

My interest in serving the needs of older adults comes from witnessing in both personal and professional experiences how aging affects not only an individual but an entire family system. With the current aging of the American population, the needs of older adults are being pushed into the spotlight, with good reason. I am currently learning how to play a part in addressing those needs, as well as those of their families and communities, in the Master's of Social Work program at the University of Michigan.

My previous field placement and past family experiences , as well as my Peace Corps service in China, have exposed me to a dilemma that plagues many older adults and their families, which is the decision of how much care the individual requires and the best way to provide that care. I believe that in order to address this dilemma, a discussion on what makes a community is necessary. In my experience, older adults want to be a part of a community, to feel a sense of belonging, and when they participate actively in that community their bodies, minds, and spirits benefit. There is always an array of factors that contribute to the decision, and none of them are ever black and white. Interpreting the many shades of gray requires that I be able to apply an eclectic knowledge base from a variety of disciplines to help the individual and family make such difficult and uncomfortable decisions.

Engagement in with the GSWSM and a scholarship to support my classroom and field learning will allow me to be exposed to a multitude of service agencies, increase my knowledge and expertise about the full spectrum of aging issues, and promote synergetic interactions with my peers. I am currently serving as a social work intern at the Area Agency on Aging 1-B and there am gaining valuable insight into the interaction of older adults and social services in Southeast Michigan. By engaging in learning experiences such as this as part of my MSW program, I will be able to better understand my elderly clients and use the complete continuum of geriatric care to support them and empower them to live their lives with dignity, pride, and the knowledge that they are a valuable part of our modern society.