

# UMSL Life Review Project

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<http://www.umsl.edu/~meusert/LifeReview/index.html>



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## About the Project

The UMSL Life Review Project is an educational and community outreach effort sponsored by the Gerontology Graduate Program. *One of the best ways to learn about the aging process is through narrative gerontology – the telling and review of personal life stories!*

The Project was initiated in 2007 with formation of a new graduate course, entitled *Interviewing Older Adults & Life Review* (GER 6130, 3 credits). This course combines training in life review interviewing with the development of video editing and production skills. Students are assigned to interview senior adult volunteers who tell their life stories on camera and for educational purposes. Students edit these stories into "Keepsake" DVDs that are presented to each volunteer as a token of appreciation. Many ask for multiple copies to give to family members. GER 6130 is offered each summer and open for enrollment by community professionals (see below).

With support from the School of Social Work and the Des Lee Collaborative Vision, the Project will is now interviewing seniors year-round in a new **Video Studio** located on the lower level of Bellerive Hall on the South Campus of UMSL. Interview footage from these interviews will be edited to support a **Gerontology Video Clip Library** available for UMSL faculty to access and show to enrich their teaching on various topics, including retirement, health, caregiving, driving and mobility, widowhood, etc.

In October, 2008, the Project co-sponsored a full-day workshop on the *Tapestries Model of Life Review*. Over 25 students and community professionals attended. Mary Jones, MSG, a graduate of UMSL, received a grant from the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis in support of this event. These funds allowed us to bring in *Tapestries* expert and journalist, Elizabeth Vega, to give the workshop. A video of the workshop may be viewed on the Project website (address above).

In June, 2009, the Project partnered with the Apartment Community at the Shrine of our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, IL, on an **Interview Blitz Day**. Students from 6130 traveled to the Community and, following an orientation, interviewed residents in their apartments. Students and interviewees ate lunch together, and we debriefed the experience as a group. It was a valuable experience for all! A similar partnership with the **Shepherd Center** in Glendale, MO, was equally successful.

## Ways to Get Involved

- Those wishing to learn life review interviewing may enroll in GER 6130. This course is open to graduate students from UMSL and neighboring institutions (when approved). Community professionals may enroll through UMSL Continuing Education. Certain restrictions apply, so it is best to contact the Project Coordinator first to discuss your interests and objectives.
- Adults, age 60 years and older, may volunteer to be interviewed and join our waiting list. There is no charge to participate and volunteers receive a DVD Keepsake video 3-6 weeks after being interviewed. As noted above, education is an important emphasis and volunteers are asked to allow de-identified clips from their interviews to be used for teaching purposes. A consent form is involved.
- Community organizations may get involved by hosting a life review lecture and/ or by linking their clients/residents as potential volunteer interviewees.
- *The Project does not have dedicated funding at this time and relies on voluntary participation and other in-kind assistance (e.g., transportation for volunteers).*

## UMSL Life Review Project

I wish to volunteer to be interviewed on camera as part of the UMSL Life Review Project. I understand that I will be contacted about the Project and provided with an informational packet to review, including a Consent Form. Interviews are conducted by graduate students.



Questions? Contact Dr. Tom Meuser at 314-516-5421 (meusert@umsl.edu).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Living Arrangement:   \_\_House   \_\_Condo   \_\_Apartment   \_\_Retirement Community

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

*How did you hear about the Life Review Project?* \_\_\_\_\_

*Other comments?* \_\_\_\_\_

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