In 2003, a study-abroad program at Portland State University (PSU) was conceived as a partnership between the Institute on Aging (IOA) at PSU and the Jessie F. Richardson Foundation (JFR)—a charitable organization dedicated to helping indigent elders around the globe by addressing immediate needs, promoting self help and reciprocity, and fostering intergenerational involvement. The purpose of the program was to help students learn about global aging, particularly aging in developing countries, by working with local communities in a developing nation to bolster the country’s capacity for improving the lives of older adults. The IOA was to coordinate the educational component by selecting students for the program, holding classes, and then leading students on a service-learning trip to Nicaragua. JFR was to serve as the main conduit between PSU faculty and students and key organizations and stakeholders in Nicaragua. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) provided technical assistance and connections to individuals and groups in Nicaragua, including officials within the Ministries of Family and Health. These contacts, in turn, helped in establishing relationships with individuals and organizations involved in housing and caring for older adults in various locations throughout Nicaragua. This article describes the development and implementation of this service-learning program focused on aging, environment, and health.

Connecting Aging, Environment, and Health
Environmental gerontology has described, explored, modified and optimized the environment for older adults for more than 40 years to maintain independence, dignity, and overall quality of life (Wahl & Weisman, 2003). Early work was based on ecologic principles that noted the interdependence of people and their environments. Lawton and Nahemow’s (1973) Ecologic Model of Environment and Aging described this interdependence of various elements in a system and stressed the fact that there is a continual process of adaptation of older people to their environment.

The field of public health has utilized an ecologic model for building healthy communities. Within the past decade, efforts have focused on aging and environments and have bridged the fields of gerontology, public health, community development, and
urban planning. According to the ecologic model used in these efforts, factors that influence healthy behaviors include biological, behavioral, social, and environmental variables (Satariano & McAuley, 2003). When considering effective interventions pertaining to healthy and active aging, an ecologic model is useful in framing research by taking these factors into account (Sallis, 2003). However, moving beyond basic research and individual interventions has been identified as an important next step for broadening the effectiveness of the ecologic model; Cunningham and Michael (2004), for example, have detailed the need to move toward policy creation and broader health intervention strategies to achieve healthier communities for older adults. The result of this approach would be action-based research that considers the impact of the factors described by Satariano and McAuley (2003)—social, biological, behavioral and environmental—while understanding the dynamic interplay over time that occurs between older people and their environments, as detailed by Lawton and Nahemow (1973). The program described here incorporates these principles into the learning environment to inform programmatic activities in service to a community.

Global Aging: Why it Matters
It has been well documented that the world is facing unprecedented population aging and that certain regions of the world will age at different rates and with different consequences (Jackson, Strauss, & Howe, 2009; Kinsella & He, 2009). A call for action from the Pan American Health Organization and the Merck Institute of Aging & Health (2004) pointed to a shrinking window of opportunity to prepare for population aging in developing countries and suggested the need to focus on the near- and long-term futures in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). In that region, years of political instability and violence are linked to economic struggles and stunted development (Solimano, 2004); additionally, poor health conditions, and demographic projections point to a more rapid population aging in LAC as compared to more developed countries in North America, Europe and parts of Asia (Kinsella & He, 2009). As Jackson et al. (2009, p. 1) note:

The United Nations projects that the share of Latin America’s population that is aged 65 or over will triple by mid-century, from 6.3 percent in 2005 to 18.5 percent in 2050. Meanwhile, Latin America’s median age will climb by 14 years, from 26 to 40. Latin America’s coming age wave is by no means the largest in the world. By 2050, over 30 percent of the population will be aged 65 or over in some fast-aging countries in Europe and East Asia. But incredibly, several Latin American countries, including Brazil, Chile, and Mexico, may have older populations than the United States.

No matter what country is being discussed, however, whether less or more developed, we are living in a world with diminished and dwindling resources in which governments and citizens alike must survive with fewer formal supports. Organizations, employers, educators, politicians, and policy makers must answer the question, “How can we do more with less?” To achieve sustainable growth and development, we need to find a way to provide for today’s generations without compromising the opportunities of tomorrow’s generations, whether older or younger.

Enhancing and sustaining the quality of life for older adults who are poor, frail or incapacitated, and who have little support is the central tenet of the work of the Aging Matters, Locally and Globally Initiative at PSU. Created through a gift by PSU alumni Drs. Keren Brown Wilson and Michael DeShane, this initiative is aimed at expanding knowledge, education, and research pertaining to aging around the world, especially for older people who are “living at the margins.” The program described here is a part of that larger initiative that may serve as a model for improving the quality of life of older adults here and abroad who have few resources.

Program Background: A Focus on Nicaragua
The idea for a program focusing on aging in LAC originated in 2001 from Dr. Martha Peláez, PAHO’s Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean. Dr. Peláez began a conversation with Dr. Keren Brown Wilson about global aging and broadening JFR’s work beyond the U.S. After a visit to various countries in Latin America, Dr. Wilson contacted PSU faculty Drs. Nohad Toulan (Dean, College of Urban and Public Affairs), Margaret B. Neal (Director, IOA) and Marvin Kaiser (Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences) to discuss creating a service-learning program. Nicaragua
was chosen as the focus of the program for a number of reasons: its extreme poverty, its rapidly aging population, its dearth of expertise in gerontology and geriatrics, and the existence of few supportive services for older adults.

According to The World Factbook 2009 (Central Intelligence Agency, 2009), Nicaragua is the poorest nation in Central America. It has suffered decades of natural disasters, political corruption, revolution, war, and the loss of resources—human, economic, and natural (Plunkett, 2002). Not only have recent generations lacked access to decent health care and education, but also the country’s international debt burdens are such that long-term planning for development and the well-being of the population is overshadowed by substantial debt services (Willman, 2000).

Although Nicaragua is not an old country—an estimated 4.6% of its population is aged 65 years or older, compared to 13% in the United States—its older adult population will increase rapidly: to 8.0% in 2030 and to 14.7% in 2050. Comparatively, the projected increase in the 65-and-over population in developed nations is less dramatic; Sweden, for example, will grow from 18.3% in 2010 to 22.6% in 2030 and 24.1% in 2050 (United Nations, 2009).

Given its rapidly aging population, Nicaragua will need expertise in social gerontology and geriatrics. As pointed out by Dr. Peláez, although there are a few professionals, advocates, politicians, and others who care for and about the aged in Nicaragua, there also has been a “brain drain” of qualified experts. Moreover, despite a large number of non-governmental organizations from outside of Nicaragua that assist the country (Central Intelligence Agency, 2009), the priority of these NGOs and the Nicaraguan government has been child and maternal health. Few organizations target the needs of older adults other than homes for elders.

The university-community partner relationship between PSU/IOA and JFR was formed, the service-learning program developed and classes conducted. In the spring of 2004, nine students and two faculty went to Nicaragua. During that initial pilot program, meetings were held with the Ministry of Family and the Ministry of Health in Managua and with staff and elders at comedores (meal sites) and hogares para los ancianos (homes for elders) in the cities of Granada, Matagalpa, and Jinotepe. Students and faculty learned about organizations that cared for, or could care for older adults in Nicaragua; the process for developing a long-term plan aimed at identifying and addressing problems related to long-term care and quality of life for older, at-risk Nicaraguans was begun.

In 2005, the number of students increased to 14, and they were split into two groups to serve additional homes for elders in Juigalpa and Masaya. By 2006, the city of Boaco was added to the communities in which students were working. Boaco and Jinotepe became the two key locations for the PSU-JFR program to provide for program continuity and facilitate relationship building. To date, after the seventh year of the program, over 100 students and nine PSU faculty or faculty affiliates have traveled to Nicaraguan communities with a focus on older adults, natural and built environments, and health.

Since the program’s beginning, change has been a constant in serving community needs and increasing our understanding of the needs as well as community strengths and assets. As argued by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), a community’s assets are an integral part of a holistic approach to community development. By using an asset-based approach and actively engaging community stakeholders, sustainable positive community development can be achieved. This approach leads to collaboration with various organizations, including those serving youth (sports teams and schools), business (microenterprise development), and older persons.

The Role of Service Learning
This program, offered as a six-credit service-learning course open to undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, and graduate students, blends service, research, and learning across international borders. The course, Global Aging and Health: Enhancing Communities in Nicaragua, fuses community service projects with academic goals and is an approved Capstone course (the final community-service project requirement for an undergraduate degree). In addition to classroom learning and service projects, the program emphasizes reflection and continual improvement through program evaluation to foster growth among students and faculty, and to serve as a model program for working internationally with students and community members on social gerontological issues.

This program goes beyond “educational tourism” by incorporating a service component to address needs,
utilize assets and to build capacity. The desire was to engage in projects that would serve needs of communities in Nicaragua during a two-week program involving students of any level in any discipline. To date, students interested in gerontology, public health, community development, business, engineering, sociology, pre-nursing, pre-medicine, Spanish, social work, international development, and urban studies have participated. In the months between students' two-week experience in Nicaragua, JFR staff and PSU faculty remain in touch with key Nicaraguan community contacts. JFR staff travel two to three times a year to refine the projects for the next group of students. Another key to the program's success has been JFR's hiring of a staff person in Nicaragua, a trained geriatrician and public health practitioner, to serve as the liaison for this and other JFR programs.

Course Structure and Content
From its beginning, the program was structured to include coursework in the U.S., along with the development of specific projects to be implemented in Nicaragua, followed by approximately two weeks of service in Nicaragua. As reported earlier, Dr. Martha Peláez, the former regional advisor on aging and health for PAHO and a current member of the board of directors of the JFR Foundation, played a key role in the development of the program, traveling to Portland to lecture. In her presentations, she described reasons for focusing on aging in less developed countries and in Latin America and Nicaragua, in particular. Dr. Peláez presented findings of research that was conducted in Latin America and the Caribbean that revealed socio-demographic trends and health patterns affecting health and well-being. She noted that the graying of less developed countries requires several actions: consultation on social protection policy and program schemes; development of community resources for supporting caregivers; technical cooperation in policy development; assistance in the development of sustainable and integrated systems; and building environments and infrastructure that enhance the health and well-being of communities. As detailed in the next section, these suggestions form the basis for the projects developed in this service-learning program.

The program's integration of both an ecologic model and an asset-based approach to community development for older adults in Nicaragua requires consideration of the biological, behavioral, social, and environmental factors that affect elders' quality of life. The content of Dr. Peláez's lectures during the first two years of the program has been incorporated in each subsequent year. Students learn about global health and aging trends, theories of aging, "upstream" public health factors (e.g., income disparities, access to education) and how they affect quality of life, health promotion strategies and educational techniques, and issues surrounding the provision and monitoring of health care. Students also learn about social-cultural aspects of life in Nicaragua, including socio-demographic patterns, dietary practices, religious practices, and community-based systems of support. Nicaragua's climate and geography (mountains, lakes, coastline), its history of natural disasters (volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, earthquakes), and its political history are described, as these dramatically affect daily life for Nicaraguans and the students. For example, climate and weather patterns in Nicaragua affect the nature of projects that can be completed (tree planting along the river cannot be accomplished during the rainy season); the physical infrastructure (roads, sidewalks, buildings) can act as a barrier or facilitator to mobility and access to important services; and politics determines governmental priorities and appointments to positions.

Use of an ecologic approach helps to identify factors that contribute to healthy community development for an aging society. Students may apply their disciplinary knowledge (for example, of aging, community development, and public health) to their projects in Nicaragua, along with their understanding of Nicaragua-specific contextual features. This knowledge, combined with direct community input into the types of projects needed and desired, and program experience about previous successful projects, guides the selection of future projects. The following sections detail such projects as water projects, home repairs, green and natural projects, public health education and health fairs, community advocacy, and a housing construction project.

Water Projects
In the first year of the program, while in the U.S., students developed a project to train elder caregivers on the use of universal precautions such as hand washing. Upon arrival in Nicaragua, the students discovered that a basic resource, water, was unavailable within the homes...
for elders. Also, most homes needed physical improvements to support the older residents, including adequate space; there was also a lack of medical supplies and little knowledge of aging or training available for staff caring for frail residents. As a community partner in Jinotepe explained, due to scarce supply, water was turned on by City officials only for brief amounts of time. When water was available, generally at night, staff would fill the home’s only water tank. The tank’s capacity of 2,500 liters was insufficient for basic daily necessities such as bathing residents, cleaning and cooking; there was not consistent access to clean water for the washing of hands as is required by universal precaution procedures. It was clear that the student project on hand washing could not be implemented and, moreover, that the lack of access to basic utilities was an obvious impediment to adequate care for residents. Increasing the water supply to the homes became a top priority.

Between 2004 and 2005, a water project was begun to fund the acquisition and installation of a water tank for the Masaya home for elders. To carry out the project, a partnership with professionals and students from the Portland chapter of Engineers Without Borders (EWB) was established. By 2007, PSU students and volunteer engineers from EWB had added a water tank at the Jinotepe home and an additional tank in Masaya, which increased the water capacity to 10,000 liters. Another PSU/EWB group completed an irrigation project for an orchard at the home for elders in Matagalpa; this project was intended to help the orchard provide food and income for the older adults living in the home. Engineering students also conducted assessments at other homes for elders to prepare for future work in Nicaragua. PSU students affiliated with EWB continue to work in Nicaragua; although they travel and arrange projects independently, the two groups continue to share experiences and assist with each other’s work.

**Home Repairs**

In Jinotepe, conversations between JFR staff, facility staff, and program faculty ensued regarding other physical plant needs of the home and the resources available in the community for improving the site. A strong relationship was developed, and a proposal to improve the facility was developed. After two years of visits to Jinotepe, the steps required to begin the physical renovation and expansion of the facility were accomplished. The home secured NGO status; the local volunteer board responsible for the operation of the home grew stronger; title to the land that the home was on was secured; and money was raised in the U.S. to fund design and development costs. From 2006 to 2009, approximately $107,500 was spent to relieve overcrowding by expanding the capacity of the home from 30 beds to 60.

In addition to the expansion of the facility, the engineering assessment project in Jinotepe revealed other needs, including retrofitting the roof for increased protection in the event of an earthquake or strong storm, upgrading the electrical system, and adding storage space for medical supplies and other items needed to care for the residents. PSU students designed and tested upgrades in Portland before traveling to Nicaragua.

This transformation of the physical infrastructure of the home in Jinotepe over several years has provided a safer and healthier environment for residents and staff. Media attention led to increased community support for the home. Microfinance projects now generate revenue for the home. The result has been an improvement of the home’s social, economic, and physical environments and an increase in the community’s awareness of and capacity to deal with an aging population. Plans for remodeling the older section of the home are underway. Additionally, the possibility of creating a national training center for caregivers that will help Nicaraguans in supporting their elders is under consideration.

**Green and Natural Features**

Maintaining the natural environment and facilitating healthy environments through the use of green spaces emerged as a need early in the program. As part of the second year’s activities, students were involved in two projects in the home for elders in Masaya. While cleaning up the grounds of the home, students used stones and soil on the site to build a raised-bed garden to grow vegetables. They noticed that one wall of the home was fully exposed to direct sun during the hottest part of the day; on the other side of that wall was the men’s quarters. The team worked with a local nursery to identify and purchase fast-growing indigenous shade trees. On the final day of the students’ visit, the students, faculty, and an older resident from the home planted trees.

During the fourth year of the program, students worked in Boaco to provide a healthier living environment for
persons of all ages. Direct community input and student and faculty observations of sanitation issues, such as garbage in the streets, water pollution, lack of potable water, and deforestation, led to the development of three projects: a tree-planting project with students from a school, a river clean-up with community members, and the installation of trash bins in and around the city’s center. Students were invited to meet with Boaco provincial government officials interested in environmental preservation and pollution-related issues to discuss environmental factors affecting quality of life in Boaco.

Public Health Education and Health Fairs
The expertise and experiences of Dr. Peláez and the PSU social gerontology faculty led to a concentration in the program on community health and public health education. As such, several student projects implemented in this arena have involved training paraprofessional caregivers, assessing the health of older adults in the community, educating people of all ages about healthy practices, and working with trained professionals to provide health screenings and deliver medical advice and attention.

During the first three years of the program, guides and posters were created and distributed in partnership with JFR as part of its Life Enrichment Activity Program (LEAP) focused on health issues for older adults, including exercise, foot care, arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure, and dementia. These materials, translated into Spanish and adapted to be understandable to individuals with low literacy levels, have been distributed widely, including at health fairs and at elementary and secondary schools.

During the fourth year of the program (2007), the first health fair in Nicaragua with a focus on older adults was held in Boaco. As a part of the event, Dr. Milton Lopez, one of a few Nicaraguan physicians with training in gerontology and geriatrics and who also has a Master’s degree in Public Health, saw older patients in the city center. Many of the older adults had not received medical attention for months or even years. In addition to assisting with the clinical attention, students organized skits and games and distributed educational materials to inform the community about healthy and active aging. Local vendors joined the health fair, and a theater group performed a play on the dangers of using non-potable water and drinking too much alcohol.

Also in 2007, students began working with Dr. Lopez to organize and offer health clinics outside Boaco, expanding into the surrounding rural areas; these clinics have been offered in subsequent years of the program to provide medical attention to older adults with limited access to health and medical services. Students have conducted health education activities, such as leading exercises, training caregivers on how to lead exercise activities, distributing health education materials, and offering community presentations on topics such as nutrition, especially as it relates to diabetes. Geriatric expertise and medical supplies and medications are insufficient to address the health care needs of an aging population in Nicaragua. Donations of supplies and medications are solicited by the program and carried to Nicaragua by students and faculty. While the extent of need is too great for such donations to make a significant difference, education is a crucial first step in changing health behaviors and improving health outcomes in the long run.

Community Advocacy and Outreach
During the 2005 program, students conducted a community asset mapping project designed to identify organizations connected with older adults in Juigalpa, as well as organizations that could be connected. During the 2006 program, a community development student team conducted a similar but more extensive community assessment in Boaco. The inventory of community organizations considered to be assets in both towns included international non-governmental organizations such as the Red Cross and Project Hope, the local library and the police department, lending institutions, and advocacy groups. Boaco organizations were asked to complete an electronic survey or were interviewed to catalogue their objectives, clientele, and connections to other local, national and international agencies. The responses were recorded in a resource guide that was distributed to partners of the PSU program and others in Nicaragua working with older adults in and around Boaco.

Among the groups vital to the early success of the program were the local Catholic church, an advocacy group named “Foundation for a University of the Third Age” (FUNITE), the U.S. Peace Corps, and the library. The Catholic church supported the Boaco home for elders financially and through providing staff. Monsignor Santa Maria and his church were partners
in the program’s work in Boaco until the Monsignor’s death in 2010. FUNITE facilitated community contacts for the program in Boaco and helped to organize the health fair. During the program’s first year in Boaco, a Peace Corps volunteer helped in arranging a community forum on aging near the town square. Seventy community members attended this first community conversation regarding aging in Boaco.

Other educational projects have been intergenerational, providing lessons about aging in elementary and secondary classrooms, using aging simulation activities and guiding teachers in the construction and delivery of training kits. PSU students organized connections between students in Boaco and elders at the home through visits and written communication and between students and elders at the meal site. A documentary video about the program was produced in 2009, a two-minute excerpt of which recently won first prize in the Gerontological Society of America’s Global65 YouTube video contest.1

In 2007, Dr. Milton Lopez began working as a program liaison, advocating for elders by raising awareness of aging in Nicaragua and creating a strong curriculum in geriatrics and gerontology at Nicaragua universities. His work included organizing a “coordinating council” focusing on elders in Boaco composed of individuals from various stakeholder groups. The Council of Elders served in an advisory capacity and raised funds for the home. With the death of Monsignor Santa Maria, the Council lost a key leader.

Dr. Lopez coordinates an intergenerational service-learning project connecting youth and older adults in Boaco, including continuing education on aging. He is exploring the possibility of connecting youth sports teams with service projects benefiting older adults.

**Housing Construction: The Bottle House Project**

For 2010, Boaco community leaders proposed that one student project involve finding a use for recyclable materials such as plastic bottles and tires. The mayor of Boaco was interested in reusing materials that the city had been collecting to benefit the community environmentally, socially and economically. An article published in Portland’s local newspaper about plastic bottles being used to build houses (Preusch, 2010) prompted the program team to contact the Peace Corps volunteer mentioned in the article and a Guatemala
A non-profit organization, Pura Vida (2010), that developed a manual on implementing projects with eco-ladrillos, “eco-blocks,” or plastic bottles filled with dry, inorganic garbage.

In the spring, the program team distributed the Pura Vida document to faculty, students, and professionals and met with a group that included an engineer, a contractor, EWB students involved with construction projects in Nicaragua, and faculty. The feasibility of the project, including potential adjustments necessary for completion in a two-week time frame, was discussed. Based on the advice from that meeting and input from the community leaders in Boaco, a plan was made to construct a small home for an older woman living on the outskirts of Boaco whose home had burned down and who was living in a makeshift shelter constructed of tree branches and plastic sheeting.

The replacement home was to use traditional Nicaraguan building practices, a concrete and reinforced steel foundation, along with a galvanized steel roof, to create a skeleton that would then have walls constructed from 1.5 liter plastic bottles filled with dry, inorganic garbage. Poultry wire would encase the bottles, and then coats of cement were to be applied for the walls. The bottles were to be stuffed by local community groups including children and youth from schools, sports teams, and churches prior to the students’ arrival. The JFR Foundation contracted with a Nicaraguan architect and contractor to draw up plans and complete the foundation and supporting structure.

When the students arrived in Nicaragua in June of 2010, the project was behind schedule: bottles had not been filled, the foundation had not been started, and the contractor had identified a budget shortfall. The two main non-monetary issues were a lack of time from community members and insufficient garbage to fill the bottles. The budget shortfall arose because it had been decided to fill and level the site. An altered timeline, budget and adjustments to the design were implemented in an attempt to allow students and the community adequate time to complete the house before the students’ departure from Boaco on July 1.

When the project team arrived at the site, little progress had been made; only 200 of the needed 1,000 bottles had been filled and the foundation had not been started. Due to a lack of appropriate garbage to fill the bottles, the team decided to use sand for constructing the walls. After two days of filling bottles, the first wall was completed, with the bottles placed using the poultry wire, screws, and additional wire to create a taut façade and flatten the walls. Due to heavy rain and a political situation that led to the mayor’s removal from office, the project was delayed further; however, students were able to work with community members to complete the majority of the home before leaving Boaco, and the contractor was paid to finish the project.
On the final day of the students’ work at the site, the newly appointed Catholic priest visited the nearly-completed home to give a benediction and to discuss the importance of community efforts in improving the lives of older adults. Ultimately, the bottle house was estimated to have cost more than a home constructed using traditional building techniques. Nonetheless, several important outcomes were noted. First, the community was surprised by the use of recycled materials in the home, providing valuable education regarding environmental stewardship and recycling. Second, the community members’ involvement was viewed as a success, with people of all ages participating. The effort seemed to create a new energy in the community, and a desire for similar future projects has been expressed. Miles away from the project site, people asked students and faculty whether they were the “ones working on the bottle house;” they were excited about possibilities for the use of recyclables. Finally, an older woman without adequate shelter had a home that markedly improved her life.

**Future Directions**

The world is aging, a trend especially dramatic in less developed countries such as Nicaragua. According to Kinsella and He (2009), in 2008, 62% (313 million) of the world’s people aged 65 and over lived in developing nations. In 2040, the proportion is expected to exceed 75%, or one billion aged people in the developing world. As Kinsella and He (2009, p. 14) noted, “Developed countries grew rich before they grew old, while many developing nations may grow old before they grow rich.” The importance of preparing for an aging society, particularly in places with limited resources and little gerontological expertise, cannot be overstated.

Population aging in Nicaragua, as well as elsewhere, must become a priority for nations and their communities. The program described here has not solved the challenges associated with Nicaragua’s aging population, nor will it. The program does, however, strengthen communities’ internal capacity for improving the lives of elders and their surrounding environments in ways that can be sustained without the presence of U.S. students and faculty.

The projects have had varying degrees of success. Myriad obstacles have emerged along the way, including those associated with intercultural and international communication, political changes and support, and competing priorities for limited resources. Moreover, change often comes slowly. Nonetheless, these efforts have rewards for older Nicaraguans, the students who serve them, and other stakeholders. Service-learning principles, asset-based community development, and application of an ecologic framework have been key ingredients to success. Implementing these approaches requires patience, communication, breadth and depth of knowledge, hard work, learning from mistakes, and building on successes, no matter how big or small.

Efforts are needed to work with older adults and their communities to increase awareness and understand the implications of an aging world. By involving students in direct service as part of their learning experience—whether for two weeks, two months, or two years—the ability to make marked local improvements is evident. Aging is connected to the environment—the social, the natural, the built—and many factors impact the health and well-being of a population. This program offers an example of how universities and community partners can work with communities to begin a holistic process to improve the quality of life and well-being of an aging population.

**Margaret B. Neal**  
Director, Institute on Aging,  
Professor, School of Community Health,  
Portland State University  
nealm@pdx.edu

**Keren Brown Wilson**  
President,  
Jessie F. Richardson Foundation  
kwilson@jfrfoundation.org

**Alan DeLaTorre**  
Research Assistant,  
Institute on Aging,  
Portland State University  
aland@pdx.edu

**Milton Lopez**  
Geriatric Physician  
Program Liaison,  
Jessie F. Richardson Foundation  
miltongerardo@yahoo.com
NOTE

1 See www.geron.org/About%20Us/history-celebrating-65-years/global65-youtube-contest and www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYjQwwJMYg8

REFERENCES


Kretzmann, J. P., & McKnight, J. L. (1993). Building community from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community’s assets. Chicago, IL: ACTA Publications.


