

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2018: *Community-Engaged Research Project*

By Abbie Kate Hancock

Community-Engaged researcher award winners, Dr. Zhujun Pan, Dr. Chih-Chia (JJ) Chen, and Dr. John Lambert demonstrate how older adults can improve their active ability with Tai Chi. In their research they examined how Tai Chi can help older adults maintain independence and increase quality of life by measuring improvements in hand and body movements. Prior research has shown that Tai Chi can improve hand, motor, and body functions, as such Dr. Pan's research team created and hosted Tai Chi classes at The Trinity Place in Columbus, Miss. For eight-weeks, MSU undergraduate students, graduate students, and primary researchers out of the Department of Kinesiology, hosted Tai Chi lessons led by an instructor from China twice a week for older adults. Pan explained that the goal of the class was to maintain the independence of older adults by incorporating daily exercise routines.

MSU undergraduate and graduate students aided the Tai Chi instructor in each of the lessons, but also spent time with the older adults. This meaningful interaction between the students and the older adults at The Trinity Place brought life and joy to the older adults because there is typically a low amount of visitors that visit. Pan emphasized that it is good for older adults to communicate with students because, most of the time, in independent living, family will only visit on the weekends. This limits their opportunity to converse with younger people on a regular basis.

Prior to this research project, Dr. Pan taught Tai Chi to older adults with Parkinson's Disease while pursuing her Ph.D. at Louisiana State University. During this experience, she saw the power of Tai Chi by witnessing it improve daily functions and movements. When Dr. Pan came to Mississippi State in 2015, she wanted to start a new Tai Chi project because there were not any related projects in Mississippi. Dr. Pan, Dr. Chen, and Dr. Lambert's contribution to the community has improved Mississippi's older adults health and has helped them maintain their independence. Currently, these researchers continue their work with The Trinity Place and have extended their work into two more facilities in Starkville: The Claiborne at Adelaide and Beehive.



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**Our students
will go there and
talk to them,
communicate
with them. The
older adults
really like it.
Our undergrad
students do
such a good
job, handling
themselves
professionally.**

” - Dr. Pan

2018-2019 FELLOW PRESENTATIONS



**Ms. Silvina Lopez Barrera
Dr. Wen-Hsing Cheng
Dr. Renee Clary
Dr. Amelia Fox
Dr. Kristin Javorsky
Dr. Melanie Loehwing
Ms. Christina Loftin
Dr. Dong Meng
Dr. Thessalia Merivaki
Ms. Suzanne Powney
Dr. Angela Savage
Dr. Holli Seitz
Dr. Ashley Vancil-Leap
Ms. Kimberly Walters
Dr. Joseph Witt**

MESSAGE FROM THE
DIRECTOR:
Michelle Garraway



Dear Reader,

I hope you have enjoyed perusing this year's edition of Engaged. The publication team has done an exceptional job of highlighting community engagement that occurs day in and day out here at Mississippi State University. While the Center for Community-Engaged Learning always enjoys recognizing the work of faculty, staff, students, and community partners, our ultimate goal is to encourage more people to join their efforts or create their own. CCEL is now in its seventh academic year. Each year we have met individuals and groups who create awareness about issues in our communities. Engaged is just a small snapshot of the experiences that they have.

If you are interested in becoming a part of the work you see here or you have an idea of your own, please contact us. Two of our premier initiatives, the MSU Community Engagement Awards and the Community-Engaged Fellows program, grew out of our desire to recognize and share resources so that projects could continue. We are always interested in connecting the university to the community in ways that positively influence our faculty, staff, and students. Community-engaged learning and research experiences provide a mechanism to step beyond campus and become active participants in the communities we inhabit. Please join us in striving forward with our community partners to create change.

Michelle Garraway