

Aging in Place – Capturing
“What Matters” Using Photovoice Methodology

Photovoice Project Virtual Gallery

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About

This Photovoice study conducted by Rush SSV student fellow Amy McChesney (OTD '23) asked five participants, community-dwelling older adults, to take photos illustrating the value of aging in place, including supports and barriers experienced within their homes. Participants selected 18 photovoice pieces which were collected and analyzed with three overarching themes identified: Self-Identity, Social Connections, and Environment. This photovoice gallery includes the final pieces and participant-recorded audio narratives. These pieces provide insight into the experiences of older adults and aim to raise awareness and foster positive change in supporting aging in place. For more information, visit the SSV webpage:

<https://aging.rush.edu/schaalman/what-matters-education-research/fellowships/>

How to Navigate

To listen to the audio narratives, you will need to download the PDF and open it in Adobe Acrobat. Once opened, click the “play” icon above the corresponding photovoice piece and select “Options” then “Trust this document” at the top of the page. The audio will play until completion. To replay audio, right click the audio box and select “View in Floating Window.”

Acknowledgments

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Cecilia White



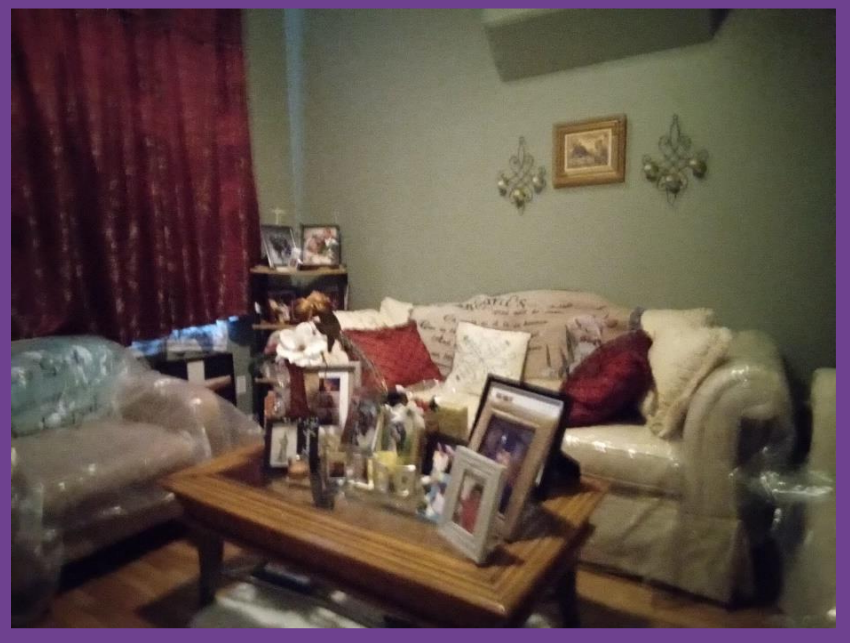
I'm Livin'

"This was my church get-together; This is what you call the head table where I sat with the leaders. The church is my heart, and not only that, the fellowship with my friends. Being 86 years old doesn't mean you have to go to the grave. If you can walk, if you can talk, you can think, work with it. You've got to work with yourself. If I sat down and feel for myself, I would die; but I've got over 100 people right now that I could start talking to. Just call! Tell them, 'I'm checking on you, I want to know how you're doing.' Well, I can do that. You know, sometimes things come up on you, but old people don't need to feel sorry for themselves. Think of just livin'."



60 Years in This House

"This is a room for company. I live in my bedroom, I live in the family room, I live in the kitchen, and I visit up here. I love this room, because when I have special company, I take the plastic off the chairs, and you know you're in a very important room in my house. This is my neighborhood, this is my family house, this is where I want people to come and feel good and safe."



Cecilia White



I Love My House. I Love My Freedom.

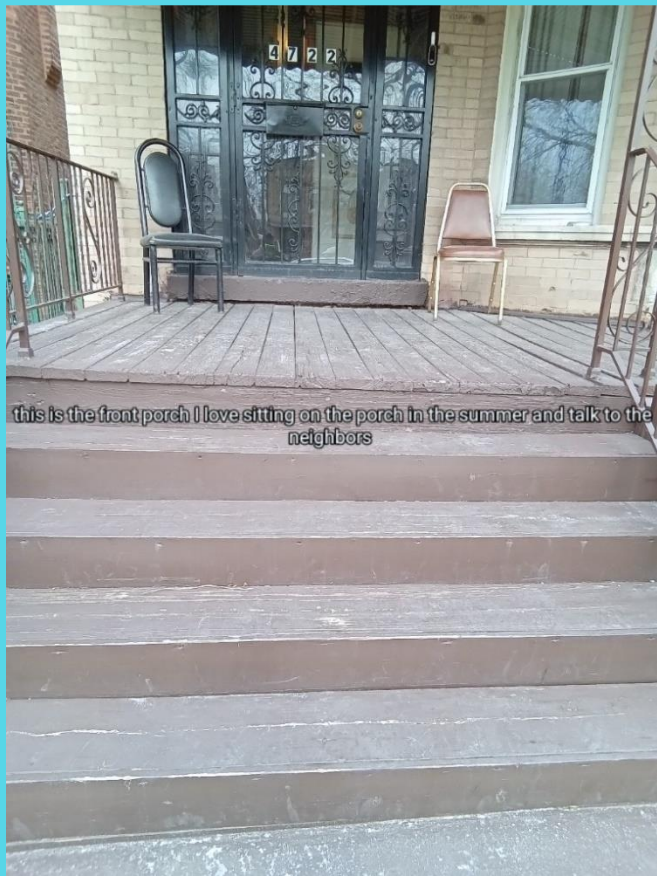
“This is my family room that leads to the kitchen. This picture represents me. This is a part of the house I really love because I can get my rest, I can sit down, put my feet on the chair, stretch out, leave my cane anywhere, and I’ve got pictures of my family. I can have who I want, when I want, however long they want to stay, and nobody can tell me it’s time for them to go. I like that. It’s something that motivates me, and why I love to be in my home.”



Church Is Where the Heart Is

“This is the inside of my church; you can see where the pastor preaches from and the organ from the music department. The church represents love among the people. Church is a big part of my life. I’ve been going to this church ever since it’s been- I was the first pastor’s wife. My husband started the church and now my son is a pastor and superintendent of the district. I am the second assistant to the women’s department. I support my district. I support my local church. I love the church and I do support it.”

Country Boy Troy



this is the front porch I love sitting on the porch in the summer and talk to the neighbors



My Front Porch

“This is the front porch. I love sitting on the porch in the summer and talk to the neighbors. The ones that are still around for 50 years because I’ve been here 53 years. I bought this building in 1969 and I’ve been here ever since. A lot of neighbors have come and gone since then.”



My Grill

“That’s my barbeque grill. It’s one of my BBQ grills. I used to BBQ a lot.

It reminds me of all the occasions that I’ve had family over on holidays, and stuff like that. It’s just one of the outings in the back yard that I enjoyed doing. And my great grandkids love the big trampoline back there that my grandson put up for his daughter. They have a good time.

If I wasn’t here, I would probably be what, in a retirement home? And I don’t know a retirement home that has big enough space where you can invite family over and have a BBQ.”



Country Boy Troy



I Miss My Tub

“That’s the bathroom. I just see a bathroom with no tub and a shower. I think a tub should always be in the bathroom. I had my bathroom redid a year ago. My grandson talked me into taking the tub out because I’m getting older, and my tub was low. Once you get in there, then you gotta get back up out of there. It’s hard to pull up out of there at a certain age.

I regret taking the tub out of my bathroom, I’ve got a shower in there but it’s not like taking a bath. Personally, I would prefer still having my tub so I can lay back and soak. If you’ve got a tub, I wouldn’t recommend that you take it out. Always keep your tub.”

Garden Spot

“I’ve had a garden for thirty years or more. I’m from the south and I did a lot of planting, so I had no problem getting into it. A lot of things I grow in the garden I’ll eat. I grow pepper, greens, and I grow onions. Sometimes I plant beans. My wife, she loved okra, I’d grow a lot of okra for her, and we’d eat it all the time. But me, I never care too much for Okra. I still grow it out of habit and give it away to family; like my sister, who lives upstairs. She loves okra. When you get older, you don’t go out as much as you use to, so it’s good to have something to do around the house. During the summer, I can just work in the yard. Now, this summer, I’ve got a lot of work to do because I killed my grass!”



Elvira



My Grandchildren Are My Future

“These are the walls in the hallway entrance to the second floor. This 100-year-old building formerly a rectory most likely has layers of lead paint that’s cracking and potentially dangerous. I don’t want to expose myself and grandchildren to lead. We are senior citizens and unable to reach and fix this problem.”



Clutter Increases Stress

“Cluttered pathway that could pose a physical hazard when walking by. The unfinished wood in the entry is depressing to look at. We’ve been unable to finish projects due to the 24-hour care of my mother who has Alzheimer’s. And I refuse to institutionalize my mother because my aunt was killed when she was taken to a nursing home.”



Elvira



ADLs [Activities of Daily Living] Can Be Difficult

“Extremely small/narrow bathroom that is difficult to clean. In addition, I need to clean my mother’s Pure wick daily (due to her incontinence). I have a hard time keeping this area clean for my mother’s baths. The wall is 11 inches wide so it’s difficult to reach the tub to clean it. My back hurts when I attempt to clean the area. Eventually we need to replace the cast iron tub and put a shower with a seat so I can use it and clean it.”

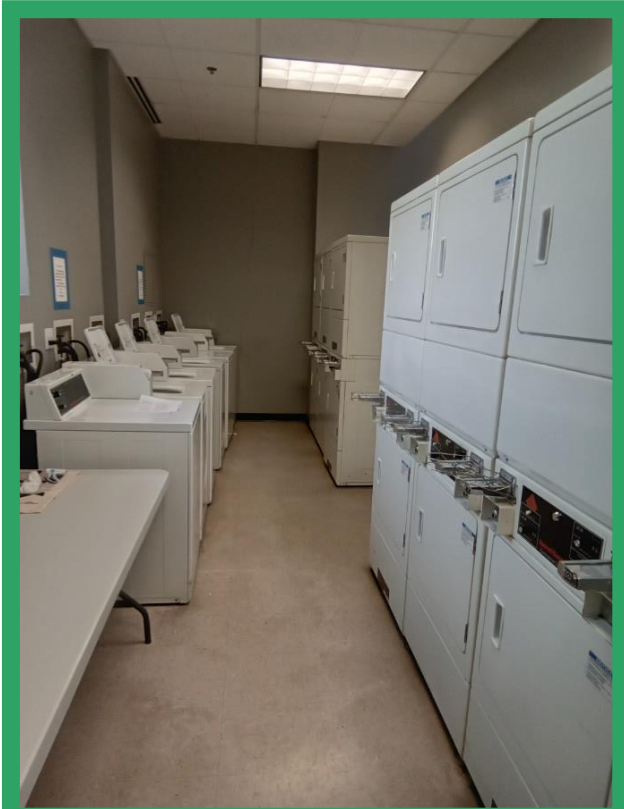


Exercise Is Medicine

“The unfinished porch that we use as an exercise area. This area is my favorite room because of all the light that comes through most of the day. It’s too cold during the winter so it’s a barrier to using it. When I work out, I start off with a sweatshirt, then as my exercise progresses, I need to take off the heavy sweats. I would like the room finished with drywall to keep the temperature constant during exercise. I know that exercise is going to help me stay healthy. So, I want to be able to exercise in comfort. I’ve always told my patients that exercise is medicine.”

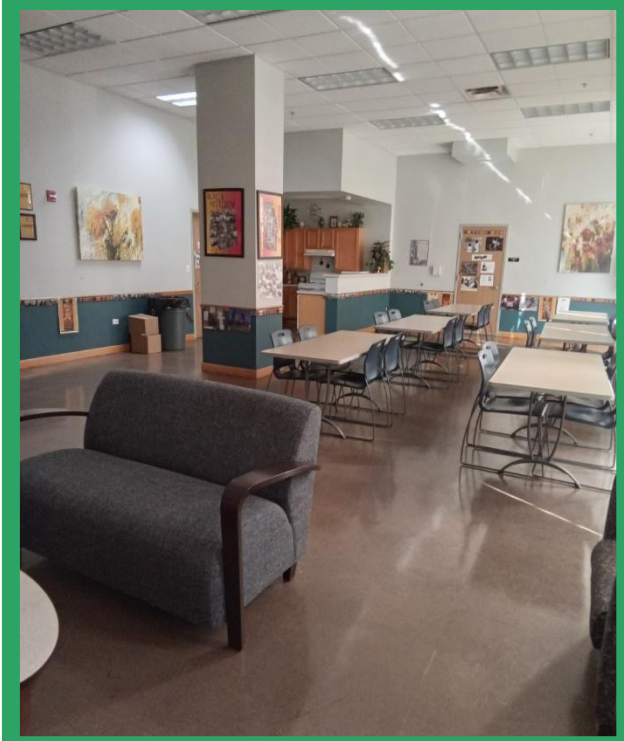


Gerri



Laundry in Building

“I live in a senior residence with modern accommodations, the laundry room is a large advantage since I or my homemaker do not have to leave the building to wash my clothes, further the cost to wash and dry clothes have remained the same for more than ten years, unlike public laundromats which are more than 700% more than the cost in my building. Having the convenience of a laundry in the building, especially at a very low cost is a definite plus for Aging in Place.”



Community Room

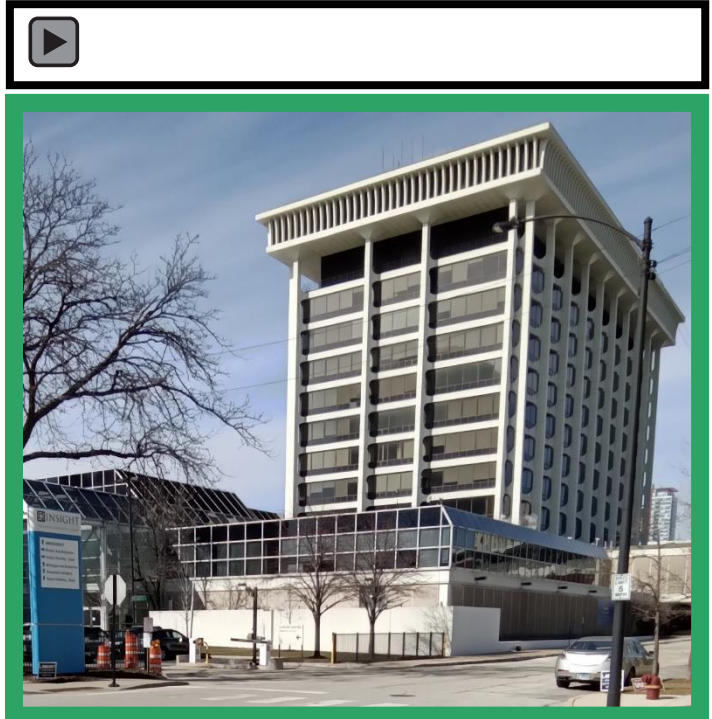
“My building has a Community Room which accommodates up to 50 people at one time. It is used by the residents to come together each week for coffee and doughnuts to socialize and interact. It has a full kitchen and is also used for private events hosted by individual residents or for teaching classes for the residents. I have taught many classes through Rush Generations for my building, such as *Take Charge of Your Health*, *Take Charge of Your Diabetes*, *Chronic Pain Management*, and a few others. These are six-week courses that meet once or twice a week.

Additionally, there are weekly activities in the Community Room; a Bible Class, Bingo, and whatever residents would like to do. Some residents don't have cable TV so they will gather in the Community Room to watch TV or a movie together regularly. Having the room is a real asset to the building and helps the residents to Age in Place, sometimes with some help from a Homemaker through the State or other assistance they choose and can pay to have.”

Gerri

Insight Medical Center

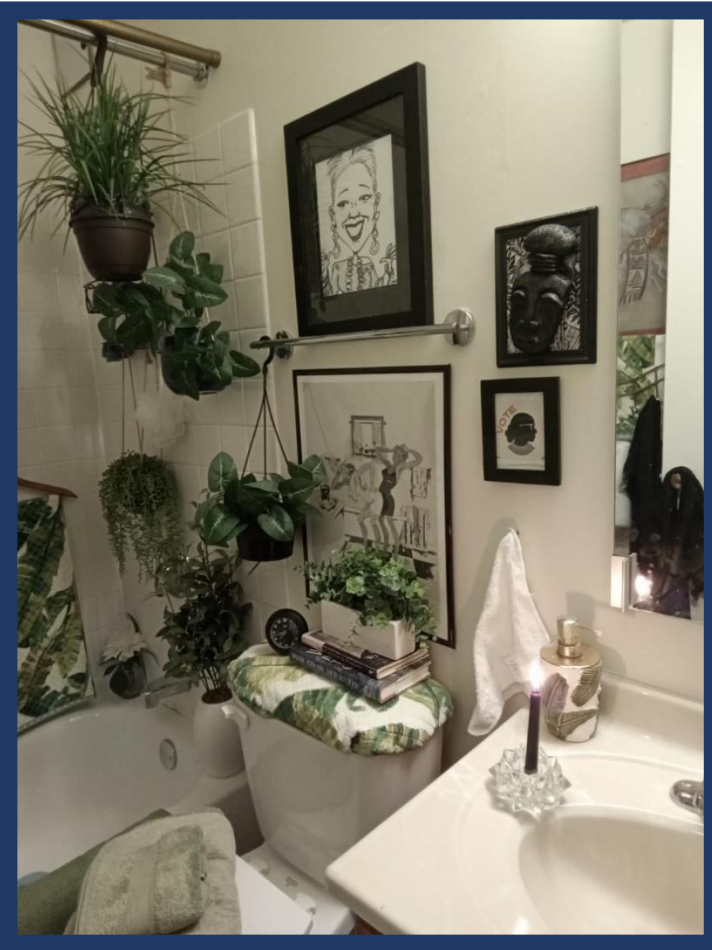
"I am blessed to live next door to a Medical Center, Insight is the name. It used to be Mercy Hospital, which was a mainstay in the community for many, many years. Living next door to a medical facility with an Emergency Department is very comforting. While I don't use it for the different doctors on staff there (all my doctors are at Rush,) I have had to use the Emergency Department several times about eight years ago when I had compression fractures in my back. I have watched residents in my building being taken to Mercy or Insights and it made a difference in their recovery from things like a stroke or heart attack because they got treatment quickly, clearly allowing them to Age in Place with the comfort of help nearby."



Kitchen Stool, Footrest

"My kitchen stool and the footrest used is my lifesaver. With arthritis in my lower spine/back that has gotten really bad, I would not be able to cook, clean the kitchen or sometimes wash dishes without the stool and footrest. I cannot stand more than two minutes in the same spot without experiencing excruciating pain, making it nearly impossible to stand long enough to prepare a meal, even a sandwich. With the stool, even needing to get up often to reach items on different counters, the stove, etc., I can complete a task and prepare entire meals allowing me to have the vegetables I had practically given up on since I couldn't prepare them. I call that, Aging in Place, making the necessary adjustments to live on my own without needing someone to cook for me."

Participant #5



The Powder Room

"The powder room fits in with my daily living routine. My mini spa has a small bookcase with the latest additions of AARP magazines, bulletins, and two books; *The Complete Pocket Positives* and *Prayers and Promises for Women*. It allows me to relax while doing word puzzles. The candle is lit with the sweet fragrance of mango, mint, and orange flowing through the air. Again, my senior studio is a place of safe refuge, a protective environment that offers a strong and peaceful sanctuary."



Wellbeing

"My living space is where I exercise its loaded with a variety of plants. This clear air machine acts as a calm space to exercise my mind as well as to meditate. It's important to me, as a senior, to be able to move daily. Walking at home for 10-to-20-minute intervals improves my breathing and my overall wellbeing."

