

**Editor: Henny van Dijk**

**[www.uthro.org](http://www.uthro.org)**

**June, 2021**

## Gone Way Too Soon... In memoriam Dr. Carmel Bitondo Dyer

*It is with great sadness when the UTHRO family heard about the passing of Dr. Carmel Dyer on May 4 at only 62. We offer our deepest condolences to her family with this loss. Dr Dyer was one of our most fervent supporters and we dedicated our Endowment supporting the Consortium on Aging.*  
 UTHRO's Executive Committee

I met Dr Dyer in Oct. 2008 when she came to speak at the UTHRO Health Fair and for the majority of our membership it was love at first sight –they connected almost immediately to her vision and goal, her enthusiasm and easy to understand medical concepts and treatments. It became the spark for The Excellence Fund started in late 2010 and our first foray into fundraising in memory of Dr. Tom Matney, who was a driving force behind the Excellence Fund and our slogan “seniors helping seniors.”



In 2016 the members voted to create a permanent Endowment for Healthy Aging with the goal of raising \$25,000 over 5 years, but after that time we actually raised more than \$80,000 and climbing. She was a dynamo and will be greatly missed for her compassion, and championing the cause of the elderly in care and abuse.

*Henny van Dijk*

I first met Dr. Dyer 21 years ago when I read an article about a doctor who specialized in seeing older patients. When I was looking for my faculty position, she “saved a spot for me” at UTHealth. She was very family oriented. She even knit a baby hat when my daughter was born, even as she was founding institutes and consortiums and carrying on towards her ultimate vision of establishing a hospital for comprehensive geriatric care. I have now come full circle with her, though sooner than I would have liked and not in the way I had hoped.

*Jessica Lee*

I first met Carmel back in 2005 when she recruited me to join her at Baylor. I'll never forget how she welcomed me on as faculty and had me jump right in. What I will miss most about working with Carmel is her passion for the care of older people and their care team. She could get so excited and animated. Just spending a few minutes with her, you would leave fired up and ready to take on any barriers in the way. It's impossible to articulate the void that her passing has left.

*Holly Holmes*

I met you in the late 1990s when you were working as a physician at Baylor College of Medicine and I was employed with Adult Protective Services (APS). At the time very little research had been done on elder mistreatment and there were very few collaborations between the medical community and public agencies serving vulnerable older adults. Your enthusiasm, will and determination to make a difference in the lives of older adult in this community and across the country made for a perfect partnership with APS. At the time, there were few if any geriatric specialists interested in visiting abused and neglected older adults in their homes which in many cases were in disrepair and not adequately fit for humans to reside. Thank you, Dr. Dyer, for being your authentic self and a friend.

*James Booker*

Knowing Dr Dyer was an honor. She was a dear friend, a mentor, an advocate for the aging population which we both had in common. I first met her when she did an internship in geriatrics and she was assigned to the dementia unit where I was the social worker. We bonded at that time and frequently worked together on issues regarding Alzheimer's Disease and the many related disorders. I did role play, offered support and validation and she provided medical knowledge re the disease process. One of our last conversations was about corona virus and how difficult has become for patients and families that he'd become isolated. Our conversations at the end were limited at which time I texted and or sent written notes. I received answers in “hearts and smiles”. Rest In Peace Dr Dyer. U r sooo missed and will be forever remembered.

*Fran Floersheimer*

*While driving home one day on I-10 and 610 about where IKEA is I noticed this huge billboard some 100 ft of the ground and featuring a well known face—Dr. Carmel Dyer and I knew then and so did Fran that she had become an icon in the UTHealth and Houston communities. The tributes to her on the “extra” pdf make clear how much she will be missed by her colleagues, friends, and patients. Our deepest condolences to her family.*

*Henny van Dijk*



### *In this Issue*

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## In Case You Wondered...

Dear HENDRIK VANDIJK:



**If you purchased or were enrolled in a Blue Cross or Blue Shield health insurance or administrative services plan between 2008 and 2020, a \$2.67 billion Settlement may affect your rights.**

*It seems that a good number of UTRHO members have received this message in their email and I wondered if this was even applicable to UTSelect so I asked Craig Eivens, the UT Benefits go-to-person in Austin and here is his answer:*

As far as the BCBS settlement and the email we all received (seems that way, anyway), OEB has added some information to its website which we'll keep there for a while. The website is: <https://www.utsystem.edu/offices/employee-benefits> and the "BCBS of Texas Settlement Information" button is in the upper middle section of the page.

We share what we essentially know about the settlement and include links where members can go should they wish to gain additional information.

**As far as UT SELECT, the settlement does not apply to our group.** Why we were included in the "mailing" is somewhat of a mystery, although there are members of our plan now who were previously members of a BCBS plan. We believe the terms of the settlement included some sort of requirement for the settlement firm to cast their net far and wide, so that's how we got looped in.

I hope this information is helpful. Please be on the lookout for the July Annual Enrollment newsletter which will have an article highlighting the retiree benefits program plus some things to look for in outside Medicare plans should someone wish to go that direction. There are potential impacts of doing so, but people do have a choice of course.

Craig Eivens

## Recruiting Retired Volunteers...



### Interested in participating in a Research study?

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Stephanie Leal, PhD, the Director of the Neuroscience of Memory and Aging Lab, at Rice University.

The purpose of the study is to learn how memories are formed and retrieved, as well as the different brain structures involved in these processes. We are also interested in understanding the impact that retirement has on cognition and memory.

We are recruiting healthy older adults that are **retired** (age 50+) to undergo cognitive and behavioral testing, which involves computerized tasks, questionnaires, and paper and pencil tasks of cognition (attention, memory, processing speed, etc.). We will compensate you \$15/hr. The study may last 1-3 hours depending on the study. All studies are being conducted remotely on Zoom at this time.

To sign up please email the Lab Manager, Amritha Harikumar, at [memory@rice.edu](mailto:memory@rice.edu)

There will be no direct benefit to you for participating in this study; however, this study may benefit society if the results lead to a better understanding of how our brain learns and processes information. In addition, results from this study may lead to a better understanding of memory impairments and may be helpful in targeting therapeutic interventions to treat disorders involving memory such as Alzheimer's disease and depression.

Thank you for considering participating in the research study.

## We're Counting on You...



**Don't Miss**

Please renew your membership if you have not done so!

It's just \$15

Make your check out to UTHRO and Mail it to

Margaret Zambrano

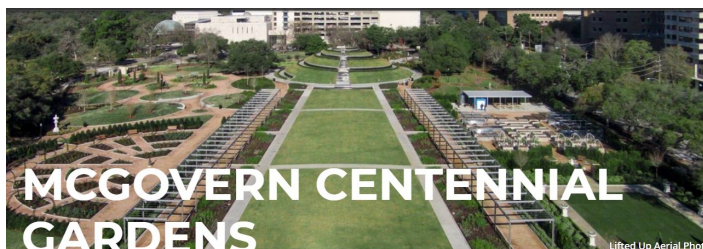
20903 Imperial Ridge Ln., Spring, TX, 77379

## UTHRO Endowment for Healthy Aging

The Endowment is doing well and we have around \$7,000 in interest money that we need to spend this year, so in conjunction with the Consortium on Aging, we plan to award a \$5,000 seed grant for research in some area of gerontology, and two other \$1,000 grants in areas of education in aging and quality improvement in aging. As in the past, the Consortium will solicit proposals, and those will be reviewed and ranked by the Endowment Committee and others, narrowing down to three or four finalists. Tentatively in September we will have a Lunch and Learn and invite members to come to hear the finalists and vote on the award winners.



## Our First Event in 2021



### *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood.*

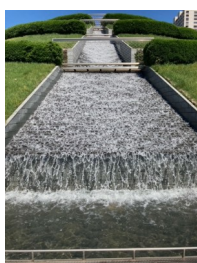
It's a rare day in Houston that one can be walking outside and remain comfortable and not left limp from the humidity. May 6 was one such day, much enjoyed by the UTHRO members who turned out at the Hermann Centennial Gardens.

If you remember the gardens from a few years ago, and you haven't visited that area recently, you will be amazed at the transformation like this comparison of the garden before and after.



UTHRO members had the chance to walk on sunny walkways, or shady paths through the trees; to appreciate the blooms that were in abundance, or just sit and enjoy the scene. Sitting at the eastern entrance to the gardens, we sat under a canopy, taking in the view and listening to the water fountains. Walking to the opposite end of the Centennial Green gave us the sound of the waterfall. Climbing to the top gives a good view of the park as well as the Medical Center. It's been my experience that kids are drawn to water; that was proved again when I saw a little boy wearing a very snazzy fedora bend down to splash in the water. Fortunately, he kept his balance so didn't get more water than he planned on, much to his Mama's relief. If you're not into climbing, you can enjoy the falls from the bottom up. All in all, it was a beautiful day and a great way for UTHRO to finally get together. Looking forward to the next gathering.

*Text and images by Mary Frances Fabrizio*



## With Open Eyes...

A couple of weeks ago, I listened to a talk about living in nature, the thrust of which was that Nature, with a capital N, isn't something outside of us – we are natural beings, and natural things surround us. This made me notice my wood floors, the ceramic mug containing the coffee I was drinking, the cotton shirt I was wearing, the leather chair my husband occupied – you get the picture. Everything around me came from natural substances at some point. Likewise, capital N - Nature doesn't exist only in pristine places like the beaches of Maui or the magnificent peaks of the Rockies.



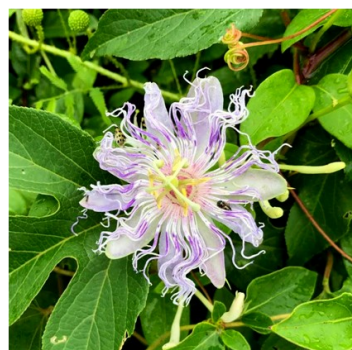
In my own neighborhood is what I have come to call a Pocket Eden, a small pond that's part of a flood control project called the Willow Waterhole Greenway. It's close enough that I can walk to it, and the trip around the pond is only a bit over a mile. The surroundings are far from pristine: one side is the booming thoroughfare of South Post Oak Road, and another side has truck and construction equipment yards, flanked by South Main Street. But in the midst of light

industry and hurtling traffic I have seen a bald eagle, great blue herons, snowy egrets, Mexican whistling ducks, snakes, nutria, turtles, hawks and countless songbirds. The abundant wildflowers spurred me to download an app to my phone so that I can actually call them by name. Likewise with birds, thanks to the Cornell Bird Lab application. This place has made me curious and provided an education about my own surroundings. The more I do this, the more amazed I am at what's right in front of me. In this year of constriction, I have found expanse.

I started posting photos from my walks on Facebook and Instagram, with comments about what I have seen. This is one from April 27:

Every day the world opens itself to me, if I have the sense to see, hear, smell, feel it. Today I heard red-winged blackbirds, grackles, doves, gulls, mockingbirds, and more I couldn't identify. I was overcome with the scent of honeysuckle, ligustrum, magnolia, cut grass. One foot in front of the other, I keep walking through the whole universe.

*Article and images by Luanne Novak*



*Willow Waterhole Greenway, located in the Westbury area, is a 290-acre greenway that offers Houstonians recreational opportunities as well as relief from flooding concerns. The expanses around the ponds are designated for wildlife conservation and passive recreation.*



# UTHRO

The University of Texas Houston Retiree Organization  
5827 White Clover Dr.  
Richmond, TX 77469

To update your address or phone number  
please contact us at 281-655-1983

## And Now For Something Completely Different... Retired & Loving It... Some more images of our "event" !



Barbara Kelly, Yoka van Dijk, Pat & Carolyn Grealy, Kathy Bradley, Lynn Medeiros



Images by Henny van Dijk

After the tour of the McGovern Garden the group assembled in the shadow of the Miller Outdoor Theatre for a picnic lunch prepared by Barry and Gill Rittman, the organizers of the whole event on a day that Houston showed its most beautiful side. Some 20 UTHRO members gathered to enjoy this day and for the first time were able to greet each other in person. A glorious day indeed!

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