
“Stitching Life Together”

A Capstone Project

— Sophomore Scholars in Residence —

Longevity and Happiness

2017-2018

Our Sophomore Scholars in Residence class, *Longevity and Happiness*, made a quilt for its capstone project. Each member of the class (15 students, 1 faculty) designed and then sewed together a 12 x 12 inch square, based on a particular person or theme from the course. Most of the squares depict the lives of individuals we met and interviewed over the year, including several from Canada, where we traveled for fall break to interview the exceptionally long-lived individuals in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia. We also interviewed several individuals from Richmond, VA. Throughout the spring semester, we learned and practiced our sewing skills, bought fabric, visited quilting stores, and finally stitched together the squares to batting and backing to create our capstone quilt for its presentation as part of the 2018 Arts & Sciences Student Symposium. The quilt traveled to Nova Scotia in June 2018 as part of a Summer Research Fellowship project awarded to SSIR students Elizabeth Cooper, Mallory Haskins, and Peter Kade. These students returned to Lunenburg to conduct follow-up research based on their coursework in *Longevity and Happiness*, and shared the quilt with some of our interviewees from the trip to Nova Scotia in October 2018. The quilt will hang in Richmond Hall, Department of Psychology, University of Richmond.





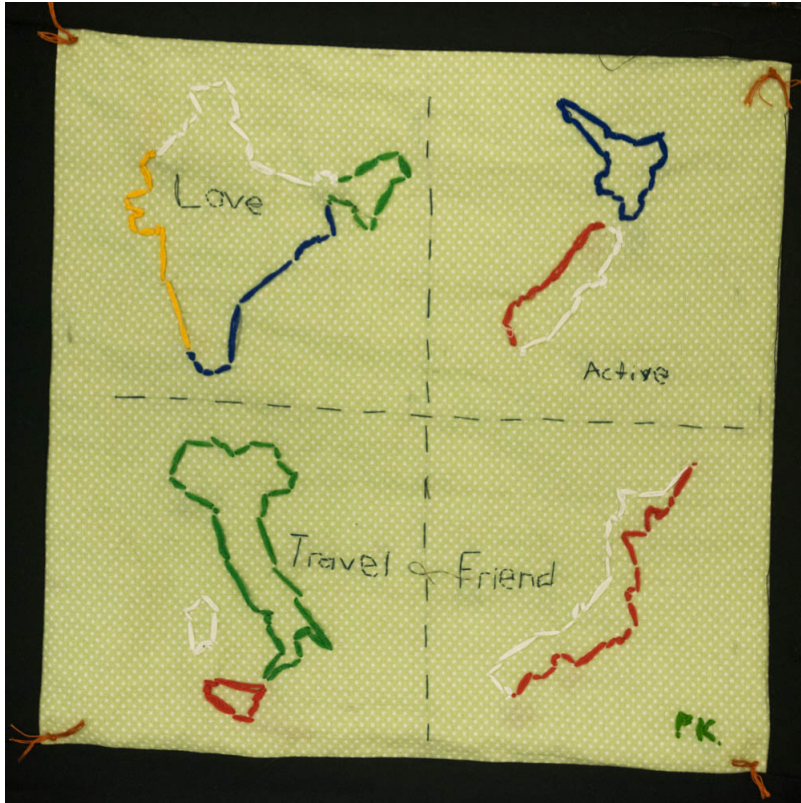
Community was an overarching theme during our studies of and encounters with long-lived individuals. The importance of having relationships, whether they be with family, friends or loved ones was emphasized in the conversations we were able to have with centenarians. My square is dedicated to three individuals, Joy Saunders, Jean Hudson, and Hazel Hull whose interviews impressed upon me the value and joy that come from a community.

Lexi Serek



This quilt square represents Ed Steinberg, who we met in Richmond. Ed is 98 years old, and I was most in awe of his positivity. He repeatedly said, “Just keep smiling” so I wanted to present this quote on my quilt square. Ed has also always been continues to be an artist, and has a particular liking to clocks, which I also wanted to include on my quilt square representing him.

Olivia Lavin



Pearl, an energetic 98 year old that lives in Richmond, VA, had so much to share with our class that it was hard to choose how to best represent her. She had many loves in her life: traveling (embodied by the countries on my square), dancing, and especially her husband. Pearl truly embodies the core characteristics of living a long, healthy life, especially through surrounding herself with a close community and being active.

Peter Kade



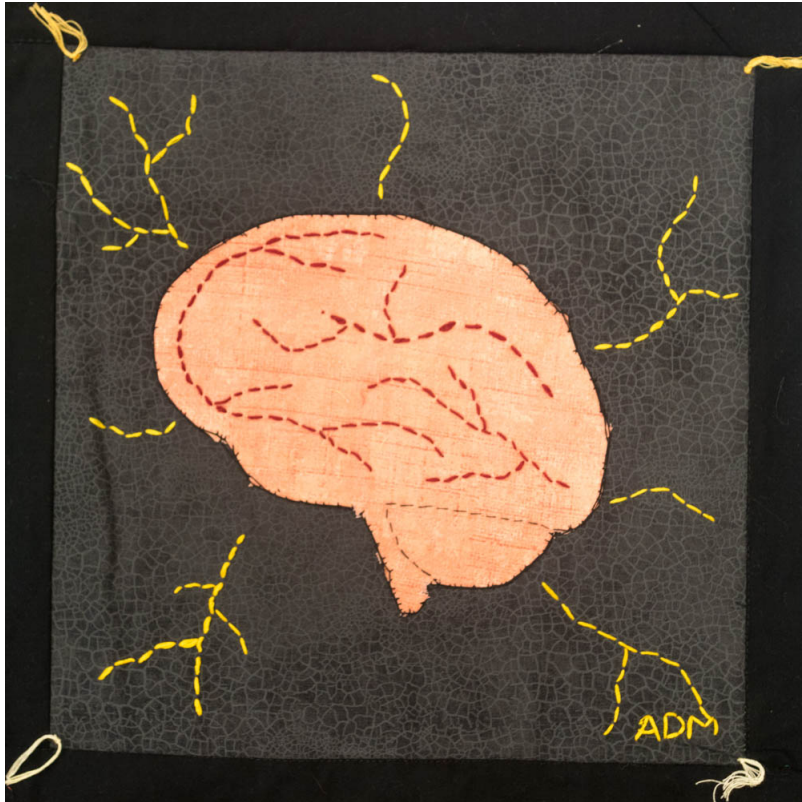
An experience like an SSIR is as rare and extraordinary as the centenarians we had the privilege of interviewing. Centenarians (individuals over 100 years old) and nonagenarians (individuals over 90 years old) are not “normal,” but instead have found a way to beat the odds. One almost too easily forgotten factor of longevity is luck. The goldfish depicted in this square represent luck in Chinese culture. It also important to note that all five blue zones (regions of the world where people commonly live active lives past the age of 100) are all touching water.

Mallory Haskins



This square is a tribute to Margaret Meister, a spunky 102-year-old woman whom we interviewed in Nova Scotia. Based on one of Margaret's own paintings – a hobby she developed while in the nursing home – the dory on the lake represents how Margaret has remained active physically and mentally into her old age. Every year on her birthday, Margaret still returns to the lake with her dory to row.

Rachel Morris



As we learned about longevity and happiness over the year, the importance of one's cognitive involvement in the world to prevent mental and physical decline became more and more clear to me. This, ultimately, was the reason I chose to make my quilt square of a brain, with neurons radiating from it to the perimeter of the square as though the brain is a sun. The centenarians we interviewed were full of life and often still active participants in their communities. My hope is that this quilt square is an fitting tribute to them and their lives.

Adrian Matthews



My square is inspired by 102 year old Margaret Meister. There is a house on the square because during her interview she told us that when she was younger, she would climb up the side of her house to get to her room in order to not wake up her mom. The house is surrounded by water for two reasons: we found a connection between blue zones and their close proximity to water, and another story she told us. She used to run on the rocks in the water. Her outgoing and adventurous personality really stuck with me and inspired me to make a quilt square based off her life.

Stephanie Elmaleh



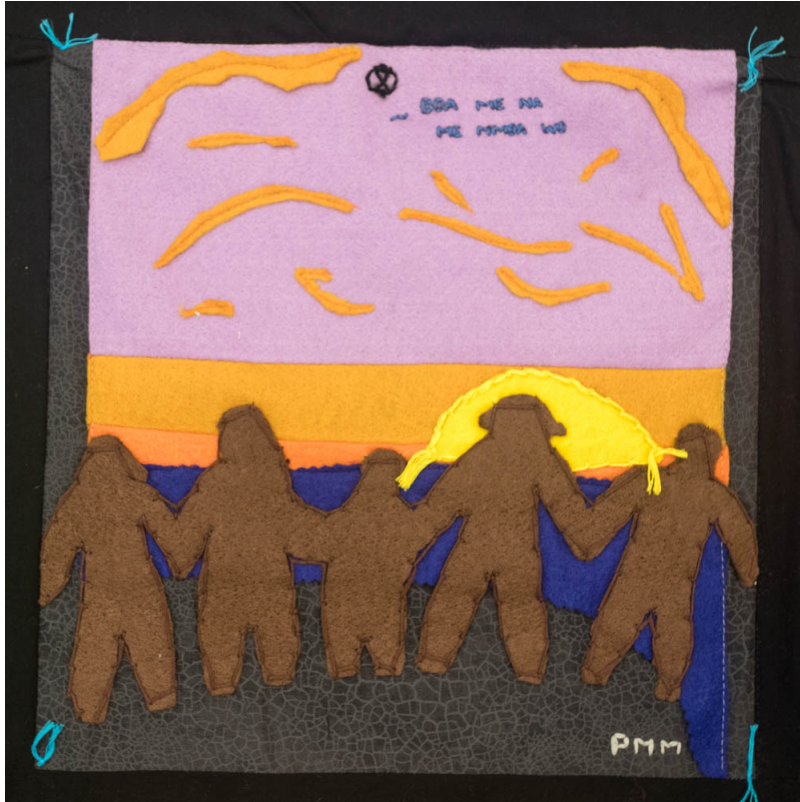
I chose the design of a father teaching his son about the constellations surrounded by the quote “Growing old is mandatory, growing up is optional” by Chili Davis because I want people to question what it means to “grow up”. A child views the world with great curiosity, motivated by a deep wealth of energy and optimism. With age and experience it is believed that one’s energy and optimism will be inevitably stifled, but not necessarily. Our attitudes towards aging and the world around us have a great impact on our mental state, and in turn our longevity. One study found that having a positive outlook can increase one’s lifespan by up to 7 years.

Ben Weinstein



Our class traveled to Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, a small picturesque town known for its number of centenarians, searching for secrets of longevity. I wanted to depict Lunenburg and how its location along the water's edge, diet, physical lifestyle and strong sense of community may have contributed to the long lives of its members. The bright, colorful houses tightly clustered together represent the importance of close-knit community, especially as one ages. One centenarian, Phyllis Creaser, described how the people she worked with at the local fish plant were "like family". Other centenarians found community in their neighborhoods, churches, and volunteering groups. Research has shown that social isolation and loneliness can act as stressors which negatively affect longevity. Communities, in addition to being support networks, help individuals stay active, engaged, and socially, cognitively, and physically healthy.

Emily Wu



Belongingness-Interdependence-Caring:

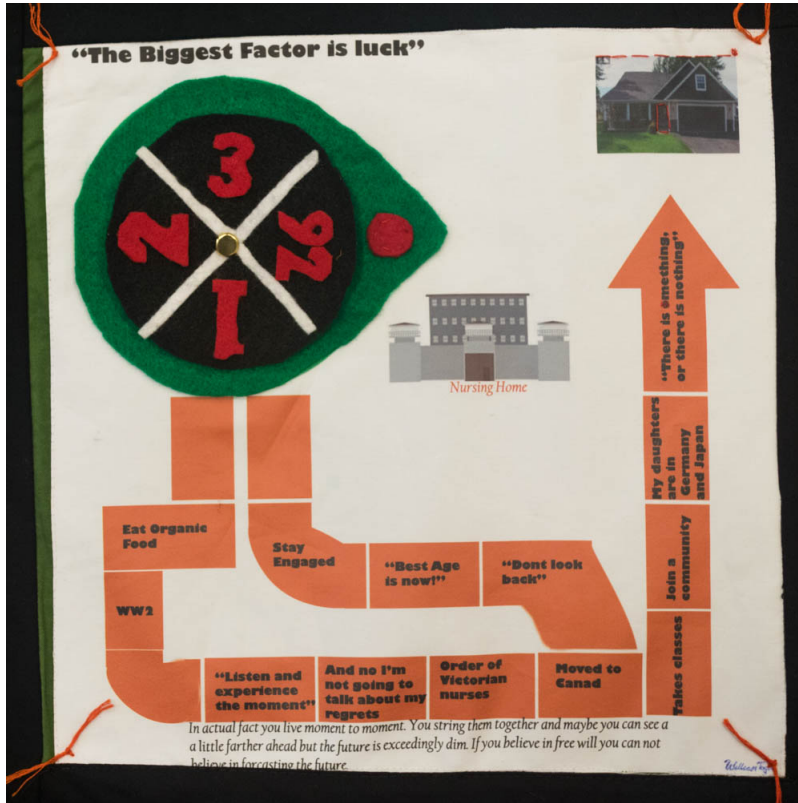
The representation radiates my volunteering experience at Sunrise senior living. As individuals grow older, they continuously want to feel loved, valued, and included in all aspects of their communities regardless of their age. Assisting seniors goes hand in hand with providing opportunities to do something for themselves and others; making sure that the help they receive is not reflected as a burden to others, but a commitment to each other as a community.

Pascaline Munezero



Mary Poole is a 105 year old centenarian from Richmond, VA. Throughout her life she admired her father's ability to make Virginia's roadways better and safer. As she looked back on her life she was quick to praise her father and share good times she had as a child. As she talked to us college students, her biggest piece of advice was to not worry which was fitting as her response to many of our questions on regrets and stress was "Why should I worry?". In tribute to her, this quilt square highlights her stress-free attitude while, not only referencing her father, but the common metaphor of "Life is a Long Road".

Henna Ragoowansi



This slide focuses on 'Lyn Cash, one of our interviewees. I choose to use the simple board game of Life to symbolize many events she shared while also tying to her quote on luck being such an important factor. Her powerful messages of living in the moment, being lucky, and connecting with the community along with such an interesting life make Lynn perfect for this project. However her impact and thoughtfulness couldn't ever be fully represented in a single quilt square.

William Tague



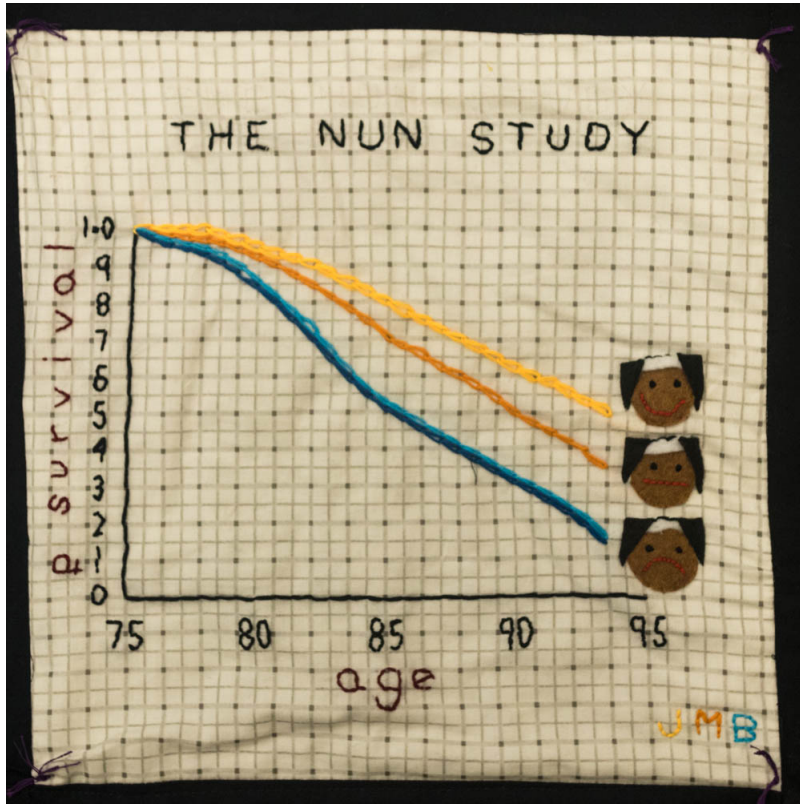
My square encapsulates our class' trip to Nova Scotia and portrays the experiences that most profoundly impacted me. These include the bottle of cabernet I left behind at our hotel, interviews with Phyllis Creaser and Lillian Hall and a quote from Phyllis Creaser, "You just have to get up and do it." My quilt encourages persevering through life, seeking out new experiences and meeting new people. By keeping these things in mind, we, like a fine wine, may get better with age.

Alex Bruno



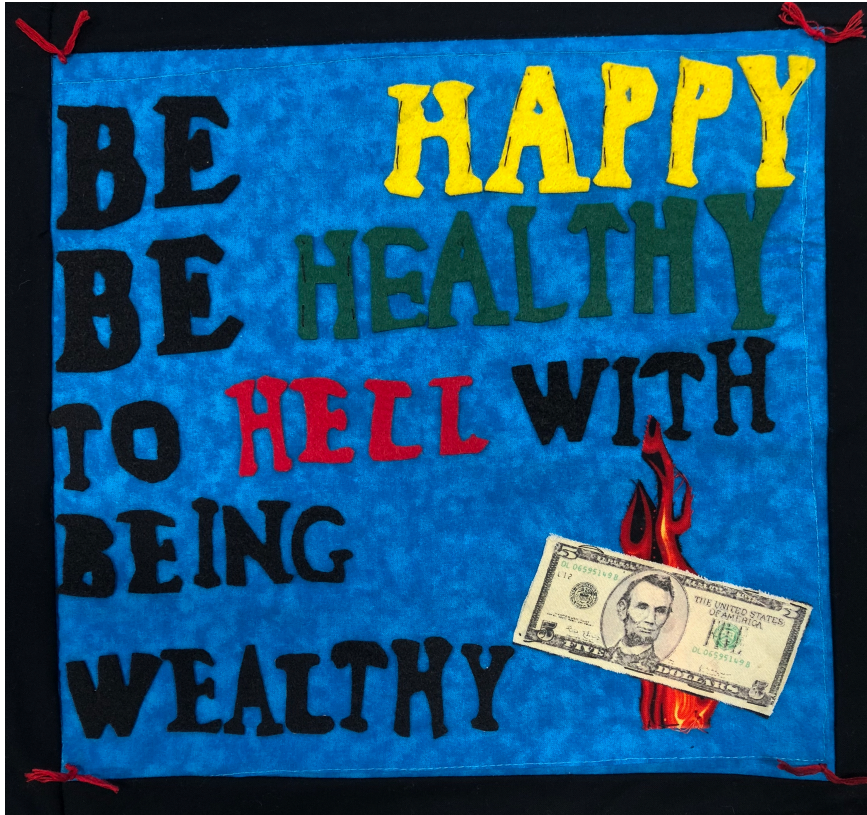
This square is an homage to our SSIR's fall trip to Nova Scotia. It features the geographical outline of Nova Scotia, as well as its state flower, the mayflower. Our trip, which allowed us to meet and interview Nova Scotian centenarians and nonagenarians, was one of the highlights of our year.

Elizabeth Cooper



The inspiration for my square springs from two sources. First, the Nun Study, whose Sister Mary was a remarkable, happy centenarian and whose purpose in life was to educate and to pray for the lives of women and children around the globe. Second, my passion for statistics and language as tools of communication. The nuns wrote about their lives when they were young women in their twenties. These texts were analyzed 50 years later for emotional content. The nuns who used more positive words to describe their lives lived almost seven years longer than the nuns with less positive words. Positive perceptions predict longevity.

Jane Berry



My square is dedicated to Donnie Hirtle, a man we had interviewed on our trip to Halifax, Nova Scotia. His quote is something which stuck with me when I asked him for advice on how to live a longer life. The blue water-like fabric I have in the background is for his love for Lake Mushamush, a place he loved to spend time and just be.

Gibran Merchant

