

INSTITUTE FOR ENGAGED AGING Newsletter

Nutrition Edition | Issue No. 5 | Summer 2025



IEA news

The IEA team is celebrating exciting new roles, academic achievements and bright futures ahead.

Upcoming events

The IEA and SC-ADRC are promoting healthy aging and connection through upcoming events across South Carolina.

Research spotlight

Maintaining good nutrition is key to healthy aging as it may help slow cognitive decline.



Learn more about the IEA

Who we are

The Institute for Engaged Aging (IEA) uncovers, creates and shares innovative approaches to help people thrive as they age through research, education and community partnerships.

At the IEA, we believe aging should be active, connected and fulfilling. We are dedicated to empowering older adults to stay involved with their families and communities by promoting practices that truly enhance quality of life. Through close collaboration with Clemson faculty, local organizations and partner universities, we tackle the wide range of needs faced by older adults. Our goal is to help individuals, regardless of their background, income or health, enjoy an engaged life.

With the aging population expected to nearly double by 2030, the IEA is proud to serve as a trusted source of knowledge, support and inspiration for older adults and the communities they call home.



Research - PACT study



Community outreach - health bingo



Education - "Avoiding Grandparent Scams" talk



Food unites us all in so many ways. It conveys a sense of history and culture. Food is an opportunity to learn more about each other. Food evolves with the times, just like we do.

This issue of the IEA Newsletter is dedicated to the idea of Eating for Life to provide context about food in our lives and health journey as we age. As we enjoy a bountiful summer of peaches and tomatoes, if there is a recipe you would like featured in an upcoming newsletter, we hope you will share it with us. There is always room at the IEA table.

Thank you so much for your continued support. We cannot do this important work without you.

— **Lesley Ross, Ph.D.**

Professor, Psychology Department
SmartState/SmartLife Endowed Chair
in Aging and Cognition
Director, Institute for Engaged Aging
Clemson University
Director, South Carolina Alzheimer's
Disease Research Center

IEA team highlights

Celebrating new roles and bright futures

Exciting things are happening for our IEA team! From new leadership positions to big academic moves, we are proud to celebrate the achievements and next steps of our incredible colleagues.



Meet our new Active Mind Project Manager

Marissa Ashwood is a project manager for the ACTIVE MIND study at the IEA. She earned her B.S. in microbiology from Colorado State University in 2020. Prior to working with the IEA, she gained experience in development of vaccines and cancer therapeutics and quality control for medical devices. Welcome, Marissa!



Connor elected as new staff senator for CBSHS

Connor Stephens, a project manager at the IEA, has recently been elected as the staff senator for the College of Behavioral, Social and Health Sciences (CBSHS), serving a 3-year term. We appreciate all you do for us and the College! We are excited to see you continue to make a positive difference.



Skylar embarks on Ph.D. journey at UAB

Skylar Weiskittel, a research associate at the IEA, is moving on to complete the Ph.D. in medical/clinical psychology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She will be specializing in psychoneuroimmunology research and will specifically be focusing on how couples' interactions influence immune responses and how those processes evolve over time.



Jess pursues passion for social work at UNC-C

Jess Mack, a research specialist at the IEA, is moving on to complete a two-year Master of Social Work program at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. After completing the program, she hopes to obtain a clinical social work license. Congratulations, Jess!

We would love to hear from you!

Help us shape future programming for Alzheimer's disease and related dementia support.

The Institute for Engaged Aging (IEA) is exploring new programs for older adults, as well as ways to better support individuals and families affected by Alzheimer's disease and related dementia.

Please take a moment to complete the survey and indicate whether you would be interested in participating in any of the programs listed. Your feedback will help us better serve you and our community.

Scan the QR code below or visit the "We want to hear from you!" section on our website to complete the survey.

YOUR FEEDBACK IS IMPORTANT TO US!



SCAN ME

How to scan a QR code?

1. Open your camera app on your cellphone.
2. Point it at the QR code.
3. Tap the link that appears to get started.

Fall prevention classes

A key step to staying safe and active

Join us! The Institute for Engaged Aging will offer FREE new classes in Fall 2025. The fall prevention classes feature the evidence-based, A Matter of Balance (AMOB) program to reduce the risk of falls. The program will include group discussions, exercise training, mutual problem-solving, role-play activities and homework assignments.

Please e-mail us at IEA@clemson.edu for more information.

Limited spots available,
register today!

No cost, FREE classes!



When?

October

7, 9, 14, 16, 21, 23, 27 & 30

(Every Tuesday and Thursday)



At what time?

From 1:30 to 3:30 PM



Where?

Clemson Balance Lab - IEA (5th floor)
Oconee Memorial Hospital,
Seneca, S.C.



Number of classes

8 classes total



You are not alone!

Dementia caregiver support group



The IEA facilitates a supportive space for caregivers, family members and friends (age 18+) of individuals living with any type of dementia to ask questions, share experiences, and receive guidance on caregiving. The support group meets the third Friday of every month from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. To register, please contact IEA@clemson.edu or (864) 916-6220. We hope to see you there!

Respite program for attending dementia caregivers. While you

attend the support group, your loved one with dementia can participate in a separate, supervised brain-stimulation activity program. Participants must be able to engage with others with minimal supervision.

Need help with care during the support group? To apply for a **free sitter service** for your loved one through the Alzheimer's Association, please contact 1-800-272-3900



Upcoming support groups

Friday, July 18, 2025

Friday, August 15, 2025



At what time?

From 1:30 to 3:30 PM

Upcoming events

The dedicated teams at the IEA and SC-ADRC are committed to boosting social connections, sharing valuable health information and building stronger ties between older adults and the services available to them.

This quarter is full of exciting opportunities to connect, learn about healthy aging and explore ongoing research through our incredible partners!

Wednesday, July 16, 2025

Golden Years Jamboree

- 9 AM - 12 PM
- Anderson Civic Center
- 3027 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Anderson, S.C.

Friday, August 1, 2025

- Upstate Senior Wellness Fair
- 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM
- Greenville Convention Center
- 1 Exposition Dr., Greenville, S.C.

Wednesday, August 6, 2025

Life Wise Lunch & Learn

- 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM
- Long Branch Baptist Church, Bolt Street, Greenville S.C.
- Life Wise members only

Tuesday, October 7, 2025

Senior Expo @ Greenville

- 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM
- Greenville Kroc Center
- 424 Westfield St, Greenville, S.C.

Thursday, October 9, 2025

Senior Expo @ Anderson

- 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM
- Anderson Civic Center
- 3027 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Anderson, S.C.

Stay tuned for more future events!

Life through the lens

The artistic journey of Larry McCollough



Larry McCollough, Ph.D., a lifelong photographer and retired professor from Clemson University, recently lent some of his vivid photographs to the Institute for Engaged Aging.

Larry McCollough has a unique story that blends intellectual thought with the beauty of art. Born in Birmingham, Alabama, McCollough taught ethics, history and philosophy at Clemson University for 30 years, inspiring countless students. He retired in 1998, marking the end of a distinguished academic career but continuing his journey in photography.

McCollough's passion for photography began long before his retirement. "I took photography seriously in high school," he recalls. His interest in capturing natural scenes deepened when he acquired a 35mm camera, marking the start of his serious pursuit of the art. Over time, he developed a deep appreciation for how photography allows one to engage more deeply with the world. He also enjoyed processing his images in Photoshop, experimenting with new techniques to enhance his photographs and highlight the beauty of everyday moments.

For McCollough, photography is more than just a hobby. "It makes you more aware of your environment," he explains. He believes photography offers a way to embrace and appreciate the world through new eyes. McCollough encourages aspiring photographers of all ages to start looking for images everywhere. Whether young or old, he believes photography is an excellent way to see and appreciate the beauty in everyday life. Through both his photography and his philosophy, McCollough reminds us that creativity, learning and reflection never need to stop, no matter your age.

Larry McCollough's work has been displayed in galleries throughout the Upstate, including Clemson, Anderson, Belton and Pickens. You can currently find McCollough's photographs at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) and the IEA where they continue to inspire others.

Food for thought

A smarter diet for a sharper brain

A nutritious diet may play a critical role in maintaining brain health and slowing cognitive decline, according to new research examining the impact of eating habits on aging populations.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, dementia involves symptoms like decline of memory, language, problem-solving and other cognitive skills serious enough to impact daily activities. While there is currently no cure, researchers continue to explore lifestyle changes that may prevent or delay the onset of symptoms. Diet has emerged as a potentially significant factor.

One approach receiving increased attention is the MIND diet, which stands for Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay. The diet combines key elements of the Mediterranean and Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diets. Both diets have been praised for promoting heart health. The MIND diet emphasizes leafy green vegetables, berries, whole grains, beans, nuts and at least one serving of fish a week. It restricts red meat, cheese, sweets, fried foods and fast food.

A recent study led by Russell P. Sawyer, M.D., at the University of Cincinnati investigated the relationship between adherence to the MIND diet and cognitive health outcomes. The research used data from an ongoing, National Institutes of Health-funded study focused on understanding racial differences in stroke and other brain-related health conditions.

Study participants self-reported their dietary habits and completed cognitive assessments at the start and conclusion of the research period. The results indicated that individuals who closely followed the MIND diet experienced a slower rate of cognitive decline and were less likely to show signs of cognitive impairment.

The research also explored possible differences in diet-related outcomes across racial and gender lines. While some variations were found, the study emphasized the need for additional research to better understand how social and demographic factors influence brain health.

These findings contribute to a growing body of evidence suggesting that diet can be an important tool in promoting long-term brain function. As scientists investigate the links between nutrition and brain health, the MIND diet stands out as a practical and accessible strategy for supporting mental sharpness later in life.

For more information, visit nia.nih.gov.



The information shared in this section is from <https://www.nia.nih.gov/news/healthful-diet-linked-reduced-risk-cognitive-decline>.



Bridgit Corbett, Ed.D., is a senior lecturer and the program director of Didactics in Dietetics (DPD) in the Department of Food, Nutrition and Packaging Science at Clemson University. Her responsibilities include teaching, advising and service. Additionally, she serves as the faculty advisor for the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) organization within the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences, as well as the mentoring program in the human nutrition department.

Prior to joining Clemson University, she taught for one academic year at South Carolina State University and worked as a clinical dietitian in long-term care and dialysis for 15 years in Macon, Georgia. While practicing full-time as a clinical dietitian, she also held adjunct instructor positions at Georgia College and State University and Fort Valley State University.

She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in food and nutrition (Dietetics) and a Master of Science degree in food and nutrition from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. She completed her dietetic internship at Southern Regional Medical Center and earned her registered dietitian credential, with licensure to practice in South Carolina. Additionally, she earned a doctorate in education from the University of Phoenix.

Nutrition tips for healthy aging

Insights from Bridgit Corbett, Ed.D., R.D., L.D.



“Let food be your medicine and medicine be your food—every bite you take is an opportunity to nourish your body, energize your spirit and build a foundation for a healthier and brighter future,” said Bridgit Corbett Ed.D. This idea closely aligns with the IEA’s mission to promote health and resilience among older adults. Corbett shares practical nutrition tips to help support healthy, vibrant aging.

Maintaining proper nutrition is increasingly vital as people age to support overall health and well-being. Bridgit Corbett, Ed.D., explains that a balanced diet provides energy for daily activities and also helps reduce the risk of age-related conditions such as osteoporosis, heart disease and weakened immunity.

Healthy eating should focus on nutrient-rich foods like whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean proteins and healthy fats. Staying well hydrated is essential since water supports cellular function and helps prevent dehydration, which is more common in older adults. Antioxidants found in colorful fruits and vegetables combat oxidative stress, a key factor in aging, while omega-3 fatty acids support joint health and reduce inflammation.

Vitamins and minerals, including magnesium, potassium and B-com-

plex vitamins, play important roles in energy metabolism and help protect against age-related decline. Fiber plays a crucial role in maintaining healthy digestion and preventing constipation, a frequent concern due to slower gut motility with aging.

Corbett also highlights the importance of mindful eating by limiting processed food and excessive sugars, both of which contribute to chronic health issues. She points out that social dining experiences offer important emotional benefits by fostering connection and helping to combat feelings of isolation among older adults.

By emphasizing nutrient-dense foods and healthy lifestyle habits, individuals can promote physical vitality, cognitive function and emotional wellness, aging with strength and resilience to meet the demands of life.



The power of pets

Companionship that boosts well-being

One promising approach to support healthy and engaged aging is pet ownership. While not without its risks, caring for a pet has shown to offer psychological, emotional and physical benefits that may greatly enhance quality of life for older adults.

Pets may promote physical activity, provide companionship and help reduce feelings of loneliness. The daily routine of feeding, walking or simply spending time with a pet introduces structure and a sense of purpose. Many older adults find emotional comfort and increased feelings of safety, particularly with dogs, who may offer both affection and protection. Even when full-time pet ownership is not feasible, alternative forms of interaction like fostering pets temporarily or volunteering at animal shelters may provide similar rewards.

Of course, owning a pet can also bring challenges, such as the financial cost of care, physical demands and potential complications with housing. To support safe and accessible pet interaction, caregivers and communities may help by providing resources like financial assistance, pet-friendly housing and education on safe caregiving practices. Whether through full ownership or occasional interaction, relationships with animals can be meaningful for older adults.

Do you have a furry (or feathered or scaly) friend who brings joy to your life? Share your pet story! We would love to hear about them. Send us a photo of your pet and share how they have made a difference in your life. Your story could be featured in the next IEA newsletter! E-mail us at IEA@clemsont.edu — we cannot wait to hear from you!

Enders-Slegers, Marie-José, and Karin Hediger. "Pet ownership and human-animal interaction in an aging population: Rewards and challenges." *Anthrozoös*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2019, pp. 255–265. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08927936.2019.1569907>

Doll therapy

Support OMH patients

Bring comfort and joy to Prisma Health Oconee Memorial Hospital (OMH) patients with Alzheimer's disease and/or related dementia (AD/ADRD).

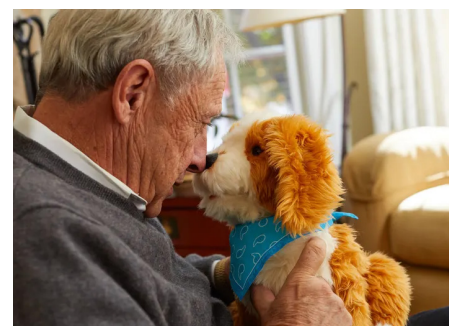
The IEA is accepting donations for the OMH doll therapy drive.

Doll therapy may significantly reduce behavioral and psychological symptoms in patients living with AD/ADRD.

How you can help:

- Donate new baby dolls or life-like toy dogs and cats.
- Drop-off location:
Front desk of the IEA on the 5th floor of OMH.

Your donations will make a meaningful impact on the lives of those living with Alzheimer's. Thank you for your kindness and generosity!



Help yourself while helping others

We are looking for dedicated volunteers just like you!

There are many ways you can get involved with the Institute for Engaged Aging (IEA), including joining one of our research studies. Your involvement in research is essential for advancing treatments and prevention for Alzheimer's disease, promoting healthy aging and improving the lives of older adults in South Carolina, including our friends, family and community. Please contact each study or program to learn more or sign up.



Active Mind Study

Location: IEA - Seneca, S.C.
Site coordinator: Eslie Aguilar
Email: IEA@clemson.edu
Phone: (864) 916-6220
Objective: This study will determine if computerized brain training exercises can improve everyday abilities and reduce the risk of dementia in persons at a higher risk.



Focus Group

Location: Upstate, S.C.
Coordinator: Abby Stephan
Email: atsteph@clemson.edu
Phone: (864) 916-6220
Objective: The Intergenerational Family Processes around Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders in Rural Communities objective is to explore how rural families discuss and respond on issues related to aging, such as Alzheimer's and dementia.



Human Movement Study

Location: IEA - Seneca, S.C.
Coordinator: Reed Gurchiek
Email: hhentni@clemson.edu
Phone: (609) 320-3875
Objective: The Free-Living Human Movement Study measures human motion in everyday life to understand how physical and cognitive functioning are related in older adults.



CHAP

Location: Jacksonville, Florida residents only
Coordinator: Marsha Hampton
Email: mhampt3@clemson.edu
Phone: (864) 916-6207
Objective: The study identifies the mechanisms through which interpersonal conscientiousness promotes healthier cognitive aging and its role within close relationships in a sample of participants.



BA-UMAP

Location: Nationwide (Online)
Coordinator: Marsha Hampton
Email: mhampt3@clemson.edu
Phone: (864) 916-6207
Website: secure.ba-umap.com
Objective: The Black American United Memory and Aging Project (BA-UMAP) examines how factors across multiple domains impact progressive cognitive decline in a longitudinal sample of middle-aged and older Black adults.



Heirloom

Location: Clemson University Main Campus
Coordinator: Will Stevens
Email: decisionlab@clemson.edu
Phone: (864) 610-5708
Objective: Heirloom, The Role of Personal Images on Stress and Well-Being, assesses how viewing images of one's personal past influences stress and overall well-being. Two, 75-90 minute in-person sessions.

Let's play!

Would you rather...?

We asked members of our team a few playful “Would you rather” questions to learn more about their food preferences, and their answers may surprise you! From giving up salt to choosing processed foods and animal products, see how staff, faculty and students made their picks.

1. Would you rather give up sugar forever or give up salt forever?
2. Would you rather eat no processed foods or no animal products?
3. Would you rather have unlimited snacks but no dessert or have one dessert a day but no snacks?
4. Would you rather eat only breakfast foods for every meal or eat only dinner foods for every meal?



Megan Schumpert

Research Lab Manager

1. Salt
2. Processed food
3. Dessert
4. Dinner



Angie Sardina, Ph.D.

Research Associate Professor

1. Salt
2. Processed food
3. Dessert, no snacks
4. Breakfast



Lauren Desing

Psychology Student

1. Salt
2. Animal products
3. Dessert
4. Dinner

Your turn! E-mail us your “Would you rather” pick!

Keep your mind active

Solve the word search puzzle

V	E	L	F	B	R	A	I	N	S	C	A	P	Q	R
B	A	D	Z	O	K	A	F	R	U	I	T	S	V	D
C	E	H	T	G	N	E	R	T	S	E	F	E	H	Y
H	X	P	R	O	T	E	I	N	A	W	G	L	Y	B
K	E	N	I	T	R	A	E	H	L	E	O	V	D	A
I	R	O	C	O	S	X	G	A	T	K	N	W	R	C
O	C	U	A	J	T	W	E	A	D	I	P	Q	A	L
C	I	R	D	Q	R	E	B	I	F	W	S	E	T	R
A	S	I	T	B	A	L	A	N	C	E	N	Y	I	U
L	E	S	I	O	E	P	A	N	S	D	I	F	O	J
C	G	H	J	S	K	A	L	Z	E	X	M	C	N	V
I	B	L	O	N	G	E	V	I	T	Y	A	N	E	M
U	Q	E	T	U	O	A	D	S	P	I	T	Y	R	W
M	F	I	W	E	L	L	N	E	S	S	I	G	H	L
A	J	L	Z	C	E	B	F	N	D	I	V	P	A	K

How many healthy habits can you spot?

This puzzle includes essential components of aging well, see how many you can find!

Word list

Longevity	Fiber	Balance
Nourish	Exercise	Strength
Hydration	Wellness	Heart
Protein	Calcium	Fruits
Vitamins	Brain	Vegetables



Summer salad recipe

Peachy corn and tomato

In this issue, we share a recipe for a fun salad from The Official Mind Diet Website (theofficialmindediet.com).



Serves: 4



Prep time: 15 minutes



Cook time: 5 minutes

INGREDIENTS

- 4 tbsp of extra virgin olive oil
- Sprinkle of salt
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 3 tbsp of red wine vinegar
- ¼ tsp of salt
- 2 ears of corn on the cob, or 2 cups of steamed corn
- ½ tbsp of sumac (optional)
- 1 cup of chopped tomatoes
- 2 cups of sliced peaches
- ½ cup of fresh basil leaves
- 2 whole wheat pitas, cut into pieces

DIRECTIONS

1. Line a plate with a paper towel.
2. Heat 2 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil in a medium pan over medium-high heat. Add the cut pieces of pita and stir to coat. Let sit and lightly toast mixing infrequently until all pieces are a light golden brown and crunchy. Transfer to paper-towel lined plate and sprinkle with salt. Set aside.
3. In a medium bowl, add the sliced onion, red wine vinegar, salt and sumac if you are using it. Mix to incorporate and set aside to marinate.
4. If using corn on the cob, steam the cob by leaving it in the husk and place in the microwave for 2-4 minutes per cob (depending on size). Remove from the microwave and wait a few minutes before you remove the husk (to let the temperature come down).
5. While corn is cooling, chop your tomatoes and peaches. When corn has slightly cooled, cut corn off the cob.
6. In a large serving bowl or platter, mix corn, tomatoes and peach slices. Add in the onions and pita pieces, and gently toss. Drizzle 2 tablespoons of extra virgin olive oil over salad. Garnish with fresh torn basil.



Join the PALS Network

Research opportunities for everyone!

Partners and Advocates for Lifespan Science (PALS) Network connects individuals of all ages interested in participating in research at Clemson University!

To sign up, please call (864) 916-6220, e-mail IEA@clemson.edu or complete the survey on our website.

Please consider joining!



Why I participate? We all have a reason!

We are thrilled that more people are joining our studies!



Your enthusiasm and participation are truly making a difference, and we are excited to see how the IEA continues to grow and impact the community.

Your support matters Strengthening communities & advancing research

While IEA research is primarily funded through grants, the majority of our educational and outreach programs rely on generous gifts. To help us continue these programs and extend our efforts, we have multiple ways for you to give.

Your generosity makes a difference and the funds directly support the IEA and the communities we serve.

Online donations can be made at:
clemsontech.com/centers-institutes/aging

****Please check that the designation field on the website lists:**
"Institute for Engaged Aging."

Mail checks to:
Clemson University Foundation
P.O. Box 1889
Clemson, S.C.
29633-1889

Be sure to include "Institute for Engaged Aging" in the memo line to designate your gift!

DONATE today



SCAN QR Code

All funds received stay in our local communities.

**HELPFUL TAX TIPS!**

Your financial contribution can be documented as a charitable tax deduction.

Contact us for any additional information!

Have questions, feedback or just want to say hello?

Our team is here and ready to assist you. Your input helps us grow and serve you better. Please reach out using the contact info on the right — we would love to hear from you!



Follow us!

Clemson Institute for Engaged Aging

Engage with us through Facebook. Keep posted about our upcoming events and news!



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PRISMA Health
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