

Healthy Aging Preview

The Healthy Aging Symposium and
Making Health Decisions Together

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**Idaho State
University**

16th Annual
**Ginny Thomas
Healthy Aging
Symposium**

*What Matters to Me: Shared
Decisions in Health & Healing*

Wednesday, October 7, 2026
2:00 to 5:00 PM

In Honor of Ginny Thomas

Ms. Ginny Thomas dedicated her life to service.



Directed the Rural American Scholarship Fund from 1997 until her passing in 2007



In 2008, a dear friend established this symposium in her honor



His generous pledge keeps it going today

2008

The first symposium

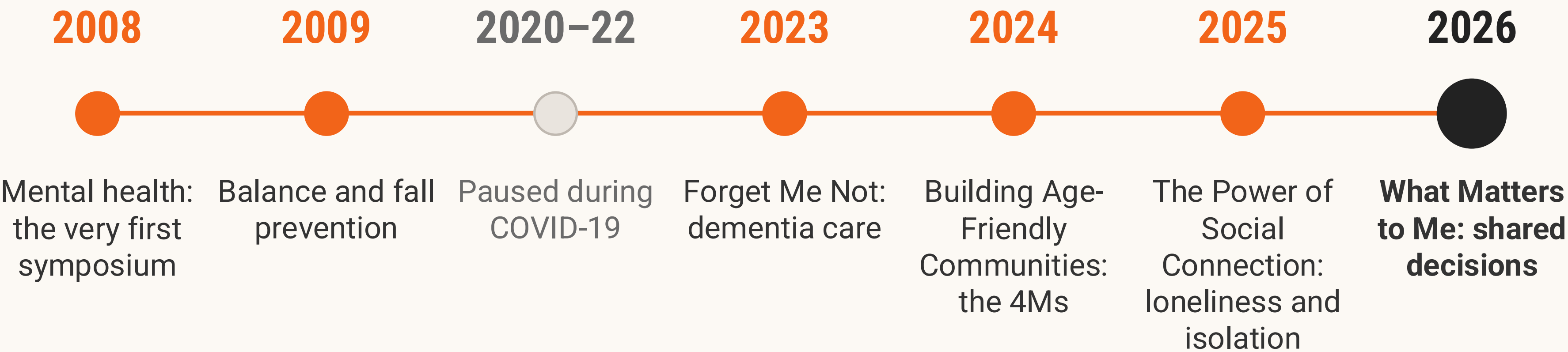
16th

Annual symposium this October

Service

The legacy we carry forward

Sixteen Years of Learning Together



Selected themes from the symposium's history

What Makes It Work



Keynote

An expert sets the stage for the afternoon



Panel

Professional, personal, and lived perspectives



Table Conversations

Students and older adults learning from each other

~400

students, older adults, and professionals across two campuses in 2024

Year after year, the table conversations with older adults are the highlight of the day.

What's New This Year



A New Name

The Geriatric Symposium is now the Healthy Aging Symposium, with a focus on living well



Three Sites, One Afternoon

Pocatello, Meridian, and Anchorage, all in person at the same time



More Older Adults Than Ever

About 50 to 75 older adults and 120 health professions students in Pocatello



A New Theme

What Matters to Me:
Shared Decisions in Health & Healing

October 7 at a Glance

- 1:30** Check-in and registration
- 2:00** Welcome and keynote: Matthew Overocker, RN, Idaho State Veterans Home
- 2:20** Panel conversation, including NKA's own Judy Liday
- 3:10** Refreshment break
- 3:30** Small-group table conversations
- 5:00** Wrap-up (we plan to let out a few minutes early)



Where

Pond Student Union
Building, Wood River
Room, ISU Pocatello



Register

cetrain.isu.edu/healthconf



Questions

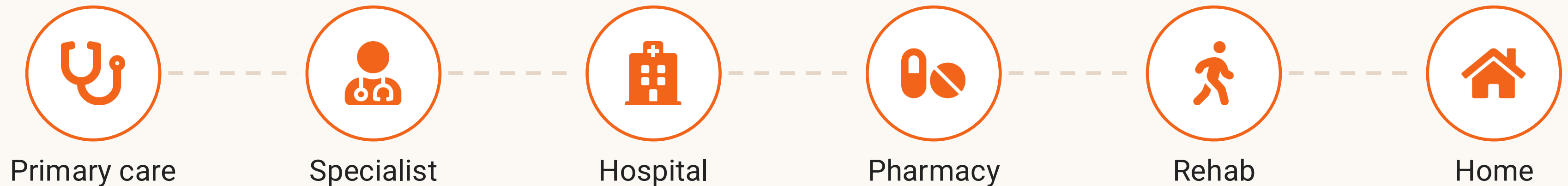
Rylee O'Neill
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Your Voice in Health Decisions

Patient engagement, informed consent, and shared decision-making

You Are the Constant



YOU: the only person present at every step

The World Health Organization (WHO) calls patients “co-producers of their own health.” You hold information that no one else in the system has.

From “Sign Here” to “Let’s Decide Together”

1957

**“Informed consent”
enters U.S. law**

The focus: what the doctor
must disclose, often on a
form



1982

**A presidential
commission speaks**

Consent should be shared
decision-making built on
mutual respect



Today

Shared decision-making

A widely accepted ideal:
care that follows your
values

The signature was never supposed to be the conversation.

Who Ultimately Decides?

The doctor decides

You decide alone

“Doctor knows best”

Paternalism

Your values may never come up

“Let’s decide together”

Shared decision-making

Medical expertise plus your values and goals

“Here are the facts. You choose.”

Left on your own

Information without guidance can feel like abandonment

***Sharing* a decision never means giving it away. The right to know and to decide stays with you.**

Two Kinds of Expertise



What your care team knows

- The medical evidence
- The available options
- Benefits and risks of each
- How others have fared



What you know

- Your goals and values
- How you actually live
- What you will and won't trade
- Your past experiences

You also choose how involved you want to be, and which decisions you want a say in.

Deciding for Yourself Isn't Deciding Alone



Our choices take shape among the people we love and trust



Preferences can be unsettled and can change, and that's normal



Loved ones can **support** your voice, but they shouldn't **replace** it

FROM A CASE OUR STUDENTS DISCUSS

After a stroke, a man told staff privately that he wanted rehab. Asked in front of his wife, he looked at her and said:

“Whatever she wants. She’s the boss.”

Whose decision is it really?

What Gets **in the Way**



Feeling like the junior partner

Many patients fear being labeled “difficult” if they speak up



Medical jargon

Technical language quietly shifts power to the professional



Rushed appointments

Real conversation takes time that busy clinics often lack



Unclear information

Information you can't use can't support a real choice

The research names these barriers honestly, and it expects clinicians to recognize and address them.

Tools You Can Use

Three questions to ask

- 1 What are my options?
- 2 What are the possible benefits and harms of each?
- 3 How likely are those benefits and harms for me?

Asking these improved the information doctors gave (Shepherd et al., 2011)

SAY IT BACK

“Let me repeat what I heard to make sure I have it right.”

ASK FOR TIME

“I’d like to talk this over with my family before I decide.”

Bringing It to October 7

At your table, you'll meet "Bob"

A 74-year-old retired shop teacher recovering from a mild stroke, whose daughter sees his next step differently

YOUR ROLE



Share what helped you feel heard, and what didn't



Speak up if a plan sounds like "doctor knows best"



Ask the students questions, too!

UP NEXT

What Matters to Me

Rylee O'Neill
Associate Director, Idaho AHEC

*Shared decisions start with
knowing what matters to you.*

References

Childress, J. F., & Childress, M. D. (2020). What does the evolution from informed consent to shared decision making teach us about authority in health care? *AMA Journal of Ethics*, 22(5), E423–E429.
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Shepherd, H. L., Barratt, A., Trevena, L. J., McGeechan, K., Carey, K., Epstein, R. M., Butow, P. N., Del Mar, C. B., Entwistle, V., & Tattersall, M. H. N. (2011). Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 84(3), 379–385.

World Health Organization. (2016). *Patient engagement: Technical series on safer primary care*.
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