

Artist's Self-Portraits Reveal Mind of Alzheimer's Aging Services of California, Sacramento, Calif.

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In the last decade of life, William Utermohlen, an American artist living in London, made perhaps his most significant contribution to society. He created a series of self-portraits, intentionally chronicling his descent into dementia. The complete 19-piece show of these works—titled “Inside Alzheimer’s: Portraits of the Mind”—was displayed at the Art Foundry Gallery in Sacramento in February. Reproductions of key pieces were also displayed at the entrance to the governor’s office in the State Capitol.

“It is our hope that the Utermohlen exhibition will direct the attention of policymakers and the public to the plight of Alzheimer’s sufferers and their caregivers,” says Anne Burns Johnson, president and CEO of Aging Services of California, which brought the exhibition to Sacramento. Held in conjunction with the organization’s February public policy conference, the exhibition was one stop on an international tour that included recent showings in London, New York, Boston, Los Angeles and the portraits’ home gallery in Paris. The Alzheimer’s Association, Northern California and Northern Nevada, partnered with Aging Services of California to extend additional public education resources to the exhibition.

From the moment in 1995 when he learned he had Alzheimer’s until his death in 2007, Utermohlen tried to understand the disease by painting. The portraits vary from 4x5-foot oil-on-canvas pieces to smaller, 1- and 2-foot square watercolors and pencil sketches.

“Sometimes there’s use of beautiful, subtle color,” explains Dr. Bruce Miller, a neurologist with the University of California, San Francisco, who studies artistic creativity in people with brain diseases. “Alzheimer’s affects the right parietal lobe in particular, which is important for visualizing something internally and then putting it onto a canvas,” Miller said. “The art becomes more abstract, the images blurrier and vague, more surrealistic.”

Fuzzy Logic Being Tested for Use in Elder Care University of Missouri Center for Eldercare and Rehabilitation Technology, Columbia, Mo.

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“Fuzzy logic” uses computational mathematics to replicate

human decision making; it allows conclusions to be reached even when information is imprecise. In recent years, researchers have been exploring the technology’s application to systems designed to improve quality of life for the elderly. This year, the University of Missouri and De Montfort University in England are collaborating for the first time on a project to apply a variation of fuzzy logic, called “Type 2,” to activity-recognition systems developed for elder care.

Sensors that monitor individuals’ movements, gait, sleep patterns, vital signs and the like are useful in identifying medical emergencies or anticipating and preventing harmful events, such as falling. Technology experts are hopeful that Type 2 fuzzy logic, when applied to information collected by sensors, will lead to better results when distinguishing, for example, between similar-sounding events such as a person falling and a door closing, thereby reducing false alarms.

The international collaborators hope to have a new prototype operating by the end of their six-month project but speculate it could be another three to five years before the technology is thoroughly tested and approved for wider application in elder care.

Tracking Devices Locate Missing People Fast

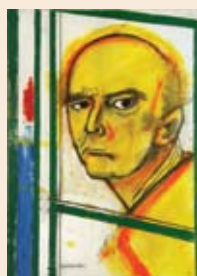
Contact: Project Lifesaver®, www.projectlifesaver.org.

Family caregivers who are responsible for loved ones with dementia—and a tendency to wander away from home—are finding they have an extra safety measure available to them as the use of electronic monitoring systems spreads.

The best-known such program is Project Lifesaver®, an international not-for-profit that partners with local law enforcement agencies, about 640 to date. In Cumberland County, N.C., for example, the Pilot Club of Fayetteville raised money for Project Lifesaver® wristbands that constantly emit a radio signal. If someone wearing one of the wristband transmitters is missing, law enforcement officers can use a tracking device to locate the individual quickly. The Pilot Club has worked with the Mid-Carolina Agency on Aging and the sheriff’s office to distribute the transmitters and receivers and train caregivers and law enforcement personnel in their use. Caregivers have to check the bracelets every day to make sure they are still transmitting and replace batteries when necessary.


A spokesman for the sheriff’s office in Catawba County, N.C., which has also adopted the program, said its shortest search took five minutes and the longest was just under half an hour. Everyone so far has been recovered alive. During a field exercise, response teams took 7.5 minutes to locate their target, a quarter of a mile away. For more information, visit www.projectlifesaver.org.

The Alzheimer’s Association estimates 60 percent of people with dementia will wander away from caregivers or their home and get lost at least once. The association’s own Safe Return program has helped in the safe recovery of more than 8,000 people since 1993, but it lacks the remote tracking capability of the newest monitoring systems. Safe Return participants wear ID jewelry with a toll-free number. Anyone who finds the lost person can call the number to alert the responsible caregiver listed in the



Safe Return database. Registration costs about \$50. The Alzheimer's Association has also joined with not-for-profit MedicAlert to make health records available to emergency responders if a wanderer requires immediate medical attention. For information, see www.alz.org/we_can_help_medicalert_safereturn.asp.

A number of private business ventures are experimenting with various radio-based and satellite tracking technologies, anticipating rising demand for these systems as the population ages. One

such company, Frisco, Texas-based EmFinders, is developing a product it hopes to roll out this year. EmFinders' transmitters, disguised as bracelets or watchbands, will alert 911 dispatchers when activated remotely and will use the cellular network to guide rescuers. The North Texas Enterprise Center for Medical Technology, a not-for-profit that helps entrepreneurs launch technology-related start-ups, is helping EmFinders with its business venture. 

AAHSA Annual Awards

Honoring Excellence in Aging Services

Does your organization stand out as an example of excellence in aging services? Have you, or has someone you know, created an innovative program or demonstrated leadership in the field that deserves special recognition? Give that person or organization the chance to be recognized by entering the 2008 AAHSA Annual Awards.

From your entries, our judges will select the outstanding nominees, who will be invited to Philadelphia, Oct. 12-15, where they will be honored at our 2008 Annual Meeting & Exposition. Additionally, the honored individuals and organizations will be featured in the September/October 2008 *FutureAge*.

Even though not every entry will receive an award, all nominations are carefully considered and often lead to additional opportunities to "tell the story" of members' accomplishments through such avenues as Quality First, education, media outreach, this magazine and other member communications.

It's easy to submit a nomination, by mail or online. Simply fill out a nomination form and answer a few questions telling us for what achievements the person or organization is being nominated, why they deserve the award, and how their accomplishments are furthering the principles of AAHSA Quality First.

For details and judging criteria, please review the AAHSA Annual Awards brochure mailed to association members in February, or visit www.aahsa.org/award to access the brochure or to enter your nomination online.

Nominations must be postmarked or submitted online by *April 30*. If you have questions about the AAHSA Awards, e-mail dcloud@aaahsa.org.

Nominate a person or organization that is making a difference—the deadline is April 30. 