Celebrating a Legacy of Love and Service

A pandemic and a snowstorm could not stop the Center for BrainHealth® from bestowing Emy Lou and Jerry Baldridge with the 2021 Legacy Award. This award is given each year to individuals whose vision and dedication enables BrainHealth to empower people to unlock their brain potential.

For the past 15 years, the Baldridges have poured their hearts and energy into BrainHealth, serving on the advisory board and generously contributing to the capital campaign for the Brain Performance Institute to deliver the latest advances in brain science to the public.

The “Legacy of Love” Valentine’s themed event was a success thanks to the creative minds of honorary chairs Jane Smith and Dee Wyly, and mother-daughter duo dinner chairs Mary Bloom and Laura Bloom Gordon, who raised over $193,000 to help advance BrainHealth’s mission.

Attendees enjoyed an exquisite dinner prepared and home-delivered by Royal Chef Darren McGrady from Eating Royally. Center for BrainHealth chief director Dr. Sandra Bond Chapman offered a virtual toast along with UT Dallas president Dr. Richard Benson and past board chair Debbie Francis.

Jerry shared that he and Emy Lou are “overwhelmed with love and feel very honored to receive the Legacy Award. Our lifelong mission of championing children’s causes and providing resources to inspire people from all walks of life to take advantage of their brain health is our greatest treasure.”

Special thanks to patrons: Emy Lou and Jerry Baldridge, The Eugene McDermott Foundation, Linda and Joel Robuck, Jane Smith, Meredith and Jack Woodworth, Lucy and Henry Billingsley, Mary Ella Bitzer, Bill Dawson, Peggy Dear, Sally and Forrest Hoglund, Sandra Estess and Elizabeth Hughes, Children’s Health, Lyda Hill Philanthropies, JF Maddox Foundation, Shirley and Bill McIntyre, Barbara and Jim Moroney, and Jane and Tom O’Toole.

Visit centerforbrainhealth.org/donate to support the Center for BrainHealth’s nonprofit mission.

Shaping the Next Generation of Scientists

Namrata Das was working in medicine when she decided to pursue her dream of obtaining a PhD in neuroscience, focusing on new avenues in Alzheimer’s research. In 2014, she approached Dr. Sandra Chapman, and the journey to shape this new scientist’s future began.

Under the combined mentorship of Dr. Chapman and Dr. Jeff Spence at the Center for BrainHealth, and Dr. Jimin Ren, an associate professor at the UT Southwestern imaging center, her work embraced exploring novel imaging techniques at 7-Tesla studying brain energy metabolism in Alzheimer’s disease.

As Dr. Das was navigating the complexities of this novel research, there was no shortage of roadblocks and stressors on her path. It started with a tornado that destroyed her home in 2015, followed by a severe car accident in 2016, capped off by an unexpected change to her husband’s visa status just as she collected data for the final element of her PhD, and then came the pandemic.

At every challenge, Dr. Chapman encouraged her to find new solutions and stay focused on the path to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

This spring, Dr. Das’ perseverance paid off with her acceptance to a three-year post-doctoral program at Harvard Medical School. The BrainHealth family wishes her well!

Namrata’s acceptance to Harvard’s ultra-competitive program is an impressive achievement and confirms we are training world-class scientists to advance our understanding of the brain in novel ways.

Sandra Chapman, PhD | Chief Director, Center for BrainHealth

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Exploring the Female Brain
The Gratuith Fund at the Dallas Foundation
Lisa Mosconi, PhD, shine-puzzled insights about gender differences in research and gaps in understanding related to healthy aging in women's brain health. As Director of the Women's Brain Health Initiative at Emory, her work focuses on how sex and gender impact aging and the role of neurological disorders.

Responding to the realities of the pandemic, in 2021 the BrainHealth team went virtual with its signature speaker series. The Brain: An Owner's Guide. This bold shift created the opportunity to reach vast new audiences. And thanks to the support of this year's sponsors, the events were offered free of charge, eliminating the cost barrier that might have kept some people away.

A first-ever social media advertising campaign produced more than 1.3M impressions that also helped build awareness for BrainHealth. The result was a record-smashing year, with more than 21,000 registered households from all over the U.S. and a smattering of other countries.

This year's speakers offered a great diversity of topics and were overwhelmingly popular. In post-event surveys, attendees gave consistently high marks, and 95% indicated that they would recommend this series to others.

BrainHealth is deeply grateful to this year's sponsors for making this event possible, and for helping us attract the largest audience in our history. Thanks also to our founding series sponsor:...
BrainHealth and other leaders offered insights on population brain health during two recent international conferences hosted by the Organization for Co-Operation and Economic Development (OECD).

On January 27, Angel Gurría, Secretary General of OECD, called for a new trajectory for public policy, suggesting "brain capital is a novel asset, it puts a premium on brain health and brain skills in our brain economy."

Addressing the importance of the BrainHealth Project, Adm. William McRaven shared, "I've come to realize, over my 40 years of leading men and women on the battlefield and in the classroom, that there is nothing more important than brain performance. I mean a brain that can think critically, that can function under stress, a brain that is resilient in the face of trauma, a brain that is creative, that is thoughtful, that is socially active. We all need and want that kind of brain."


Juan Yermo, OECD Chief of Staff, said, "How can we make sure that policies are gender-conscious and take into account questions of brain health [specific to women]? Certainly, brain health is at the heart of a strong, resilient, inclusive and sustainable recovery."

BrainHealth researchers are employing virtual reality in novel ways to assess executive function, attention, memory and problem-solving abilities in real-world settings.

Lead author Zhengsi Chang is a PhD student that works in the lab of Daniel Krawczyk, PhD, deputy director of the Center for BrainHealth®. Along with Brandon Pires, a researcher at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, the team investigated whether VR can be used to effectively test how much information a person can process to achieve a goal. Their findings were recently published in Computers in Human Behavior Reports.

Participants prepared a grocery list by comparing ingredients in kitchen cabinets to a list of recipes. This kind of everyday task employs daily working memory and strategy.

Researchers were surprised to find that participants’ working memories were not related to how well they performed the task. Analysis revealed that participants were switching up their strategies as executive functional load increased. Some tried to memorize as many ingredients as possible before looking at the recipe, while others frequently shifted between searching in the kitchen cabinets and examining the recipe list.

This VR assessment may have broader applications to help people suffering from executive function impairments better manage their everyday lives.

Study participants as well as research funding came from The University of Texas at Dallas.