issues, starting with the “digital divide” between younger and older adults, the reasons for this divide, and interventions to close the gap. The potential of emerging technologies to support older adults will be summarized, as well as potential pitfalls in the design and implementation of these technologies. The talk will conclude with speculation on the future of the digital divide and whether it can ever be entirely eliminated.

NEW FRONTIERS IN CAREGIVING RESEARCH: BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVES AND INTERVENTIONS
Jyoti Savla,1 Karen Roberto,1 and Mamta Sapra,2
1. Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia, United States, 2. Salem VA Medical Center, Salem, Virginia, United States

Although families embrace the opportunity to care for a loved one, caregiving is stressful and takes a toll on the caregiver’s health and well-being. Earlier studies of stress and coping among family caregivers focused on psychological outcomes and emotional well-being. In the last decade, stress researchers have broadened their focus to include biomarkers and health outcomes. Data from two studies of caregivers of persons with memory loss will be used to discuss two new frontiers of caregiving research. First, a daily-diary study will be used to identify the mechanism by which stress disrupts the physiological processes and proliferates into serious psychopathology and pre-clinical and clinical health conditions. Second, a mindfulness-based psychoeducational intervention study will be utilized to identify malleable factors that can be harnessed to lower stress and improve the well-being of family caregivers. Next steps for caregiving research in the context of demographic and technological trends will be discussed.

SUCCESSFUL ADAPTATION IN THE CONTEXT OF CARE ENVIRONMENTS: PROMISE AND CHALLENGE FROM A CAREER IN GEROPSYCHOLOGY
Suzanne Meeks, University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky, United States

My first clinical exposure to older adults was in a psychiatric hospital, to people with life-long severe mental illnesses; I was drawn to their perseverance. The older people we see clinically interact with care environments that may or may not effectively use patients’ personal histories. I have studied the affective experiences of older people in care environments—the mental health system and long-term care—to improve mental health care and well-being. Solutions seem obvious, and difficult. Theory and abundant empirical research tell us that environments can support adaptation through nurturing strengths, offering compensatory tools, and acknowledging losses. My work on depression is a simple example of how this can work in psychotherapy. Yet implementing simple solutions means overcoming barriers of training, resources, and institutional inertia. The promise is understanding age as the dynamic representation of a life span; the challenge is making this understanding work for older people.

WHY AGE MATTERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION
Joann Montepare, Lasell University, Newton, Massachusetts, United States

At the core of behavioral and social scientists’ work in the aging field is informing and supporting the well-being of individuals and their communities. With the shift in age demographics and the aging of our populations, broadening educational efforts are more important than ever. However, advancing knowledge about aging and creating age inclusive educational opportunities has been a challenge in higher education, reflecting its historical, age-segregated structure, among other things. The pioneering Age-Friendly University (AFU) initiative, recently endorsed by GSA’s Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE), offers a valuable set of guiding principles that institutions in higher education can use to assess the extent to which their programs and practices are age inclusive, as well as identify gaps and opportunities. This presentation will discuss how the time has come for scientists to help shape more age-friendly institutions, and what they can look like in the years to come.

SESSION 5725 (SYMPOSIUM)

RURAL AGING: MULTIDISCIPLINARY, MULTINATIONAL INNOVATIONS THAT SUPPORT NEW APPROACHES TO ADDRESS UNMET NEEDS
Chair: Roger O’Sullivan
Co-Chair: Lyn Holley
Discussant: Megan Bond

The meaning of aging in rural areas is not well explored in the literature. To address this gap each presenter in this multidisciplinary and international group of researchers will address different components of rural aging. An exact definition of “rural” is essential to forming, implementing or evaluating policies and programs impacting rural populations; however there is no universal definition. Cohen introduces definitional issues, and underscores the heterogeneity and regional variability of “rurality” and how such factors drive rural-urban disparities. Pendergrast, an early career researcher, reports results of in-depth semi-structured interviews that examined institutional influences of social networks on health of rural older adults, with specific focus on support services. Leavey describes lessons learned from the activities of PLACE-EE, a transnational partnership of public health agencies, local authorities, academics and ICT experts dedicated to improving the quality of life for older people. He describes the impacts on relationships of a program of community engagement and intergenerational exchange between younger and older citizens that used an assets-based approach. Zurek explores the potential for reward structures that can be embedded in ‘social games’ to motivate older adults to exercise in the context of research conducted in the rural US (Appalachia) and urban Poland (Krakow), and suggests a new direction that can inform services intended to improve health and happiness of rural adults. Our discussant will reflect on the major themes that emerge from these multidisciplinary perspectives, especially the potential for intersection of rural community-based innovations and learning from different regions of the world. Rural Aging Interest Group Sponsored Symposium.

SOCIAL GAMES: THE INTERSECTION OF ESTABLISHED REWARD STRUCTURES AND EXERCISE FOR OLDER RURAL ADULTS
Lyn Holley, University of Nebraska Omaha, Omaha, Nebraska, United States

A high percentage of older adults engages with games; however research about impacts of gaming on older adults is focused almost exclusively on games intended to strengthen...