

THE SOUTHERN GERONTOLOGIST

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Dr. Ethlyn McQueen-Gibson

The Southern Gerontological Society's 46th annual regional aging conference will be held in the historic city of Birmingham, Alabama. Our theme is **Building Bridges: Collaborations and Communities in Aging**. As President of the Southern Gerontological Society, I would like to extend an invitation for you to attend and contribute to our meeting being held on April 3-6, 2025.

Known for its welcoming and friendly atmosphere, Birmingham exemplifies Southern hospitality. Conference-goers can expect a warm reception from locals, great food, and a generally positive environment for both learning and networking.

Birmingham is a city with a significant history, especially in relation to the Civil Rights Movement. Visiting Birmingham for a conference gives you the chance to explore historical landmarks such as the Civil Rights Institute, 16th Street Baptist Church, and Kelly Ingram Park, offering valuable context and understanding of social justice and history.

The focus of our 46th Annual Meeting and Conference starts by "bridging" with the University of Alabama Birmingham's Minority Health & Health Equity Research Center's longstanding UAB Health Equity Research Symposium. In place of providing pre-conference intensives, we invite you to register and attend this symposium on Thursday, April 3, 2025. We will have an exciting joint event that evening which will serve to "bridge" our two events as a "community collaboration" for clinicians and researchers.

Starting Friday, April 4, 2025; we will open with topics that explore the different types of aging communities and the key themes surrounding them through podium and poster presentations.

Connecting communities with older adults is crucial for several reasons, as it fosters mutual benefit, strengthens societal bonds, and addresses critical challenges that both groups face. The conference presentations will address many of these challenges such as 1) combating loneliness and isolation; 2) intergenerational learning; 3) building stronger social relationships; 4) promoting health and well-being and 5) addressing ageism and misconceptions.

We are organizing the conference into five domains to drive session creation in ways that ensure that researchers, practitioners, clinicians, policy advocates, and older adult consumers create linkages in terms of networks, sharing ideas to forward the agenda of connecting communities and improving older adult quality of life. The DOMAINS are (1) Age-related Health and Wellness, (2) Diversity Topics in Aging Communities, (3) Caregiving, Care Support, and Care Partnerships, (4) Gerontological Education and Professional Development, and (5) Advocacy for or by Older Adults. We hope you will join us and share your important work at the Birmingham, AL 2025 meeting.



THE CALL FOR ABSTRACTS IS OPEN! SUBMIT YOUR ABSTRACT BY 1/10/25!

Learn more about the Call for Abstracts at https://southerngerontologicalsociety.org/meeting-abstracts.html.

2025 Call for Abstract Reviewers

SGS needs your help to ensure the success of the 46th Annual Meeting and Conference! We need members of SGS to volunteer to review submitted abstracts. Abstract reviewers assist in fulfilling the mission of the organization and preserve the integrity of the annual meeting by confirming the high quality and relevance of proposed conference presentations. Your participation in the abstract review process will allow the SGS Program Planning Committee to organize a compelling, impactful, innovative annual meeting that fosters reflection, discovery, advocacy, and collaboration to serve our aging society best.

Being an SGS abstract reviewer can result in the following;

- Gaining experience to add to your CV
- Increasing gerontological knowledge
- Further establishing your reputation as having expertise in the field of aging
- Personal fulfillment knowing that you have contributed to an enlightening annual meeting with sessions designed to educate and empower academics, students/trainees, advocates, practitioners, policymakers, and community members concerned with enhancing the lives of older adults.

Professional, Emerging Scholar, Encore, and Student Members can participate in the abstract review process. Reviewers are assigned approximately 10 abstracts to review. Abstracts are no more than 250 words and typically take ten minutes to review. You will be provided with instructions.

Deadline to Volunteer: December 31, 2024
Abstract Review Period: January 13 - 24, 2025
If you would like to participate, please complete the <u>interest form</u>.

Keep up with all the latest conference updates at https://southerngerontologicalsociety.org/meeting.html

ABOUT BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham was born out of the iron and steel industry. Remnants of those early beginnings are preserved in places such as Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark and Vulcan Park & Museum. The city is also well known for its prominent role in America's Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. A visit to the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute gives visitors an in-depth look at that important era.

Today, Birmingham wears a much different face. It's a place that's brimming with entertainment, the arts, nightlife, outdoor recreation, and world-class cuisine.

Should you have Birmingham pigeonholed as serving only barbecue and fried pies, remember that the city is home to "the Oscars of dining," with James Beard Foundation Award winners and nominees. Visitors to the city should take in the beauty of down-home cooking as well. And guests with an appetite for live music have come to the right place.

The area's antique shops are featured in upscale lifestyle magazines around the country. Trendy malls have taken root, bringing tony, high-end shops to the state's retail giant. Dozens of art galleries surprise enthusiasts and collectors with a spectrum of paintings, sculpture, jewelry, ceramics, fine, and folk art. The Birmingham Museum of Art houses an impressive collection of artistic work from cultures around the world.

With a comfortable climate nearly year-round, Birmingham attracts outdoor advocates to play golf along two courses on the state's Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail. Biking, hiking, and mountain climbing are popular activities, along with family gatherings in green spaces like Railroad Park downtown.

It is a potpourri of experiences that is the city's greatest strength and strongest appeal. We are a medley of cultures and attitudes that blend beautifully with the Southern charm that is Birmingham.

Visit the **Greater Birmingham Convention & Visitors Bureau** to learn more!



CONFERENCE REGISTRATION IS OPEN!

SGS has kept conference rates the same as 2024. Make sure you log in as an SGS member to access membership rates. See all rates and register at https://southerngerontologicalsociety.org/member-meeting-registration.html.

If you are an SGS member in the "Encore" membership category and have maintained at least five (5) years of SGS membership, we encourage you to apply for a travel grant to help offset the cost of attending the SGS Annual Meeting & Conference. The amount of the grant will be determined by the SGS Executive Committee and may be split amongst more than one applicant. Winners will remain anonymous.

Learn more and apply here.

The SGS Annual Meeting & Conference will kick off in the late afternoon of April 3, 2025. This event will be held jointly with MHERC and will also be open to the community. The exact times and more details about this event are coming soon but you won't want to miss it so please plan your travel accordingly. On April 4th, we will have our keynote presentations, poster session, and concurrent workshops. On April 5th, we will hold our Annual Business Meeting, continue with concurrent sessions, and provide time during the day for attendees to explore Birmingham. Our day will conclude with a celebration of our award winners during our evening Awards Dinner. On April 6th, we will continue with our concurrent sessions and end with an exciting closing session. For travel purposes, please note that April 6th will be a half day. Please plan on staying through 2:30 PM.



This year, SGS is partnering with the University of Alabama Birmingham's Minority Health & Health Equity Research Center. Their UAB Health Equity Research Symposium will be held on April 3, 2025. We invite all our attendees to take advantage of the opportunity to attend this event while traveling to Birmingham for our Annual Meeting & Conference. In addition, we encourage you to consider submitting your abstract to present at both events. To learn more, visit:

https://www.uab.edu/medicine/mherc/news-events/research-symposium



We all know someone who goes above and beyond. Help them get the recognition they deserve by nominating them for a SGS award! Or maybe you would like to nominate yourself? Go for it! From students to experts in the field, SGS offers many award opportunities. Learn More Here.

Deadline: 2/13/2025



SGS is happy to announce that we have moved to annual sponsorship opportunities for 2025. Not only will sponsors we continue to be recognized at the Annual Meeting & Conference but they will also be spotlighted throughout the year at other events and through other mediums. We hope you will take this opportunity to review our new sponsorship packages. We are also happy to discuss a custom package that best fits your needs.

LEARN MORE HERE

Member Announcements

100th Day of School Celebration

A PreK - Grade 2 Curriculum Guide for Cultivating Positive Views of Aging The "fun" activity of dressing like a 100-year-old teaches kids that it is okay to have fun at the expense of another segment of the population and that it is funny for older people to appear frail, weak, confused, and out of touch. The authors created this toolkit to offer accurate information about aging and ageism and to provide teachers with options that do

not perpetuate ageist stereotypes. Celebrating the 100th day of school can reinforce important academic content while supporting age-inclusivity rather than ageism. Introduction This toolkit contains teaching resources for lessons about people who lived to be 100 years of age or beyond. These individuals, called centenarians, are sometimes referred to as "super-agers" because they tend to be strong, healthy, and very engaged in activities that are meaningful to them. Unfortunately, in our modern society, many people of all ages see older people and centenarians through the lens of negative aging stereotypes: someone who is frail, confused, lonely, angry, or sad with little to live for and who serves little purpose in our society. These negative aging stereotypes are products of ageism.

This toolkit was created by gerontologists and early childhood and elementary educators to provide preschool through second grade (P-2) teachers with lesson plans that help interrupt the development of ageism. Growing older is in everyone's future. As individuals and as a society, everyone benefits from efforts to replace negative views of aging with realistic and optimistic ideas about having a fulfilling life as an older adult. P-2 teachers may be interested in lessons about centenarians because existing classroom activities, such as having students dress up like 100-year-old people, reinforce negative aging stereotypes. Learn more and access the toolkit here.

Tina M. K. Newsham, PhD, UNC Wilmington, newshamt@uncw.edu Cynthia Hancock, PhD, UNC Charlotte, chancock@charlotte.edu



The Carework Network launched in August 2000 with a one-day conference at Howard University in Washington, D.C., prior to the American Sociological Association meetings. In the quarter century since, many of our motivating questions have continued as both pressing social matters and persistent research interests. Simultaneously, new questions have emerged as the Network has expanded to include a broader range of disciplines, participants, geographic contexts, and research settings.

The Carework Network is taking this opportunity of its 25th anniversary to reflect on the histories and futures of carework research and the study of care more broadly during a bilingual (Spanish and English) three-day conference bringing together researchers and advocates from around the world.

The conference will explore how conversations about care have developed during this period and what factors have informed notable inflection points — not only discrete events such as the 2008 financial crisis and the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic but also more sustained dynamics such as environmental crises, pervasive neoliberal policies, the ongoing importance of migrant careworkers, the changing role of technologies and infrastructures, and renewed global reckonings with the effects of racism and colonialism.

Learn More Here

DISASTER APP - CAREGIVERS NEEDED

Dr. Lindsay Peterson and her team have been developing an app to assist caregivers in making decisions during disasters. Her team is recruiting caregivers in West Central Florida who have had disaster experiences as caregivers, asking them to assess the app for its usability and usefulness. Responses will be used to make revisions. Please contact lipeterson@usf.edu for more information.



Submitted by Bethanie Constant, CFRE VP of Mission Advancement WCBR Foundation



becoming bOLDER is a meaningful conversation meant to share lived journeys. At WCBR, we believe older adults or elders have talents and wisdom to share. We also believe that we are all more than our past – acknowledging present interests, the future, and possible selves is important because aging brings new opportunities and capacities for growth, contribution, and self-expression. This podcast illustrates that older adults are accomplished and are involved in and a vital part of their community. The path to elderhood will look and feel different for everyone. It may be living life with intention, gerotranscendence, acting as a guide for those who come behind, handing down knowledge, and/or nurturing well-being among communities. Our guests demonstrate that there is no right or wrong way to age. We invite you to listen in. Together, we are becoming bOLDER.

https://becomingbolder.podbean.com/

Member Spotlights

We want to celebrate your achievements - professional or personal! Please send any news you want to share to Amanda James at admin@southerngerontologicalsociety.org.



Dr. Jeffrey Lentz after a 5K/13K Double Race: 1st Overall 5K, 2nd Overall 13K, 1st Overall Double

Georgia State University, A.G. Rhodes Launch Innovative Elder Care Partnership

Read More



Virginia Geriatric Education Center awarded \$5M grant to improve care of older adults. Read More





SGS AROUND THE REGION



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Above - SGS President, Dr. Ethlyn McQueen-Gibson and SGS Member, Dr. Julian McKoy Davis at the Florida Conference on Aging.

Right - SGS President, Dr. Ethlyn McQueen-Gibson, JAG Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Debra Dobbs, and SGS Board Member, Dr. Lindsay Peterson at the Florida Conference on Aging. Left - SGS President, Dr. Ethlyn McQueen-Gibson represents SGS at the Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association (GAPNA) Conference.

Below - SGS Past President, Dr. Jennifer Craft Morgan and SGS Executive Director, Amanda James present at the Georgia Gerontology Society Conference.





SGS AROUND THE REGION



Above - SGS President, Dr. Ethlyn McQueen-Gibson shares information about SGS with gerontology leaders at Mississippi State University

Right - SGS President, Dr. Ethlyn McQueen-Gibson represents SGS at the American Public Health Association Conference.

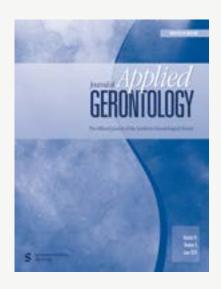


Above - SGS Executive Director, Amanda James and SGS Past-President, Dr. Jennifer Craft Morgan at the Southeastern Association of Area Agencies on Aging (SE4A)

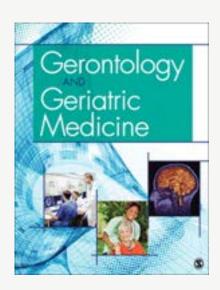
Right - SGS President, Dr. Ethlyn McQueen-Gibson and SGS Student Representative, Alfred Boakye at the 2024 African American Caregivers Forum.







WRITING A PAPER?



Journal of Applied Gerontology (JAG) provides an international forum for information that has clear and immediate applicability to the health, care, and quality of life of older adults. Published monthly, it brings you comprehensive coverage of all areas of gerontological practice and policy, such as caregiving, exercise, death and dying, ethnicity and aging, technology and care, long-term services and support, mental health, and sexuality. **Submit your paper**

Gerontology and Geriatric Medicine (GGM) is an interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed, open access journal focusing on the psychological, behavioral, social, and biological aspects of aging. The journal addresses a wide variety of topics in gerontology and geriatrics, including health economics, health services research, health outcomes, public health, medicine, biology, equity, social science, epidemiology, demography, and nursing. GGM reflects the global importance and interest in this subject area and its particular relevance to countries that are experiencing an exponential growth in older population. SGS members receive a discount on publishing fees. **Submit your paper**

The Sage <u>Journal Author Gateway</u> provides a variety of <u>How to Get Published</u> resources (including a how to get published webinar series) and <u>Promote your article</u> guidelines to support authors.

•<u>SAGE Author Services</u>, powered by Editage, offers high-quality professional language editing and manuscript formatting services for pre-peer review manuscripts.

JAG provides an international forum for information that has clear and immediate applicability to the health, care, and quality of life of older adults. Published monthly, it brings you comprehensive coverage of all areas of gerontological practice and policy, such as caregiving, exercise, death and dying, ethnicity and aging, technology and care, long-term services and support, mental health, and sexuality. Submit your paper



INTERESTED IN BEING A REVIEWER FOR JAG?

The Journal of Applied Gerontology (JAG) depends on volunteer peer reviewers to evaluate manuscripts and recommend revisions in order to publish innovative and practical applied gerontology research. Learn more about reviewer awards offered by Sage here. If you are interested in learning more about being a reviewer, contact Editor-in-Chief, Dr, Debra Dobbs at ddobbs@usf.edu.

Sage Perspectives

The Sage Perspectives blog focuses on highlighting topical and interesting research published in Sage books and journals. The blog includes posts from authors across a wide range of subject disciplines and research areas. Authors published in *JAG* have contributed blogs on a variety of topics within the field of gerontology. Explore the blogs and associated articles here.

Making the Most of Your Membership

Contribute to the Southern Gerontologist

What's New(s)?

- Please send your professional accomplishments (i.e. promotions, job changes, awards, grant work, scholarships, graduation notices) and newsworthy personal events such as weddings, anniversaries, births, etc.
- Have you published a video, article, or podcast you would like to have in the newsletter? We
 can do that! Just send us a link to the material and a description, along with any information
 you need us to include to help promote the great things you are working on!
- Also, we would like to remember those who have been influential to SGS. Should you know of
 anyone who may have passed away, please let us know. We welcome the opportunity to
 publish "In Memoriams" written on the behalf of SGS members who are no longer with us.
- And if you need to brag on one of your fellow members, that's okay too!
- If you have any upcoming events you'd like other members to put on their calendars, please be sure to send the dates and details!

Please limit articles to 250 words with no more than two photos. Send content to Amanda James at admin@southerngerontologicalsociety.org.

Join a Committee

Are you currently on an SGS committee? Joining a committee is one of the best ways to influence the work of SGS and meet other SGS members. You can read about all of our committees at https://southerngerontologicalsociety.org/committees.html.

Update Your Profile

Did you know that all SGS members have access to our Member Directory? The Directory can be a wonderful tool for networking with other members, looking for resources, and identifying potential mentors. In order for our Directory to serve its purpose, we need all members to make sure their profile is updated and includes helpful information for other members. Please update your profile today! If you would like help updating your profile, please reach out to Amanda James at admin@southerngerontologicalsociety.org.

: HAPPY: HOLIDAYS

SEASON'S GREETINGS

MAY YOUR HOLIDAY SEASON SPARKLE WITH JOY AND LAUGHTER!

CORNER

A Supplement of the Southern Gerontologist provided by the Student and Early Career Committee



Adventurous Trip to Japan, the World of Nutrition, Exercise, and Social Connectedness

The world is experiencing population aging due to an increase in life expectancy and decreased fertility rates. For once, the number of older adults aged 65 or older will outnumber those 15 years and younger. In the United States alone, about 1 in 5 Americans will be 65 or older by 2040, and this is expected to grow exponentially afterward. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it is expected that the number of older adults will reach 73 million by 2030, a 23% increase from 2020.

This population is also vulnerable to several chronic diseases, such as diabetes, cancer, stroke, arthritis, and various forms of cognitive decline, classified as Alzheimer's Disease and other related dementia (ADRD), with Alzheimer's being more predominant.

In this paper, I would want to highlight some of the strategies that Japan, a 'superaged' society, has adopted to ensure the health and well-being of its older adult population is maintained and what the United States can learn from them.

Japan's Aging Population

Japan is experiencing the fastest growth in its population, with more than 1 in 10 people now aged 80 years or older. As a super-aged society, this is impacting their society, workforce, and economy. I found this great article that explains Japan's aging society in terms of providing a solid understanding of what is causing the Japanese population to age faster – the root of the phenomenon, socio-economic consequences, some government policies, and the role of immigration policies as contributory factors. You can access the article here.

The concept of Nutrition, Exercise, and Social Connectedness

I had the opportunity to visit the Kanagawa prefecture and to meet with their governor. The governor shared their innovative strategy to respond to the needs of older adults and encourage healthy living among them. The ME-BYO concept is the magic behind Japan's healthy longevity and increased life expectancy. The ME-BYO is a triad concept – nutrition, exercise, and social activities. This is to transform and contain Japan as a super-aged society by bridging the gap between healthy and sick trajectories.

With over 1,400 partners – local and international, Japan intends to track the future risks of illness and encourage people to change their lifestyles. With the right nutrition, increased exercise, and social interactions, Japan seeks to promote a vibrant and purposeful life situated in positive spirits and a good community/environment. The Wakabadai housing is an example of how social activities and connectedness are displayed. They have within the housing project active resident associations, multigenerational families, community events, and programs to encourage people to have meaningful interactions with each other and for the younger generations to learn from the older ones. What is interesting is how this ME-BYO concept is accepted and incorporated into every working policy, either in education, medicine, technology, etc.

How would I talk about everything without mentioning their nursing homes and how they operate? Until recently, people preferred to die in the hospitals. Now, they prefer to either die in the nursing home or their own homes. With the universal healthcare system, older adults only need to contribute 10% out of pocket to supplement the 90% from the government. The display of technology through the use of sensors in resident rooms to monitor and prevent falls is breathtaking. Unfortunately, Japan is also facing workforce shortages, low pay, strain, and high turnover. With their strict immigration policies, they are unable to tap into the direct care workforce from other countries. Recognizing this challenge, they have begun partnership programs to recruit direct care workers from South Korea, Taiwan, and other Asian countries.





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My Personal Experiences

Traveling to Japan has been one of the best experiences so far and has been the highlight of my career in gerontology - at least for now. The two-week trip was nothing but full of exciting activities. There was something new to learn every single day. As an international student from Ghana studying in the United States, I had the great opportunity to compare and contrast how aging policies are incorporated into everyday federal and state decisions and planning. Through this experience, I would say that in as much as there are some similarities between these three cultures, countries, and continents - Ghana, the U.S., and Japan, so are sharp differences. For example, whereas the U.S. is more individualistic, Ghana and Japan are strong on family and the role of familial support as effective ways of aging gracefully. Families feel responsible for taking care of their older parents, who need support with activities of daily living and, sometimes, instrumental activities of daily living. One similarity between these countries is the fact that their population is aging at a faster rate, and technology has become the tool to respond to the many needs facing older adults. I wouldn't even want to talk about the food because I am literally thinking and salivating as I write this blog. They have the healthiest meals, which are eaten in smaller portions. My favorite was their seafood noodles garnished with different types of vegetables. I ate seaweed in almost all my food, and matcha (either tea or ice cream) was always the best to complement my breakfast, lunch, or dinner. Japan is neat and well-organized, and the people are amazing. Despite the language barrier, people were receptive and ready to help in the best way they could. They would always 'bow' as a sign of respect and thank you a million times within a minute - is that not amazing?!

I can go on and on with my experiences, but I would end it right here. If you have the chance, I highly recommend you visit Japan and learn, meet amazing people, eat good food, and explore your 'ikigai' – 'sense of purpose" or 'what motivates you to do what you do or wake up each morning.' For me, my 'ikigai' is to support direct care workers in improving their health, well-being, and quality of life and to provide quality care to residents in nursing homes and other long-term care settings.

Watashi no burogu o yonde itadaki arigatou-gozaimasu (Thank you for reading my blog)

Alfred Boakye

Autonomous Vehicles: Revolutionizing Senior Mobility in the South

By: Larry Hardy

Introduction: As a graduate student in the Southern Gerontological Society program, I'm deeply interested in the challenges and opportunities facing our region's aging population. One critical area is senior mobility.

Many older adults, particularly those living in rural areas or with declining physical abilities, face limitations in getting around. This can lead to social isolation, decreased access to healthcare, and a decline in overall well-being.

This is where the burgeoning technology of autonomous vehicles (AVs) presents a fascinating potential solution. These self-driving cars hold the promise of revolutionizing senior mobility, offering independence, safety, and improved access to vital services.

In this blog, we'll explore the specific challenges faced by older adults in the South, the potential benefits of AVs, and some of the considerations for integrating this technology into our communities.

The Southern Challenge: Unique Considerations

The South presents unique challenges for senior mobility. Factors like:

- Sprawling rural communities: Public transportation options are often limited in rural areas, leaving many seniors reliant on private vehicles.
- Hot climates: Walking and cycling can be challenging in the South's hot summers, further restricting mobility options.
- Limited access to technology: Some older adults may not be comfortable using technology to hail or interact with AVs.

These factors combine to create a situation where seniors are particularly vulnerable to mobility limitations.



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Autonomous Vehicles: A Potential Game Changer

AVs offer a glimmer of hope. Imagine a world where seniors can:

- Maintain independence: AVs could allow seniors to travel to grocery stores, doctor appointments, and social events without relying on others.
- Improve safety: AVs can react faster than human drivers, potentially reducing car accidents involving seniors.
- Increase access to services: On-demand AVs could connect seniors to vital services in their communities, like healthcare and social programs.
- Enhance quality of life: Improved mobility can lead to increased social interaction, reduced isolation, and a greater sense of well-being.

However, there are also challenges to consider.

Navigating the Road Ahead: Considerations for Implementation

While AV technology holds immense promise, several considerations need to be addressed before widespread adoption:

- Safety Concerns: Ensuring the safety and reliability of AVs is paramount, especially for a vulnerable population like seniors.
- Technology Adoption: Integrating user-friendly interfaces and addressing potential technology gaps among the senior population is crucial.
- Regulation and Infrastructure: Developing clear regulations and adapting infrastructure for AVs will require collaboration among policymakers, technology developers, and transportation authorities.
- Social and Ethical Concerns: Questions of data privacy, accessibility for people with disabilities, and the potential impact on public transportation need to be addressed.

Conclusion

The intersection of autonomous vehicles and senior mobility in the South is a complex but exciting area. While challenges exist, the potential benefits for our aging population are undeniable. By working together, gerontologists, technologists, policymakers, and community leaders can shape the future of AVs to ensure safe, accessible, and equitable transportation for all, regardless of age or location.

Further Discussion

This blog is just the beginning of the conversation. We encourage you to share your thoughts!

- Do you think AVs can address the specific mobility challenges faced by seniors in the South?
- What concerns do you have about AV integration for this population?
- How can we ensure equitable access to this technology for all seniors?

By fostering open dialogue and innovative solutions, we can work towards a future where seniors in the South can navigate their communities with independence and dignity.

The Promise of Autonomous Vehicles for Enhancing Senior Mobility

Ensuring older adults preserve their independence and quality of life is becoming more and more crucial as our population ages. The possibility for autonomous vehicles to completely transform senior mobility is one of the most intriguing advancements in this field. I find it fascinating how this technology might help older adults with their transportation needs as a graduate student at Georgia State University.

The Mobility Challenge for Seniors

Maintaining mobility gets harder as people get older for many older adults. Driving might become hazardous or difficult due to physical restrictions, eyesight problems, and sluggish reflexes. This lack of autonomous transportation frequently results in:

- Reduced access to essential services like healthcare and grocery shopping
- Increased social isolation and loneliness
- Loss of independence and autonomy
- Decreased overall quality of life

These issues don't just affect individuals - they have broader societal impacts in terms of healthcare costs, social services, and community vitality.

Enter Autonomous Vehicles

Numerous of these problems could potentially be directly solved by self-driving automobiles. Autonomous vehicles could benefit older adults by offering accessible, dependable, and safe transportation.

- Maintain independence and access to services
- Stay socially connected and engaged in their communities
- Age in place more successfully
- Improve overall well-being and quality of life

Key Benefits for Senior Mobility

- Safety: Autonomous vehicles don't get distracted, tired, or impaired. They can react faster than human drivers and are designed with multiple safety systems.
- Accessibility: Self-driving cars can be designed to accommodate mobility aids like wheelchairs and walkers, making transportation more accessible for those with physical limitations.
- On-demand service: Ride-hailing apps could provide older adults with convenient, 24/7 transportation options.
- Reduced isolation: By making it easier for older adults to get out, autonomous vehicles could help combat the "epidemic of loneliness" that disproportionately affects older adults.
- Extended independence: The ability to call a self-driving car could allow older adults to maintain their independence even after they're no longer able to drive themselves.

Continue Reading

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