The Art of Aging with Alice and Richard Matzkin

Artists who confront aging with curiosity, acceptance and joy

California artists Alice and Richard Matzkin explain their interest in painting and sculpting older people by describing their own negative experiences with aging. “We were freaking out,” remembers Alice. “If we didn’t change our attitude about getting older, we were going to be very unhappy.” Using canvas and clay, they worked through their feelings about aging and the new health challenges and vulnerabilities that come with end-of-life issues. Each created a series of pieces examining the beauties and sorrows of aging. Alice explains with a laugh that the experience was like being on a psychiatrist’s couch.

In 2009 the couple published a book, The Art of Aging: Celebrating the Authentic Aging Self, featuring their art and describing their view of aging. “Our voyage takes us from birth to old age, and eventually death,” they wrote in the introduction to their book. “We offer our words and our artwork in the hope that they will touch others and help move them to become masters of their own art of aging."

ICOA brings artists to Missouri

Leadership at the University of Missouri’s Interdisciplinary Center on Aging was impressed with the couple’s work and acceptance of aging, and sponsored their visit to the University of Missouri with support from University of Missouri Health Care’s Art in Health Care program. In November 2010 the Matzkins shared the images and stories of their artistic journey with the MU and Columbia community. “The Matzkins are very special people who create a field of engaging energy,” said David Oliver, PhD, assistant director of the Center. “They stimulate our minds and encourage us to explore our feelings about life, aging and death, leading us to greater understanding and acceptance of this beautiful mystery we call life. The Interdisciplinary Center on Aging thought it was important to bring them to campus.”

The couple had a full schedule while they were in Columbia. Speaking at the Perlow-Stevens Gallery in downtown Columbia during a special Research Seminar on Aging on November 11, they discussed watching their parents and other loved ones grow old and vulnerable and then the jolting realization that they were next in line. This roused them to explore their feelings and look to those who aged well for inspiration. Alice proclaims that the world filled with amazing elders. In her opinion, it is those who live in the present moment who create the best life possible.

Continued on page 2
Exploring physical changes, sensuality, relationships, aging parents, spirituality and death, the Matzkins revealed “that our elder years can be a time of ripening and harvest rather than stagnation and despair.” Augmented by videos and images, they shared with campus and community audiences how they have used their art, writing, and deep contemplation to come to a greater joy and appreciation of the process of growing older.

The following morning the Matzkins took their hopeful message to the airwaves when they appeared on KOMU’s David Lile Show (see page 7) and later that day they addressed a crowd of 140 senior citizens and medical students during a Heyssel Senior Teacher Educator Partnership event (see page 4).

“The reviews were overwhelming positive,” commented Oliver. “All of us, young and old, yearn for understanding of the aging process. Together Alice and Richard have a combined 60 years of study and practice in Eastern spiritual tradition. This may explain their gentle and powerful illuminations.”

**Facing fears of aging**

During their talks, Richard, age 67, admitted that he was frightened by the prospect of growing older and felt compelled to face his fears. In his “Naked Old Men” series, he confronts the vulnerabilities of aging and asks his audience to submit to these realities in order to live life more fully now. He and Alice have learned to appreciate the present and have come to terms with the inevitability of change.

**Recognition and distinction**

Alice, age 71, has two paintings in the permanent collection of the National Portrait Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution. Her work appears in major galleries and has been showcased in national magazines. In 1997, she was commissioned by the Congressional Club in Washington, D.C. to paint a portrait of Chelsea Clinton, which was presented to Mrs. Clinton and hung in the private quarters of the White House during the Clinton administration. She and her Women of Age series were featured on The Oprah Winfrey Show in May 2001.

Richard, age 67, has exhibited his work in numerous galleries and shows, and his work is in collections throughout the United States. His sculpture appeared in a book published by UNESCO; his monumental equestrian work can be viewed in the train station in Camarillo, California. “Richard has always had the instinctive ability to form in clay what his eyes see,” explains Alice. “It’s a rough medium that brings out the ‘seasoned souls’ of older subjects.” Richard’s artistic nature also expresses itself through music, and he is a talented jazz drummer.

The Matzkins share a home and studio in Ojai, California. For over a dozen years their work has almost exclusively concentrated on aging and elders. For more information about the Matzkins and their art, go to their web site: www.matzkinstudio.com.

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**The Art of Aging: Celebrating the Authentic Aging Self**

Alice and Richard Matzkin’s book, *The Art of Aging: Celebrating the Authentic Aging Self*, has won two prestigious book awards: the Independent Publisher Book Award and the Nautilus Award for books that promote spiritual growth, conscious living, and positive social change.
MU Is Awarded $1 Million Grant to Enhance Training for Physicians Caring for Elders

Donald W. Reynolds Programs in Geriatrics

Just as the first baby boomers began turning 65 years old this year, the University of Missouri launched a project to improve care for the rapidly growing elderly population. The innovative training effort is supported by a new $1 million grant from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation. “The financial support will allow us to enhance geriatric medicine education by offering several new programs for medical students and resident physicians,” reports Steven Zweig, MD, director of MU’s Interdisciplinary Center on Aging and the project’s principal investigator. “The programs will emphasize teamwork training and the patient-centered ‘medical home’ model of care,” he explained.

Zweig also leads MU’s family and community medicine department, which is highly ranked for its success in scholarship, health care delivery and education. He and Michael Hosokawa, EdD, Professor of Family and Community Medicine, were awarded their first geriatric medicine education grant from the Reynolds Foundation in 2003. MU is one of 10 universities to receive the new round of funding from the Reynolds Foundation.

The Interdisciplinary Center on Aging’s Research Enrichment and Dissemination (READ) grants encourage interdisciplinary aging research and collaboration among MU faculty. Since the READ program was established, $176,318 has been awarded to investigators representing 16 different disciplines. The next deadline for proposals is April 15, 2011; guidelines can be found on the Center website: http://aging.missouri.edu.

Conversations about Health and Aging

As a legacy of the original geriatrics-education project supported by the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation in 2003, MU’s Interdisciplinary Center on Aging created a short documentary about caring for elderly patients. The video features MU physicians and older patients. “Recognizing we are all in this together,” explained Steven Zweig, MD, “we chose to hear from physicians from multiple medical and surgical subspecialties as well as primary care physicians and geriatricians.”

The video is available through the ICOA web site: www.aging.missouri.edu.

The Donald W. Reynolds Foundation is a national philanthropic organization founded in 1954 by the late media entrepreneur for whom it is named. Headquartered in Las Vegas, Nevada, it has committed over $210 million nationwide to its Aging and Quality of Life programs.

ICOA Promotes Geriatrics Research with Grant Awards

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2010 READ Grant Awards

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<tr>
<th>Awardee</th>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Project</th>
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<td>Steve Hackley</td>
<td>Psychological Sciences</td>
<td>Target Intervention Sites for Treatment of Memory Deficits in Parkinson’s Disease</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colleen Pruett</td>
<td>Human Development and Family Studies</td>
<td>Educational Intervention: Implementation and Evaluation of a Lifelong Learning Program at TigerPlace</td>
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<tr>
<td>James Stowe</td>
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<td>Sandra Tye</td>
<td>School of Medicine</td>
<td>The Experience of Initiating Dialysis Among the Elderly</td>
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Now accepting READ grant submissions. Deadline: April 15, 2011
Medical students turn to senior citizens to understand their health care needs.

Medical students turn to senior citizens to understand their health care needs. At the University of Missouri, students can go directly to the experts, actual senior citizens that is. Since 2001, the Heyssel Senior Teacher Educator Partnership (Heyssel-STEP) has brought seniors and medical students together. To date, 364 students have volunteered to take part in the program, and its popularity continues to grow. Last fall, 60 of 104 first-year medical students voluntarily joined Heyssel-STEP to get firsthand knowledge about the physical and emotional needs of elders.

**Project Design**
Throughout the academic year, seniors and students gather at the medical school for events that include lunch and a presentation, usually on a health topic. In addition, Heyssel-STEP partners arrange meetings outside the scheduled sessions. They participate in activities such as exercising with each other, having meals together, going to movies, and attending concerts. Some seniors invite their students to accompany them to their health care appointments.

Evaluation of the Heyssel-STEP program has demonstrated that when students spend time with seniors they become sensitive to their needs and are inspired to help them preserve their health and independence. The STEP program is a successful strategy for enhancing sympathy and empathy, emphasizing respect for elderly persons and gaining appreciation that aging is an individualized process.1

**Addressing Ageism**
Four decades of literature indicates that students, much like the general population, can hold negative stereotypes about older adults.24 However, research conducted at MU shows that participation in Heyssel-STEP positively affects student attitudes. The program trains student doctors to respond effectively to a growing aging population; improved health and function for older patients is the ultimate goal.1

**Understanding Seniors’ Health Needs**
Nicole Shen, a medical student who enrolled in the program last year, reported that her Heyssel-STEP mentors, Dale and Wanda Angel, provided valuable insights about seniors and their concerns about health care. “My partners were particularly available and spoke openly about their medical visits,” she said. Christopher Nauser, a first-year medical student who joined last fall, attributes the program to providing him with a new perspective on seniors. “I am amazed by how active and involved my STEP partner, Lorna Baxter, is in her own health. It excites me to know that my future patients will look to me to be a partner, and not an authority, in their care.”

**Intergenerational Friendships**
Students are grateful for the friendships they develop with their mentors. Ashley Egan, a first-year student who is new to Columbia, especially appreciates having a Heyssel-STEP partner and friend who lives in town. “I know she’s always there for me, a phone call or e-mail away,” she explains. “She cares about how I am doing and would be there if I ever needed anything.”

**Funding**
Initial funding for the program was provided by the John A. Hartford Foundation and the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation. Continuing support is provided by MU’s Interdisciplinary Center on Aging, the Office of Medical Education, and, most importantly, the Robert M. Heyssel, MD, Endowment (see sidebar, page 5).

**Who Can Enroll?**
Active seniors (age 65+) who are willing to spend about an hour per week talking and visiting with a medical student partner are welcome to apply. Contact MU’s Interdisciplinary Center on Aging at 573-884-3337 for an application or go to the Heyssel-STEP website: www.stepmu.com.

**References:**
The Name behind the Heyssel-STEP Program

Maria Heyssel

In 2003, Maria Heyssel selected the STEP program to receive a $100,000 endowment in memory of her husband, the late Robert M. Heyssel, MD. Today the program’s name, the Heyssel Senior Teacher Educator Program, reflects the Heyssel family’s generous support.

Dr. Robert Heyssel graduated from the University of Missouri’s School of Medicine in 1953. He went on to serve as the associate dean of the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and later became the president and first CEO of the Johns Hopkins Health System. He was deeply committed to medical education and served on nearly every national committee charged with supporting and saving our nation’s teaching hospitals. He practiced the art and science of medicine, teaching his students the importance of caring for patients with respect and honoring their dignity.

Caring for the Entire Patient

Sharing her husband’s belief that a patient is more than a disease and deserves to be treated as an “entire person,” Mrs. Heyssel sought out a program that supported their philosophy. In STEP she found a way of deepening students’ capacity for empathy.

What is your current research project?

I am working on identifying from the literature the percentage of functional aging that is caused by being sedentary. The human genome evolved to support physical activity for survival. It is thus a mystery why the lack of physical activity accelerates biological aging in many systems.

Have you incorporated your research findings into your own life?

Yes—my research along with that of others demonstrates that a low level of daily physical activity not only doesn’t help your current health status, it could be the reason you got sick in the first place. I enjoy being physically active and playing with my dog (I named him Run). I do resistance training four times a week, and I live green by running the 1.3 miles to and from my office each day instead of using a motorized vehicle. If I have a meeting across town or downtown, I run to it.

Meet the Center Fellow

Frank W. Booth, PhD

Frank Booth, PhD, FACSM, is a member of the Department of Biomedical Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine, and the Department of Medical Pharmacology & Physiology, School of Medicine and Director of the Health Activity Center, all at the University of Missouri. He earned his PhD from the University of Iowa and completed postdoctoral fellowships at the School of Aerospace Medicine in San Antonio, Texas, and at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. Recently the American College of Sports Medicine bestowed upon him its highest tribute, naming him the recipient of its 2011 Honor Award.

What led you to pursue research in aging?

My postdoctoral advisor John Holloszy, MD, at Washington University, was a pioneer in understanding the impact of exercise training on the quality of life of the elderly. He sent me to a summer training session on aging sponsored by the National Aging Institute.
Medication Improves Driving Skills in Persons with Mild Alzheimer’s Disease

A study has found that cholinesterase inhibitors (ChEI), a type of medication often prescribed for Alzheimer’s Disease (AD) improved some cognitive skills in patients with mild AD. Subjects showed improvement on computerized tests of executive function, visual attention, and performance on a simulated driving task. The study is published in the June 2010 edition of the Journal of Clinical Psychopharmacology. [Link](http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2010-06/l-cam060910.php)

Daughter versus Son Caregivers Suffer More

Although close and secure relationships with parents are a predictor of better mental health and greater satisfaction in adult child caregivers, not always a study finds. In a study of caregivers of stroke victims, the quality of relationships before and after the stroke had an equally important influence on wellbeing. Adult daughters placed greater importance on family relationships than sons and thus were negatively impacted by poor relationships with their parent. [Link](http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2010-06/host-dcf053110.php)

British Company Manufactures User-friendly Mobile Phone for the Elderly

Loud as a pneumatic drill or a speeding train, a British company has produced a mobile phone for the elderly with a ringtone of 100 decibels. It also has large buttons and a big screen for the short-sighted. Designed for older people who report that mobile phones are too complex and too quiet, the phone is being promoted by the Royal National Institute for Deaf People. It is estimated that there are 9 million deaf or hard of hearing in the United Kingdom. [Link](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/mobile-phones/7800781/Mobile-phone-for-the-elderly-has-ringtone-as-loud-as-a-road-drill.html)

Canada Promotes “Medical Home” Model for Primary Care

The patient-centered medical home, while widely discussed in medical circles, is being implemented in Ontario, Canada. Expanding access, improving quality, and demonstrating cost savings, these “homes” include physician-led multidisciplinary teams that provide comprehensive primary care, expanded hours, evidence-based measures, improved patient communication, and the use of modern information technology. Some feel the Ontario experience could be a blueprint for reform in US primary care. It is a model that is currently being used to inform similar innovation by the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the University of Missouri. [Link](http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/extract/303/21/2186)

Happiness Comes with Age

Results of a Gallup phone survey (340,000 people nationwide) reported in the online May 17 Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences revealed that we are happier after age 50 and less stressed than at any other time in our lives. It was found that we start out feeling pretty good about ourselves at age 18 and then begin feeling worse until age 50. About that time there is a sharp reversal and happiness escalates; by age 85 we are more satisfied with ourselves than at age 18. [Link](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/01/health/research/01happy.html)

Middle-Aged Suicides Replace Elderly Suicides as Highest in USA

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for the second year in a row, the suicide rate among men and women between the ages of 45-to-54 (17.6 per every 100,000 people) was higher than those 75-to-84 (16.4 per every 100,000). Ranking third were people in ages 35-to-44 (16.3). [Link](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/06/us/06suicide.html)

6th Annual Poster Session at the
21st Annual Caring for the Frail Elderly Conference
August 19, 2011
The Holiday Inn Select Executive Center
Columbia, Missouri

We encourage completed work on research, quality improvement and educational evaluations.

Send abstracts to graym@health.missouri.edu
Submission Deadline: Friday, July 15, 2011
Details: [www.aging.missouri.edu](http://www.aging.missouri.edu)
ICOA Center Fellows

Honors and Awards

Since the last publication of Chronicles, the scholarly work of many Center Fellows has appeared in peer-review journals, been accepted for presentation at national and international conferences, and recognized in various academic and other publications. Below is a list of some honors and awards our Center Fellows have accrued.

Frank Booth, PhD, Professor, Department of Biomedical Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine, and the Department of Medical Pharmacology & Physiology, School of Medicine, and Director of the Health Activity Center. Bestowed with the American College of Sports Medicine’s 2011 Honor Award.

David Fleming, MD, MA, Chair and Professor, Internal Medicine, was awarded the Jane Hickman Teaching Award.

Rebecca Johnson, PhD, Associate Professor (Nursing) and Millisap Professor of Gerontological Nursing and Public Policy Associate Professor (Vet Med), and Director, Research Center for Human Animal Interaction, MU College of Veterinary Medicine, was named president of the International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organizations.

Richelle Koopman, MD, MS, Assistant Professor, Family and Community Medicine, received the 2010 Dorsett L. Spurgeon, MD, Distinguished Medical Research Award.

David Mehr, MD, MA, was named the William C. Allen Professor in Family and Community Medicine

Kyle Moylan, MD, Assistant Professor of Clinical Internal Medicine, was named Outstanding Instructor, Clinical Curriculum.

David Oliver, PhD, Assistant Director of Interdisciplinary Center on Aging and Research Professor, Family and Community Medicine was named a U.S. Administration on Aging Older American’s Month Contest Winner.

Debra Parker Oliver, PhD, Associate Professor, Family & Community Medicine was awarded a $2.1 million Research Project Grant (R01) from the National Institutes of Health to fund ACTIVE Intervention to Improve Hospice Caregiver Pain Management.

Marilyn Rantz, PhD, RN, Helen E. Nahm Chair, MU Sinclair School of Nursing, University Hospitals and Clinics Professor of Nursing, Executive Director, Aging In Place and Associate Director, Interdisciplinary Center on Aging was named Curator’s Professor, University of Missouri and was named 2010 Midwest Nursing Research Society Distinguished Contribution to Research Award.

Todd Ruppar, PhD, RN, was named a John A. Hartford–Atlantic Philanthropies Claire M. Fagin Fellow and received a Midwest Nursing Research Society Dissertation Award.

Enid Schatz, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Occupational Therapy & Occupational Science/Department of Women’s & Gender Studies was accepted into the RAND Summer Institute Fellowship.

Benyamin Schwartz, PhD, Professor, Department of Architectural Studies was named by Design Intelligence one of the top 25 “Most Admired Educators of 2011,” by the trade magazine, DesignIntelligence.

Paul Tatum, MD, Assistant Professor of Clinical Family and Community Medicine, was awarded a Geriatric Academic Career Award (GACA) by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

The Interdisciplinary Center on Aging Rocks the Airwaves

Since fall 2009, the ICOA has had a regularly scheduled monthly show on KRFU’s David Lile Show. In the Columbia area, tune your radio to 1400 AM or listen live from anywhere on the internet: http://www.kfru.com. Shows will be scheduled throughout 2011 at 8:35 a.m. on Fridays. Upcoming shows include April 8 and May 13. Go to the ICOA web site for details: www.aging.missouri.edu.

ICOA Radio Broadcasts on KFRU

Humor and Aging: Laughter is the Best Medicine (March/2011), Sally Tureman, MA (John Knox Village resident) and David Oliver, PhD

Seeking the Medical Home: Are We There Yet? (Feb/2011), Jeffrey Belden, MD, and Marilee Bomar, APRN, GCNS

Cyber Seniors Searching the Internet (Jan/2011), Richelle Koopman, MD, and David Oliver, PhD

Integrating Geriatrics into the School of Medicine Curriculum (Dec/2010), Steven Zweig, MD, MSPH; Michael Hosokawa, EdD, and David Oliver, PhD

The Art of Aging: Celebrating the Authentic Aging Self (Nov/2010), Alice and Richard Matzkin, Visiting Artists from California, and David Oliver, PhD

Minimizing Pain of Hospice Patients through Communication (Oct/2010), Debra Parker Oliver, PhD, MSW, and Elaine Wittenberg-Lyles, PhD

Returned Military Veterans and Shelter Dogs (Sept/2010), Rebecca Johnson, PhD, RN, and David Oliver, PhD

Local Alzheimer’s Researcher Rides to Jefferson City in the Alzheimer’s Breakthrough Ride (Aug/2010), David Oliver, PhD and Ashley Burden (Alzheimer’s Association, Mid-Missouri Chapter)

The Heysel-STEP Program at the University of Missouri (July/2010), Peggy Gray, BS, David Oliver, PhD, Nancy Fritsch, MSW [junior STEP participant] and Tim Dribbin (MU medical student STEP participant)

Certified Nursing Assistants: The Most Valuable Resource in a Nursing Home (June/2010), David Oliver, PhD and Micah Bryan, CNA, and Jeannie Davis, CNA (from Lutheran Senior Services at Lenoir Woods)

Becoming Addicted to Positive Aging (May/2010), David Oliver, PhD

Advance Directives and Medical Care at the End-of-Life (April/2010), Paul Tatum, MD, Beth Traudes, RN, and David Oliver, PhD

Technology and Aging: Video Phones and Hospice Care (March/2010), Debra Parker Oliver, PhD, and David Oliver, PhD

Sexuality and Aging (Feb/2010), Elio Moscatelli, PhD and David Oliver, PhD

Aging and Exercise: Enhancing Health and Happiness in Old Age (Jan/2010), Frank Booth, PhD, and David Oliver, PhD

Dealing with Transitions of Care, Adjusting and Thriving (Dec/2009), Marilyn Rantz, PhD, RN, and David Oliver, PhD

Older Drivers: Giving Up the Keys to the Car (Nov/2009), Steven Zweig, MD, MSPH and David Oliver, PhD

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Alzheimer’s disease is a baffling ordeal for patients and their loved ones. Caregivers often suffer with despair, guilt, anger, shame, and more. Surviving in the land of dementia is a challenging and difficult task for the most healthy, and devastating for others who succumb to illnesses brought on by stress, fatigue, and the loss of hope. Plaques surrounding brain cells and tangles within them cause chemical changes in the brains of Alzheimer sufferers that cause the disintegration of memory, reason, personality, and the self. The disease is now the sixth leading cause of death, and with more than 77 million baby boomers moving down the life course, the number of people diagnosed with it will increase more than three times, from 5.3 million to as high as 16 million by mid-century.1

The Alzheimer’s Association envisions a world without Alzheimer’s, and the organization supports and promotes legislation to make this vision a national priority. Due in large part to the Alzheimer’s Association’s efforts, The National Alzheimer’s Project Act was signed into law in January 2011. It is expected that The Alzheimer’s Breakthrough Act legislation will pass next, increasing NIH research funding to $2 billion per year.2 This is important legislation and, it is hoped, will bring treatment improvements and, perhaps, elimination of the disease. In the meantime, families struggle as they try to find ways to cope with changes in the behavior and memories of loved ones who, over time, fail to recognize those with whom they have lived most of their lives.

Often lost in the midst of biochemical research is the hands-on caregiver who, on a daily basis, is in need of assistance and hope. This is particularly the case for persons who are caring for someone with Alzheimer’s disease. How do you love someone who continuously pushes you away, doesn’t know your name, refuses to take a bath, accuses you of being unfaithful, disrobes in public, and has somehow acquired a long list of obscene words? It is not easy to survive these unwelcome, hard-to-understand, unfair, and tragic sets of behaviors.

However, hope is available. The Mid-Missouri Alzheimer’s Association is an invaluable resource for caregivers, providing advice, information and support to thousands of families. Go to www.alz.org/mid-missouri, click on “Living with Alzheimer’s” (top) or “Caring for Alzheimer’s (side) menu bar. Here you will find excellent information on daily care: activities, communication, eating, bathing, and more; behaviors: agitation, repetition, hallucinations, sundowning, and other behaviors; and coping strategies for caregiver stress, changing relationships, grief and loss, and respite care. Other, very useful information about the disease and how to care for it can be found on this outstanding website. For local information and resources contact the Mid-Missouri Chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association, 573-443-8665. It is located at 2400 Bluff Creek Drive, Columbia, Missouri.

References: