In early fall Dr. Rosemund Robbert was presented with the Center for Gerontology’s distinguished alumni award. Dr. Robbert earned her bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees in sociology from WMU. She was an Associate Professor Emerita of the University of Illinois at Springfield and served as adjunct faculty with WMU’s College of Human and Health service simultaneously. Dr. Robbert’s focus throughout her career has encompassed the medical, sociological, and economic issues related to aging and older adults. Currently she continues to share her expertise as a volunteer with the Area Agency on Aging and Ministry with Community in Kalamazoo.

(Pictured left to right: Dr. Rosemund Robbert and Dr. Ellen Page-Robin, the 2012 Distinguished Alumni Award Winner)

We are pleased to announce that in Spring 2013, the first two students completed the gerontology minor. Both students have continued at Western for their graduate studies. Jeana Brown, who is completing her Masters of Arts in Orientation and Mobility and Lisa Fall, who is completing her Masters of Public Administration with a Health Care concentration.
Debra Lindstrom is the Affordable Health Care Act Educator for AARP MI. AARP MI has created a 1 hour presentation that includes non-partisan information, phone numbers and links so that participants are informed but can make their own choices about the benefits/problems with the Affordable Health Care, Patient Protection and Affordability Act. Debra has provided several presentations for WMU College of Human and Health Services Students. She has also presented at Buchanan Senior Center and at the Portage Breakfast Optimists club.

As the nurse practitioner at the Borgess Geriatric Assessment Center, Patricia Fuehr is part of the inter-professional team that specializes in the evaluation and treatment of older adults. The team coordinates care with the patient’s regular healthcare provider.

Services include: complete medical and cognitive evaluations and in-depth assessment of neurological conditions, including dementia. A pharmacist provides medication consultation. Personal and caregiver counseling is available with a licensed social worker. Caregiver guidance education and assistance with planning for future needs is also provided.

Gerontology Students in Action

In many of the gerontology classes the faculty feels the best way increase understanding of older adult health circumstances and obstacles is to create simulations. Above pictures the simulations performed in the classroom of this fall’s GRN 1000 class, students are provided with visual simulators which can give the feeling of low vision or aging diseases such as macular degeneration and gloves to create less contact between themselves and objects which similarly is felt with the decline of peripheral nerves functioning.

The students also had other simulators which created hearing impairments, diabetes, and stroke.

Students pictured from left to right: Antonina Ashford, Oksana Mauricio, Michelle Tanner, and Abby Ekong.
Western Michigan University’s Alliance Senior Day Services (ASDS), part of the College of Health and Human Services, has been serving seniors for over 10 years at their senior center in Portage, MI. ASDS is an adult day program designed to serve individuals who are diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease or other forms of dementia. Alliance also serves seniors who require supervision during the day due to health reasons or cognitive impairments. Alliance Senior Day Services provides students from various WMU departments including the Center for Gerontology, experience in working with individuals with aging issues.

Some students intern at ASDS and others gain interaction experience through running activity groups or working one-on-one with the seniors as part of their course work. WMU students also volunteer at the day program in preparation to apply for admission to advanced health care educational programs or to just gain experience in working in geriatrics.

This fall WMU students pursuing their minor in gerontology participated at Alliance Senior Day Services be leading activities with the participants. This was done as part of Gerontology 3500, Issues in Aging: Service Learning, taught by Dr. Janet Hahn.

Students from GRN 2000 participated in West Michigan’s first Honor Flight. Honor Flight flies WWII vets to Washington, DC for a day of visiting the memorials that honor those who fought in our wars. The local group, Talons Out, flew 24 vets and their guardians to Washington DC on October 26. The send off and welcome home ceremonies were held in CHHS building. The students assisted the veterans and their companions in the morning with registration, breakfast, and flight documents and helped them board the bus to Grand Rapids where the actual flight took place. Upon their evening return the students, families of vets, and community members held a welcome home celebration in CHHS. The students made posters, collected donations, and escorted the vets into the building where they were met by family and over 400 community members.

Also soon to be published is a remembrance book created by the spring 2013 GRN 3500 class which features anecdotes, stories, and pictures from those around the world during WWII.
Go4Life, an exercise and physical activity campaign from the National Institute on Aging at NIH, is designed to help you fit exercise and physical activity into your daily life. Motivating older adults to become physically active for the first time, return to exercise after a break in their routines, or build more exercise and physical activity into weekly routines are the essential elements of Go4Life. Go4Life offers exercises, motivational tips, and free resources to help you get ready, start exercising, and keep going. The Go4Life campaign includes an evidence-based exercise guide in both English and Spanish, an exercise video, an interactive website, and a national outreach campaign.

Go4Life Workout to Go