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Submit news by **September 1, 2006**
for mid-October 2006 publication.

From the President

Here's an update of major SPO-related highlights for those unable to attend AGHE's annual meeting in Indianapolis. Several significant decisions were made as our board becomes more actively involved with SPO day-to-day operations. The board will absorb some of the administrative work AGHE staff has been providing, allowing SPO to decrease the amount of our contract with AGHE. There will be three (3) issues of the SPO newsletter each calendar year and individuals and chapters may purchase affordable advertisements in the newsletter. The SPO newsletter Managing Editor will solicit your articles and ads via the SPO listserv.

Another exciting announcement is that incoming President Debra Sheets volunteered to manage the SPO web page and update our membership brochure. We also finalized the logistics associated with increasing the president's term from one to two years and decided that, beginning this spring 2006, annual report forms will be distributed on April 1 and are due to the national office on June 30. We hope this schedule is more consistent with demands of the academic year.

AGHE 2006 SPO student sessions featured four papers, five posters, and a resource exchange. Topics ranged from the experiences of doctoral students in interdisciplinary gerontology programs to the nature and scope of arts opportunities for elders in a community. Each paper was accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation and presenters graciously agreed their presentations may be posted on the SPO web site. Be sure to check them out!

The SPO President's Symposium featured James Peacock (President) and Debra Sheets (President Elect) to: 1) identify SPO's constituents, 2) identify resources that chapters need to be effective, and 3) prioritize objectives and identify next steps. Conducted in a focus group, it emerged that chapters are differentially effective at including student, faculty, and professional members as active members. Participants identified resources that may help them accomplish goals with respect to education, leadership, service, promoting a gerontological community on campus, and fostering sustainability. Based on the discussion, participants identified the SPO website as the top priority as a resource for sharing across chapters. Other priorities were: encouraging student SPO members to maintain their membership and involvement with SPO after graduation, inviting new professionals in the field to join our ranks, increased visibility at upcoming AGHE and GSA meetings via presentations, support for student attendees, and by our presence in the exhibit hall.

The business meeting was well attended. Board members shared highlights from the board meeting, the student sessions, and the symposium. The topic that received the most attention was the board's decision to take on many administrative tasks AGHE staff have been providing. As a result, we actively seek individuals to become more involved with SPO at a national level. A major task will be working with board members committed to developing resources to be posted on the web site. Join these efforts! Please contact me. Share the energy!

In an effort to help chapters track their membership, chapter contacts will receive a list of their current and former members. Accompanying this list will be a request to help us update the national database. Please heed our request, so our database is as accurate as possible. ~ Submitted by Jennifer Kinney, AGE Chapter (Miami University, Oxford OH) kinneyjm@muohio.edu 513-529-2915

Sigma Phi Omega thanks the following members for recent contributions.

Mary Ann Amemiya
Letha Chadiha
Elizabeth Chandler
Charles Copkney
Sidney Gerber
Morris Jenkins
Crystal Johnson
William Lane
Renee Leary
Malcolm Little
Jared Miller
Jennifer Nance
Carolyn Rizza
Patricia Savage
Ernestine Smith
Marian Spencer
Derek Stepp
Patricia Wurst





Welcome New SPO Chapters!

Winston-Salem State University • University of North Carolina at Wilmington
Epsilon Alpha Delta Omega

SPO Chapter News from ...

Beta Zeta Chapter, St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, MN



The Beta Zeta chapter shared and savored a potluck in conjunction with the St. Cloud State University Gerontology Program and Gerontology Club, November 2005. Those attending networked with faculty and community members and planned upcoming activities. An on-going fundraiser is our sale of "Aging - Journey of a Lifetime" t-shirts. Consider purchasing one for yourself! We continue our community service project with the Kaleidoscope Playground. Visit our website for more about our chapter activities and new officers at

<http://www.stcloudstate.edu/gerontology/sigmaphiomega.asp>

~Submitted by Dr. Rona Karasik, Gerontology Program Director rjkarasik@stcloudstate.edu

Delta Epsilon Chapter, California State University, Northridge, CA

In January 2006 our Delta Epsilon chapter hosted a celebratory luncheon at the University Club to congratulate Dr. Debra Sheets, President-elect of the incoming SPO Executive Board. Dr. Sheets, the Coordinator of Gerontology at Cal. State Northridge, oversees both the undergraduate program and graduate students in the Interdisciplinary Masters degree program in the Study of Aging. Professor Sheets, a former critical care and trauma Registered Nurse, has a B.A. in Humanities and Ph.D. in Gerontology and Public Policy from the University of Southern California. Her publications involve aging with disability, assistive technology, and policies. Still, Dr. Sheets finds time for her special interests in music, poetry and art.

Faculty guests, alumni, gerontology students, and local community members attended the SPO luncheon. Guests highlighted the positive and long-lasting impacts Dr. Sheets has had on their professional and personal lives. Dr. Helen Castillo, Dean of our College of Health and Human Development, paid tribute to Dr. Sheets noting she is a highly valued faculty member and professional colleague. All joined in wishing Dr. Sheets success and satisfaction throughout her upcoming year as SPO National President. We are proud to have her as our teacher and mentor here at California State University, Northridge. ~ Submitted by Mary Kirby kirbymaryj@yahoo.com 818-609-9357

Delta Eta Chapter, California State University, Long Beach, CA



We continue to host many events! Last semester's career panel was a tremendous success. This semester we host our 2nd annual Intergenerational Reading Day, when seniors from the local community come to campus and read to children at the Child and Family Care Center. Other events include two fundraisers: a garage sale and participation in Relay for Life. We look forward to more fun, commitment to seniors, and student activities. ~ Submitted by Dr. Melanie Mallers, Advisor mhorn@cslub.edu 562-985-7494

Delta Gamma Chapter, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, NC

New Delta Gamma officers were elected for the 2005-2006 year at the regular October meeting. The new officers are: Tricia Young, President, Anne Drake, Vice-President, and Burgin Ross, Secretary. Dr. Jan Wassel continues in her role as Advisor for our chapter. Our April Careers in Aging event included a display in Jackson Library and 10 student poster sessions exhibited at the student union, with raffle prizes for those who inquired at the posters about the gerontology profession. Chapter member's participation also energized our UNCG Gerontology Program's successful summit on April 3, "Aging Is Good Business: Introducing the Silver Industry". ~ Submitted by Tricia Young, pmyoung@uncg.edu

Delta Sigma Chapter, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR

In March the Delta Sigma Chapter participated in the 2006 Northwest Arkansas Memory Walk sponsored by the Alzheimer's Association. The team included seven student members from the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville who walked in the event. In all, team Sigma Phi Omega raised \$595 for Alzheimer's services and research!



This was accomplished with generous donations from friends and team members' families, and a very successful Forget-Me-Not sale at the student union. The sale raised \$110 and prompted discussion between Sigma Phi Omega members and other students about the need for careers in aging and Alzheimer's awareness. We look forward to continued partnerships with the Alzheimer's Association. ~ Submitted by Tori Burden vburden@uark.edu 479-575-5262



Gamma Kappa Chapter, California State University, Fullerton, CA

In December 2005 the Gamma Kappa Chapter hosted its annual *Winter Initiation and Holiday Party* that was well attended by students, faculty and alumni. Members enjoyed the festive ambiance and fantastic feast provided by board members. This was a wonderful opportunity to bring members together in a relaxed social atmosphere to mingle and network. During this event we distributed polo shirts in white or blue, designed with the Greek chapter letters and institution.



Our Gamma Kappa Chapter is enjoying membership growth. We welcome ten new Sigma Phi Omega members! Dr. Joe Weber,

chapter Advisor, presented newcomers with Sigma Phi Omega certificates and pins, formally initiating them into the organization.



We feel especially privileged to be part of an institution that is active in educating and furthering future gerontologists with the avid support of Dr. Pauline Abbott and Dr. Joe Weber, both past Sigma Phi Omega Presidents. We are excited to begin planning upcoming events and look forward to increasing awareness of the issues of gerontology in 2006. ~ Submitted by Karen Wong kbwong2002@yahoo.com

Gamma Mu Chapter, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY



In the autumn of 2005, the Gamma Mu chapter sponsored an "Aging and the Arts" event at the downtown Lexington Radisson Plaza Hotel. Artists from the Donovan Scholars program and the Lexington Fayette County Senior Citizen's Center were the evening's focus with an exhibition of their artwork including paintings, drawings, and art in various mediums. The Donovan Reader's Theater group's performance rounded out the event. The talent

showcased was such a success that the Graduate Center for Gerontology plans to make this celebration an annual autumn event!



Our chapter has a variety of events planned for the spring of 2006, including an intergenerational quilting night at a local senior housing facility, the Careers in Aging breakfast, and the new member induction ceremony. Our chapter website can be found at: <http://www.mc.uky.edu/gerontology/studentc/MU.htm> ~ Submitted by Hedi H. Ewen hedi.ewen@uky.edu

Gamma Omicron Chapter, University of Hawaii, Honolulu, HI

The Gamma Omicron Chapter held an intergenerational Christmas Carol event at Hale Pulama Mau, the long-term care facility at the Kuakini Medical Center in Honolulu. Spring activities include a paper goods drive for elders served by Catholic Services for the Elderly and a site visit to a new retirement/LTC facility at Kahala Nui. Our annual meeting will be held this summer. ~ Submitted by Tony Lenzer tlenzer@hawaii.rr.com

Gamma Upsilon Chapter, University of Massachusetts, Boston, MA



The Gamma Upsilon chapter held its annual induction ceremony in April at the Campus Center. It included undergraduates, graduate students, alumni, and professionals in the field of aging.

The guest speaker was Bing Chen, the Frank J. Manning Eminent Scholar's Chair in Gerontology. His keynote address was titled: "*White House Conference on Aging: Reflections of a Delegate*". ~ Submitted by Kerstin Gerst gerstk@hotmail.com 617-501-7661

Iota Sigma Upsilon Chapter, Iowa State University, Ames, IA

The big event here at Iowa State University will be Iota Sigma Upsilon's three evening series on older adults coping with trauma. Presentations will include economic hardship, dealing with natural disasters, and handling elder abuse. Future activities will include several fundraisers. ~ Submitted by Bruce Randall brucer@iastate.edu



Message from SPO Student Representative, Echo Chang

It has been a great pleasure, honor, and valuable learning experience to serve for the past two years as Student Representative on the SPO Board. Interacting with the other board members - every one of them a distinguished gerontologist - I gained valuable information in the academic field of gerontology and professionalism. I had the pleasure to meet and share ideas with other students attending the annual 2006 AGHE/SPO meeting and participated in local chapter activities. Though unable to attend the activities of SPO chapters outside my geographic location, I eagerly read your chapter news in each SPO Newsletter!



Since I am the first Student Representative of the SPO Board, the job description is still flexible, leaving room for growth and creativity. It is for you, future Student Representatives, to define. SPO continues its support for students by naming Ms. Dawn Carr of Miami University in Ohio as the new student representative. Please join me in welcoming Dawn, who will be an excellent voice on the Board representing gerontology students.

Finally, I congratulate all of the 2006 graduates. Your commencement is a memorable event. Please wear your **SPO Society medals and honor cords** on Commencement day as recognition of your achievement. To place an order, contact your chapter or the SPO national office at 202-289-9818 or download the order form from the AGHE website SPO page. www.aghe.org

Again, thank you for the opportunity to serve as the first Student Representative of the SPO Board. I look forward to continuing my relationship with this wonderful organization. ~ Submitted by Echo Chang echochan@usc.edu

Echo Chang Receives 2006 SPO President's Award

The SPO President's Award recognizes outstanding SPO student presentation submissions at the annual AGHE meeting. The first annual President's Award was given to Ms. Echo Chang at the 2006 AGHE Annual Meeting for her presentation "*Unmet Need and Instrumental Support to Widowed and Childless Men and Women in Later Life*." Ms. Chang is a doctoral candidate of the Gerontology Program at the University of Southern California.

The SPO President's Award is funded solely by donations from SPO members and other interested parties. To contribute to this unique award, recognizing outstanding "up and coming" students in gerontology, mail your check, payable to Sigma Phi Omega, to Sigma Phi Omega, 1030 15th Street NW, Suite 240, Washington, DC 20005. Your contributions ensure vitality by awarding future leaders within SPO!

AGHE 2006: A Graduate Student's Perspective

The Sigma Phi Omega forum, "Outcomes of Gerontological and Geriatric Education," at the 2006 AGHE conference was a great example of transferring gerontological knowledge from professionals to students. As future professionals, students received a taste of how aging research is conceptualized. More importantly, the AGHE conference provided greater opportunities than ever for student involvement in committee and social networking. The student breakfast was a great addition (*free food!*) providing the opportunity to relax with professionals who share our interests. Overall, AGHE just might be the most accessible conference for students, particularly those interested in higher education. AGHE 2007 will bring attention to the responsibilities that we undertake as we become the teachers and professionals. Contribute your knowledge and join us at AGHE 2007! ~ Submitted by Dawn C. Carr, Graduate Student, Department of Gerontology, and freelance musician carrdc@muohio.edu

SPO Presidential Symposium

Attention all SPO members: YOU ARE NOT ALONE! This message resounded loud and clear at this year's Sigma Phi Omega Presidential Symposium during the 2006 AGHE Conference in Indianapolis. As vice president of a new and struggling chapter at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, I found it encouraging meeting other members experiencing similar challenges and learning from those leading successful chapters. Membership, funding, and a lack of enthusiastic participation appear to be common themes experienced by many chapters. Gratefully, those of us present were able to express our concerns and receive feedback from other student and professional members.

As a student and advocate, I feel compelled to let other struggling chapters know that **you are not alone!** At this year's AGHE conference I witnessed a wonderfully passionate and supportive group of students and professionals available to help us. Throughout the SPO President's Symposium/Focus Group, many professionals addressed each of us personally with words of support and encouragement. Our SPO president, Dr. Jennifer Kinney, invites us to contact her with any questions or requests for support.



Our honor and professional society is a rich network, a vast array of students and professionals waiting to help. With such assets, no doubt our small, new Delta Sigma chapter will become one of the most influential organizations on our campus! Experiencing AGHE 2006 helped us establish higher goals for the Delta Sigma chapter. For those of you feeling a little less enthusiastic, please remember that there are dozens of students and professionals willing to inspire you. And if you need a boost in morale, contact me! ~ Submitted by Victoria Burden, Delta Sigma VP, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville vburden@uark.edu

Katherine Thomas – Social Entrepreneur

SPO members from the University of Southern California (USC) would like to introduce you to Katherine Thomas, an outstanding member of our chapter and a befitting example of our prodigious talents.

Katy, a native of Southern California, worked as an investment banker and analyst, then as a corporate strategy business analyst. In that capacity, she enjoyed working with older adults and realized that a graduate degree in gerontology would be extremely gratifying. Her altruism toward elderly wellness led to the formation of a social club, "The Islanders", for the elderly in the Long Beach area. Bringing elderly in the local community together, affording them a caring platform to dissolve their social isolation, was at the root of her passion. Great visions do not need people who think 'larger than life', but a caring heart, burning passion for change, and a down to earth personality feeds visions. This describes Katy.



A well-rounded individual, Katy is a regular Marathon Runner, uses her spare time to coach neighborhood kids' soccer lessons, and she loves to travel. With a firm belief that "even a smallest act of caring has the potential to turn a life around" (taken from her favorite Leo Buscaglia quote), she aspires to be a "Social Entrepreneur." Her immense knowledge in both the field of gerontology and business technology will be valuable generating innovative solutions for problems the elderly face today.

We may all be inspired through good deeds of vibrant people such as Katy. Each of us has a spark that can make a huge difference in the lives of others. Together we can and will make a difference! ~ Submitted by Swamini Wakkar drswamini@gmail.com



Career Reflections



We encourage SPO members to reflect on their careers,
introducing students to a myriad of opportunities!
This issue features a student's reflections on "Successful Aging".

Seeking a Portrait of Successful Aging

After several days of drafting, revising, and revamping my personal definition of "successful aging, I came up with these words: "To age successfully is to be able to smile and feel gratitude at the start of each day, no matter how old or in what circumstances one discovers oneself to be." Yet, upon reflection, I began to suspect that my definition was too simple.

I took the question to the experts: those wise souls gathered around our Thanksgiving table, many of whom are now tromping through the mysterious forests of old-age. The panel of aging authorities ranged from those tiptoeing into their sixties, and an older generation bravely striding into their mid-80s. As my jury lazily enjoyed second helpings of turkey and cornbread stuffing, I introduced the topic and presented my newly coined definition for discussion. "So," I asked, "what does 'successful aging' mean to you?"



I felt my heart twist and yank when my grandfather shared his answer first. It had little in common with my definition. "I don't feel that I'm aging very successfully," he said. "Not for an 86-year-old." My face crumpled with concern and sadness as I listened to him. "I should be doing better. This isn't how I expected to age."

It isn't how any of us expected him to age, either. My grandfather, a former Navy officer and vice president of a wooden boatbuilding company who became an active Kiwanis volunteer in his retirement, exercised faithfully, swimming and working out at the club three days a week into his early 80s. He was the last person anyone imagined would someday suffer from debilitating osteoporosis.

When I heard him speak, my definition of "successful aging" clarified like sugar syrup in a hot pan. I raised my voice over the din of forks scraping the last streaks of pumpkin crumble and whipped cream off of dessert plates and addressed my small family clan. "This is exactly why a definition of 'successful aging' must be deeper and broader than the physical experience," I declared. "Sure, we all hope we can still be on cross country skis when we're 80, but the fact is that we're not all going to have that experience." I suggested that if we base our happiness in our later years largely on our physical experience, those of us facing more severe physical challenges will live out our last 20 years mired in sadness, depression, and feelings of failure.

"A definition of successful aging must be rooted in the inner realm," I decreed, wishing I could recount all that Leder had to say about "spiritual aging". My grandfather appeared to embody Leder's Western model of aging: like most Americans in his shoes, he had done all he could to "combat" the losses of old age, rather than embrace them as tools for spiritual growth – the sticking point of the Eastern Hindu model. I did not ask my grandfather if his physical trials have enriched him spiritually, but I imagine that they have. Is he, I wonder a "richer of soul" for his pain? Has he grown to be more of an elder-sage as a result of his losses? More importantly, has he arrived at a place where he is able to "befriend these erstwhile foes" and discover the prized inner treasures to which Leder refers?

Wong's commentary on the meaning of life and death in successful aging echoes Leder's ideas when he christens personal meaning "the hidden dimension" of successful aging. According to Wong, possessing a positive attitude and sense of purpose is the key to thriving in later years: "...the challenge of successful aging is to discover positive meanings of life and death even when one's physical health is failing." Wong sums up his revelations by proclaiming that the secret to successful aging is discovering the transcendental meaning of life and death. Perhaps it is precisely this discovery that can enable people to wake up smiling and grateful day after day, regardless of their circumstances, in old age or at any age. Leder and Wong are excellent resources for students and professionals who want to delve into the meaning of successful aging. I encourage you to join me in reading them. ~ Submitted by Catharine Sutherland, UNCG Gerontology Program student, cjsuther@uncg.edu

References:

Leder, D. (1998, October/November). The trouble with successful aging. *The Park Ridge Center Bulletin*, 6.

Wong, P.T.P. (2000). Meaning of life and meaning of death in successful aging. In A. Tomer (Ed.), *Death attitudes and the older adult*. Brunner/Mazel Publishers.

Meet SPO Officers & Staff for 2006

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From the Editor: The Rewards of Annual Reports



Each year SPO chapters are encouraged to complete an annual report, due June 30, summarizing your Chapter's previous academic year accomplishments. Annual reports track the success of SPO chapters and SPO itself. With the transition of chapter officers each summer, these annual reports often fall through the cracks. Need an incentive to report in June? When your chapter submits its annual report, your chapter receives **a \$5 rebate for each of your current memberships!** So encourage your members to remain "current", submit your annual report by June 30, and enjoy the reward of knowing your chapter can receive a substantial rebate! ~ Submitted by Janice Wassel, Ph.D., SPO Newsletter Editor, UNCG Gerontology Program Director jiwasse@uncg.edu 336-256-1020

Aging is Good Business:

The Silver Industries Model

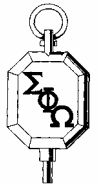
The Gerontology Program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro thanks supporters, exhibitors, advertisers, and attendees of our successful April 3, 2006 Summit!

<http://www.uncg.edu/gro/agingisgodbusiness.html>

(Paid Advertisement)

It's Your News!

Your chapter news, pictures, and ideas are invited for each SPO newsletter. Send articles to the Managing Editor, at acstring@uncg.edu and include your chapter name, college or university, location, submitter's name, email, and phone. Note our new deadlines on page 8!



As you see (above) SPO also welcomes paid advertisements! Visit <http://www.aghe.org> > SPO > Marketing & Advertising to purchase the SPO mailing list or to submit ads for upcoming SPO newsletters. As further enticement, chapters in good standing may receive 50% off of one (1) advertisement in the 2006-2007 academic year! Whether sharing free news or paying for a special ad, your SPO newsletter volunteers look forward to sharing your news!

This newsletter is published as a membership benefit of Sigma Phi Omega (SPO) with a circulation of 1,600. SPO offices are located at 1030 15th Street NW, Suite 240, Washington, DC, 20005. Faculty, faculty advisors and students are encouraged to submit news, meeting reports, club activities or studies underway to the SPO Newsletter Managing Editor Ann Stringfield acstring@uncg.edu by **September 1, December 1, and April 1.**

~ ~ Coming Attractions ~ ~

June 3-6, 2006

Grant Hyatt Washington Hotel, Washington, DC
Alzheimer's Association 18th Annual Public Policy Forum. Contact: (202) 393-7737 or <mailto:Advocate@alz.org>
or visit <http://www.alz.org/publicpolicyforum>.

June 4-6, 2006

Washington, DC

"Strategies for Navigating the New Medicaid", The National Medicaid Congress, sponsored by Harvard Health Policy Review, Health Affairs, Milbank Memorial Fund, FDC Reports and Medical Education Collaborative. Contact: visit <http://www.MedicaidCongress.com>.

June 15-17, 2006

Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA

"Aging and Social Change in Africa," in conjunction with AAGE's Fifth Annual Meeting, presented by The Gerontology Institute at Georgia State University collaborated with the Association for Anthropology and Gerontology (AAGE). Registration deadline: June 6, 2006.
Contact: email abstract to Sharon King at gervsk@langate.gsu.edu, for more information, visit <http://www.gsu.edu/gerontology>.

June 15-18, 2006

Antlers Hilton Hotel, Colorado Springs, CO

"Aging and Decision-Making Capacity: Clinical, Family and Legal Issues," 2006 National Clinical Geropsychology Conference, co-sponsored by the Retirement Research Foundation and the Gerontology Center at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (UCCS).
Contact: Brian Glach at (719) 262-4071 or <mailto:geropsy@uccs.edu> or visit <http://www.uccs.edu/geropsy>

August 6-10, 2006

Fairmont Hotel, Chicago, IL

"Shaping Communities for a Maturing America," 31st Annual Conference and Tradeshow of the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging.
Visit www.n4a.org for additional information.