser” claims to have made a mistake and asks the seller to refund the difference. Either way, the victim is told to ship the requested merchandise immediately and, to return the “excess funds” — either by wiring them to a bank or person located outside the U.S. or by enclosing them with shipment of the merchandise.

The victim then cashes or deposits the postal money order, assuming the financial document to be legitimate. That is when they learn that the money order is a fake. If the money was deposited, the victim’s account is debited for the full amount once the bank discovers the money order to be counterfeit. At the very least, the victim loses the merchandise already shipped to the “buyer.” In addition, he or she will likely be questioned by bank personnel and other officials about their involvement in the fraud.

Postal money orders have many security features to help verify their legitimacy, according to the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. To check that a money order is authentic, hold it up to the light and look for Ben Franklin images repeated on the left side (top to bottom) and a dark security thread running (top to bottom) to the right of the Franklin watermarks, with the tiny letters “USPS” facing backward and forward. If either of these security features is not present, the postal money order is a fake. Also, be aware that denominations appear in two locations. If denomination amounts are discolored, that indicates they have been erased. U.S. Postal money orders are printed on crisp textured paper stock with a maximum value of $1,000; the maximum value for international postal money orders is $700.

If you have questions about accepting postal money orders, contact your local Post Office, call the fraud hotline at 1.800.472.8347 or visit www.usps.com/postalinspectors.

Gerontology Course to be Offered Off Campus

For the first time, an undergraduate CCU course aimed directly at the needs and interests of older adults and retirees will be offered at a satellite center in the fall of 2005. The course will be PSYCH 425: Gerontology. It will be offered on Thursday evenings from 6:00-8:45 at CCU’s Waccamaw Higher Education Center on Willbrook Drive in Pawleys Island, and it will be taught by Dr. Reid Johnson, former director of CCU’s Center for the Study of Aging and Active Retirement (CSAAR), and a prominent local gerontologist. (Several attractive courses for older adults will also be offered on the Conway Campus this fall, if that location is more convenient for you.)

While this course can be taken by any aged student, it would be particularly beneficial and of special interest to seniors who live on the south end of the Grand Strand. The course description for PSYCH 425 is, “An in-depth analysis of the aging process in late adulthood through death and dying. Psychosocial influences on normal and dysfunctional aging processes will be examined. An emphasis on procedures and strategies for effectively intervening with both well and frail elderly will enable students to integrate their knowledge of gerontology into a multidisciplinary context.” In short, this course will consider both normal and abnormal development in older adulthood, as well as how to prevent and intervene in common psychopathologies.

Older adult residents aged 60 and over can take this course for free, after paying a nominal application fee and completing a special form in the Coastal Carolina University Admissions Office. (Call 349-2026 for further details and the special application form.) This course may be taken on either a regular (for-credit) or audit basis or it can be audited (where all assignments and tests are optional), and if the course has at least 15 registrations, older adults could also sit in on occasional class meetings as guests.

If you are an older adult or retiree, don’t miss this great opportunity for an interesting, useful, and enjoyable learning experience, offered at a convenient location and at minimal cost. Complete the special senior application and sign up for PSYCH 425 today!
efficacy” (pride in one’s accomplishments) and you can
double your fun and cognitive benefits by applying
your new competencies to benefit others who are in
need (which improves one’s “self-satisfaction” and “self
esteem”). Learn something new and then show what
you know to others who don’t. Both you and they will
really enjoy it!

**Principles 6 & 7**

Now to the new information for this article:

**Principle 6** is to use the selective optimization with com-
pensation and remediation cognitive strategy or style
whenever possible. Say what?! (I apologize for the sud-
den injection of polysyllabic jargon, but there’s an
important point to be made here and that’s what it’s
called!)

Let’s break all that down into bite size. First, selec-
tive optimization means to take a cold, hard look at
your cognitive strengths and weaknesses and spend
most of your time doing what you do best. This isn’t
some obtuse abstraction; it just means to keep your
sharpest knowledge and skills honed by using that
knowledge and applying those skills every day, if possi-
ble. You’ll enjoy showing off, and everyone will be duly
impressed with your inherent wonderfulness. And, oh
yeah, it’s very good for your brain, too. It’s no coinci-
dence that some of the greatest music ever composed,
and some of the greatest art ever painted, and some of
the greatest books ever written, and some of the world’s
most successful and wealthiest business people were and
are individuals in their 70s and 80s. All of us have
unique talents; don’t keep them a secret!

So what about those other two terms in the
Principle 6 tongue-twister? Compensation and reme-
diation address what we should do about our cognitive
weaknesses. They represent two different strategies to
achieve the same ultimate goal; i.e., making ourselves
smarter in our old age.

**Remediation** means identifying the weaknesses of our
intellect and carefully attacking them to make them
stronger. There are two basic forms of remediation; the
direct approach – called drilling – which uses repetition
and rote memorization to try to shore up a weak area of
knowledge or skill, and then there’s the more sophisti-
cated approach – called elaboration – which uses some
of your stronger cognitive abilities to help improve the
weaker ones.

Let’s compare and contrast drill and elaborative
remediation to illustrate their differences. Say you have
a hard time remembering couples’ names who you meet
only occasionally and you want to remediate that cogni-
tive weakness. To drill you might write their names
down on cards or paper and rote repeat the pairs of
names until you could correctly identify the full list
without further clues, and given one name, you could
produce the other. Then you’d run through the list a
couple of more times, which is a really good psychologi-
cal gimmick called “overlearning” that smart people use
all the time. The less often you see the couples, the
more often you’d need to drill with your name cards.

In contrast, elaborative remediation would require
forming some symbolic, linguistic, or logical association
to the pairs of names. For instance, say a couple’s first
names are Fred and Martha, and another pair’s names
are Alice and Marvin. A mnemonic – a gimmick to
facilitate memory – for those names might be “radio”
since the initials spell out “FM” and “AM.” Or say two
couples’ first names are Burt and Irma and Ralph and
Diane. A mnemonic association for those four people
would be “bird,” since the initials spell out that
acronym. Smart people naturally use elaborations more
than drills, but both can be useful for remediating dif-
ferent kinds of cognitive problems.

Remediation is always preferable for shoring up
weak cognitive areas, but what if you have problems
that remediation just won’t correct, no matter how hard
you try? That’s where compensation can come to the
rescue. Compensation means finding a different way to
achieve the same goal; i.e., remembering unfamiliar
names. Say you’re attending a party where a large num-
ber of people whose names you can’t remember are
going to gather. One way to compensate for your
memory failures would be to carry a “cheat sheet” of the
paired names on a sheet of paper. Then you and your
spouse find a place where you can observe the crowd
and practice naming the people you can see before
entering the party. If your memory deserts you in a face
to face situation, feign a cough where you turn to the
side and quickly check your list which you’ve kept in
your coat pocket. This strategy won’t work all the time,
and thus is definitely a less desirable option than reme-
diation, but having to apologize for not remembering
some people’s names is better than not remembering any
of them! Right?
Taking off in a completely different direction, Principle 7 is to be conscientious about your general health. This is not just a general maxim that “good health is good for you” — although that’s certainly true. Instead we’re stating that good health enables you to maximize your cognitive abilities as well. More specifically, we’re saying that bad health — especially long-term chronic diseases like heart trouble or cancer — can detrimentally affect your brain functions as a side effect. Any disease that reduces the supply of nutrients or oxygen, which your brain cells need to live, or glucose, which is the fuel your brain cells need to function, directly decreases cognitive abilities.

Two other areas of good health or “wellness” activities which can be of great benefit to us cognitively are diet and exercise. Maintaining a healthy diet not only means avoiding dangerous foods — and dangerous quantities of foods — but also avoiding dangerous food reductions in an effort to fight obesity. A healthy diet includes high proteins, low fats, small portions, calcium, antioxidants, and vitamins A, C, D, and E. A daily multivitamin is good, but usually needs to be supplemented by additional quantities of calcium, potassium, and beta carotene in foods for ideal “brain food”. Proteins are the chemicals that not only constitute the cell structure of your body and brain, but are also the key elements in hormones and enzymes that control the functioning of those cells.

Three major cautions regarding diet and dieting are in order here for good cognition. First, eating too high quantities of any foods, or eating too much fatty foods, can not only lead to obesity that threatens your heart and circulatory system’s health, it can also lead to diabetes. Obesity, circulatory disorders, and diabetes compete with your brain for key chemicals required for good cognitive functions. Second, you should be very cautious if you try low carbohydrate or low salt diets. While there may be some dietary benefits of not eating too many carbohydrates — especially from animal sources — and too much salt, carbohydrates are important building blocks for the brain’s proteins, and basic levels of sodium (table salt is sodium chloride) must be maintained for brain cells to communicate with each other for effective cognitive functioning.

Third a strong caution about consuming “nutritional supplements,” “natural or herbal remedies,” or “alternative medicines” usually sold through so-called nutrition centers or health food stores. Read the labels of such supplements very carefully and look for two statements like the following: “Health claims of these contents have not been tested or approved by the Food and Drug Administration.” and “This product is not designed to prevent, treat, or cure any disease.” Don’t buy any product with these warnings on them! What these statements mean is that these products have never been objectively proven to be either safe or effective for human consumption! Although such “supplements” are now a multi-billion dollar a year industry, and up to 70% of older adults take these supplements according to one study, many of these products constitute significant health risks and all of them are a waste of good money! Don’t be fooled by their appealing commercials or word of mouth; if they were really beneficial the government’s Food and Drug Administration would have valid scientific data to support their worth. They don’t, so you shouldn’t use them!!

Finally some brief but very good news about older adults’ cognition and exercise. Several major studies have recently shown that a relatively low level of exercise — especially aerobic exercises that increase the heart rate under controlled conditions — can have great benefits cognitively. As little as 20 minutes of exercise per day, three or more days a week, can significantly increase blood flow and oxygenation of the brain, which keeps the brain functioning at a healthy and smart level. Brisk walking, bicycling, walking while playing golf, playing tennis, stretching and lifting light weights, or any similar form of exercise that tones the muscles and oxygenates the brain can be enjoyable in and of themselves, but they can also be the difference between a well-functioning brain and an inefficient, forgetful one. Even the kind of “range of motion” exercises that arthritis sufferers are encouraged to do can constitute one of these three or four days a week regimen. Remember, our muscles and brains both operate on the same core principle of “use them or lose them.”

The choice is up to each of us.
As an older gentleman’s 80th birthday approached, his two sons put their heads together to try to think of something extra-special to celebrate the event. Since they were both very concerned about the loss of vitality their father had demonstrated since their mother’s death several years ago, they wanted to think up something that would snap the old man out of his funk.

“I’ve got a wild idea!” one brother announced excitedly, and although his sibling had major reservations, he eventually agreed and they laid their plans. They hired a “strip-o-gram” company to send a young woman to their father’s house to do a strip-tease for him a few hours before the standard family celebration and birthday cake.

Unfortunately, the woman chosen for this assignment was a part-time prostitute, and she got her signals crossed about exactly what she’d been hired to do.

At the appointed time, the old man answered his doorbell and was shocked to find a voluptuous young woman on his front porch who gleeefully announced, “I’m here to give you super sex!!”

The old man was taken aback, but after a few moments’ thought he said, “I’m feeling kind of tired today. I’ll take the soup.”