

2026 MSU AgeAlive Education & Research Forum

About the Presenters & Awardees

Research GEMS Panel

“Sit Sense - A New Approach to Sitting - in the Home, in the Hospital, and Supportive Care for Injuries/Diseases,” Presented by Dr. Tamara Reid Bush, Professor, Mechanical Engineering and Associate Dean for Inclusive Excellence, MSU

Dr. Bush is a Professor in Mechanical Engineering and holds an adjunct position in the Department of Bioengineering at Michigan State University. Bush also holds the position of Associate Dean for Inclusive Excellence in the College. She is nationally and internationally recognized for her research in biomechanics; her work has impacted the fields of engineering mechanics, material science, modeling, medicine, and inclusion in STEM. Dr. Bush’s research has received funding from NSF, NIH, and numerous industries. Most recently, she received an NSF Partnership for Innovation award to support research and device development for persons with disabilities. Bush collaborates with hand surgeons to better understand hand function and the biomechanical alterations that occur pre-and post-hand surgery. Finally, she is investigating ways to make autonomous vehicles accessible to persons who have a reduction in mobility. Dr. Bush will be discussing Sit Sense is a new approach to sitting - in the home, in the hospital, and supportive care or injuries/diseases. Please welcome Dr. Tamara Reid Bush.

“Nature Walks and Healthy Aging: What Happens When We Step Outside?” Presented by Dr. Fatemeh Saeidi-Rizi, Assistant Professor, Landscape Architecture, MSU

Dr. Fatemeh Saeidi-Rizi is an Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture in the School of Planning, Design and Construction at Michigan State University. Dr. Saeidi-Rizi’s research operates at the intersection of landscape architecture, cognitive psychology, urban design, and public health. Through both empirical investigation and theoretical inquiry, she examines how built and natural environments influence human health, well-being, and cognitive functioning. Her work seeks to generate evidence-based design strategies that support healthier, more resilient communities. Please welcome Dr. Fatemeh Saeidi-Rizi, and note that she was a recipient of the AgeAlive Research in Aging Award in 2024!

“Reimagining Ability: Using Residual Movement for Human & Machine Interface Design,” Presented by Dr. Rajiv Ranganathan, Associate Professor, Department of Kinesiology, MSU.

Dr. Rajiv Ranganathan is an Associate Professor in the Department of Kinesiology at Michigan State University, with a joint appointment in Mechanical Engineering. His research focuses on motor learning and rehabilitation, exploring how humans develop skilled and coordinated movement and how these abilities change with development, aging, and movement disorders. His work aims to advance neurorehabilitation techniques and improve the design of human-machine interfaces. Dr. Ranganathan’s research has been published in leading kinesiology, biomedical engineering, and neuroscience journals, and his work has been supported by the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health.

Keynote

“Aging in Motion: Making Movement the Expectation, Not the Exception.”

Shanta’ (Shawn-tay) Favors is a nationally recognized disability advocate and former Director of Care whose career and life were reshaped by a spinal cord injury in 2018. She is Ms. Wheelchair Michigan 2024, First

Runner-Up for Ms. Wheelchair America 2025, where she is also the recipient of the most impactful speech and People's Choice Award. Shanta' is the Founder of FAVE (Fortitude Advocates Valiant Everywhere) and serves on the Board of the United Spinal Association of Michigan as Advocacy Coordinator. A wife and mother, she leverages lived experience and professional background to advance mobility, equity, and inclusion across aging and care systems. Please welcome Shanta' Favors!

Mobility Initiatives Panel

“Let AARP Guide You as the Driving World You Once Knew Changes” Presented by Ann Lindsay, Michigan State Coordinator for AARP Driver Safety

Ann Lindsay is a retired educator of 35 and half years. She is a school board member and a state appointed volunteer for AARP. Ann trained as a Fraud Presenter and later trained to become a Safe Driver Instructor. She was appointed a year ago as the AARP Driver Safety Michigan State Coordinator. Entering her 13th year as an AARP Volunteer, Ann has engaged in community outreach, assessment of school climates and advocated for human rights. She is supportive of teen groups in the manner of tutoring, character building and motivational speaking. In addition, Ann is a committee chairman of a professional organization that supports the American Heart Association, raising funds for their annual Walk. Please welcome Ann Lindsay!

“Expanding Community Awareness of Access 2-1-1 for Fall Prevention,” Presented by Sara Arena, Professor and Director of Physical Therapy, Oakland University

Dr. Sara Arena is a Professor and Director of the Physical Therapy Program at Oakland University. With over 35 years of clinical experience, her work emphasizes health promotion and prevention-focused care for older adults, as well as cardiopulmonary physical therapy. Her research centers on PT-led fall-prevention initiatives and community-based interventions, supported by nearly \$1 million in grant funding. She currently collaborates with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and Michigan 2-1-1 to develop a statewide, evidence-informed fall-prevention resource hub. Please welcome Dr. Sara Arena!

“The Life Changing Impact of Mobility Wallets and Transportation Rx,” Presented by Valerie Lefler, Executive Director & Founder, Catch a Ride Network

Valerie Lefler is the Founder and Executive Director of Feonix Mobility Rising and the Catch a Ride Network, advancing equitable access to transportation through innovative mobility models. A national expert in rural mobility and Mobility as a Service, she has led deployment in 10 states with partners including Ford Philanthropy, the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center, Easterseals, AARP, Toyota North America, and state DOTs. Recognized by Smithsonian Magazine as a 'Top Innovator to Watch,' she holds degrees in Business and Public Administration from the University of Nebraska. Please welcome Valerie Lefler!

MSU AgeAlive Awards

Research in Aging Awardees

Tamara Reid Bush, Professor, Mechanical Engineering and Associate Dean for Inclusive Excellence, MSU

Dr. Bush is a Professor in Mechanical Engineering and holds an adjunct position in the Department of Bioengineering at Michigan State University. Bush also holds the position of Associate Dean for Inclusive Excellence in the College. She is nationally and internationally recognized for her research in biomechanics; her work has impacted the fields of engineering mechanics, material science, modeling, medicine, and inclusion in STEM. Dr. Bush's research has received funding from NSF, NIH, and numerous industries. Most recently, she received an NSF Partnership for Innovation award to support research and device development for persons with disabilities. Bush collaborates with hand surgeons to better understand hand function and the biomechanical alterations that occur pre-and post-hand surgery. Finally, she is investigating ways to make autonomous vehicles accessible to persons who have a reduction in mobility. Dr. Bush will be discussing Sit Sense is a new approach to sitting - in the home, in the hospital, and supportive care or injuries/diseases. Please welcome Dr. Tamara Reid Bush.

Peter Berg, Ph.D., Professor, School of Human Resources and Labor Relations, College of Social Science

Professor Berg has built a sustained, influential, and field-defining body of scholarship on the aging workforce that has fundamentally advanced how researchers, policymakers, and organizations understand aging at work. At a time when much aging research centers on individual attitudes, preferences, and constraints, Professor Berg's work is distinctive in its organizational and institutional focus. He examines how employer strategies, human capital decisions, and stakeholder interests shape the lived experiences, opportunities, and well-being of older workers across the lifespan. His scholarship makes clear that successful aging at work is not solely an individual responsibility but is deeply contingent on organizational environments and choices. Through rigorous and innovative research, Professor Berg has illuminated how organizations respond to workforce aging and how these responses influence employment quality, retention, skill utilization, and equity for older workers. His work has provided critical insights into employer behavior, organizational incentives, and the structural conditions that support or undermine positive aging outcomes in the labor market. Collectively, this body of research has added significant value to lifelong well-being by shifting scholarly and practical attention toward organizational accountability in an aging society. Further demonstrating his intellectual leadership, Professor Berg is currently serving as guest editor for a special issue of ILR Review titled "Organizational Perspectives on an Aging Workforce," helping to define the next generation of scholarship in this area. Taken together, Professor Berg's research exemplifies rigorous, innovative, and impactful aging-related scholarship. His work not only advances academic knowledge but also provides organizations, policymakers, and stakeholders with evidence-based insights essential to promoting positive aging, sustained employability, and well-being across the working lifespan.

Intergenerational Awardee

Allison Stawara, MSU Alum & Community Farm Manager, Partridge Creek Farm

Allison and the Partridge Creek Farm team have worked tirelessly building a 3-acre farm from scratch in the middle of Ishpeming, Michigan. Allison is the farm manager and has dedicated their life to growing food and increasing intergenerational food access. When Partridge Creek Farm first started building the farm 5 years ago on the site of a former hospital, they not only had the challenge of building the farm from a vacant lot but also building trust and relationships with the enders and whole community next to the farm at the Jasperlite Senior Housing Facility. Now Allison and Partridge Creek Farm host a weekly farm stand that has a line wrapped around the block so people of all ages can access healthy, local, and affordable fresh food. Additionally, Allison is a graduate of the College and Agriculture and Natural Resources at MSU.

Legacy Awardee

Maureen McCabe-Power, Community Member

Since 2010, Maureen has been a stalwart of the Friends of the East Lansing Public Library. She served for many years on their board of directors including as a very active President of the Board, coordinating with the library director and paid staff. Under her leadership, the Friends have been able to support the ELPL with needed funds and volunteer hours. A significant legacy donation is directly attributable to Maureen's leadership. Although now no longer president, she remains the backbone of the Friends Shop working extra shifts whenever needed. Additionally, Maureen has devoted countless hours supporting the Davies project which connects families to resources by providing reliable transportation to essential healthare. This recognition would make a most appropriate 80th birthday present for a dedicated East Lansingite!