MEET 11 OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL MINDS IN AMERICA

Educational campaign, “Beautiful Minds: Finding Your Lifelong Potential,” identifies Americans who are keeping their minds beautiful without letting age be a barrier.

Beautiful Minds: Finding Your Lifelong Potential is a national health education campaign designed to promote the importance of brain health and empower Americans to develop and maintain healthy, beautiful minds by incorporating key lifestyle factors known as the four dimensions of brain health — diet and nutrition, physical health, mental health and social well-being.

A partnership between life’sDHA™ and the National Center for Creative Aging, the campaign features inspiring stories of individuals who are fulfilling the four dimensions of brain health and accomplishing amazing things well into the second half of their lives.

The campaign also features the 2011 America’s Brain Health Index, a state-by-state ranking of brain health that delivers data on how well Americans are successfully incorporating the four dimensions of brain health into their daily lives and states where more action is needed.

Below are profiles of the 2011 Beautiful Minds finalists, as well as information on where their state ranks in America’s Brain Health Index.

For more information on the campaign, visit www.beautiful-minds.com.

Arthur S. Berger
91, Aventura, Fla.

I use the power of mind to slow the aging process. I wrote five books between ages 67 and 75, was elected to office at 76, founded a project matching school kids with older people at 80, and wrote and acted in a play at 86. Now I advocate for others as Ombudsman for the State of Florida Department of Elder Affairs. One of the most beautiful things a mind can do is to remove the age barrier that stops older people from continuing to do beautiful things. I feel and behave as I did years before, think and believe that I am younger, and deny not my age, but that I am old. I am living proof that the power of mind exists. The use of mind power to reverse my aging process has a significant positive impact on my mental health.

Fun fact: Arthur is a shining example of the many Floridians who are striving for better brain health. The Sunshine State ranks No. 14 on America’s Brain Health Index.
**John Guider**  
62, Nashville, Tenn.

A professional photographer, adventurer, boater and author, I’ve traveled 5,500 miles of America’s waterways, including the entire Mississippi, in small motor-less boats. I built a boat and have been traveling a route known as the Great Loop, a course down the Mississippi, around the Gulf and East Coasts, into the Hudson, the Great Lakes and back to the Mississippi. I go out two months every year and row upwards of 12 hours a day in all types of weather. I’ve changed physically and mentally. My asthma is in remission and my arthritis and chronic bronchitis have gone away. The experience has been so amazing, my photos only tell a portion of the story. So I’ve continued on as a writer as well. Now, at 62, I have everything to look forward to. The best of my art is still ahead.

Fun fact: John’s efforts to achieve better brain health can serve as inspiration to others in his home state of Tennessee, which ranks No. 45 on America’s Brain Health Index.

**Sue Kelley**  
72, Olmsted Township, Ohio

I believe you do not grow old; you become old by not growing. That’s why I volunteer for several charitable causes; eat a healthy diet and exercise regularly; maintain strong friendships with young and old alike; engage in intellectual activities; and recognize the importance of nurturing my spiritual self. I volunteer for Meals on Wheels, Habitat for Humanity and my church. I’m a “grandma” to almost 30 children I know through friends and family. I still maintain friendships from nursing school. I eat healthy foods and take supplements. I’m passionate about bike riding, and I cross-country ski and swim, too. I love music and belong to two choirs. I challenge myself to do things that may be uncomfortable, such as driving to a new location. I practice yoga, Tai Chi and meditation. A beautiful mind continues to grow with learning and good care.

Fun fact: Sue’s home state of Ohio is ranked near the top third of brain-healthiest states, with an America’s Brain Health Index ranking of No. 35.
Melody MacDuffee
59, Mobile, Ala.

I was raised with a strong service ethic, but didn’t find my niche until, at 55, I traveled to Ghana, where I taught West Africans to make jewelry out of their traditional beads. Afterward, to try to help alleviate poverty there, I founded Soul of Somanya, an organization offering training and employment at a living wage to the area’s disadvantaged youth. I’ve loved every minute of teaching in the rainforest under the trees, living as they live, with no running water, no vehicle, intermittent electricity, and limited phone and Internet. Now I’m also teaching myself a wide range of skills on the run — marketing, PR, accounting, trans-Atlantic shipping, volunteer coordination — everything needed to run a small nonprofit. My brain is getting the most exercise it’s had since grad school. My spirit is being fed in a whole new way. For the first time in my life, I’m doing something significant and ongoing for others. I’ve found my niche.

Fun fact: Melody’s achievements can point the way for fellow residents of her home state of Alabama, which ranks No. 47 on American’s Brain Health Index.

Alice and Richard Matzkin
71 and 68, Ojai, Calif.

Alice is a painter and Richard is a sculptor. In late middle age, after raising kids and pursuing a career, our creative fires were rekindled. Responding to our fears and curiosity about growing old, we began several series of artworks exploring aging. We’ve amassed a body of work that we hope will tour museums around the country. Our creativity kept evolving and we found ourselves writing a dual award-winning book, “The Art of Aging: Celebrating the Authentic Aging Self.” We believe an essential element of a beautiful mind is creativity. We keep our minds beautiful by creating our art. When working in our studio, we are ageless and free. We’re busier, more engaged and inspired than at any other time of our lives. There is no time, no worry, just the joy of playing in the present moment.

Fun fact: The Matzkins are showing the way to brain health in their native state of California, which ranks near the middle of America’s Brain Health Index at No. 24.
Benjamin Nickson
86, Washington, D.C.

I exhibit the four dimensions of brain health. I maintain a healthy diet, count calories and take supplements daily. For physical activity I exercise several times a week, practice yoga and take jazz dance classes. I use a treadmill, a sitting elliptical machine, lift 5-pound weights, and do chair Tai Chi. To stay social I go to the sauna with friends for relaxation monthly. I enjoy going to the Kennedy Center, and the Quotidian and Arena Stage theaters. For mental engagement I study Russian, play the cornet and take music lessons. I read the newspaper to dissect world and economic news. I’m learning to play jazz and standards. I saw jazz musician Wynton Marsalis backstage and he asked me to play my cornet with him in 2012. I’m practicing hard for that now.

Fun fact: Benjamin’s home is ranked the second healthiest in the nation, according to *America’s Brain Health Index*.

Delores Porch
61, Gresham, Ore.

After surviving an accident, I now have a healthy body and partake in lifelong learning, volunteering and spiritual growth. Like millions without health insurance, I do everything I can to take care of my body. I’ve been vegetarian for 20 years. I hike or walk, sometimes more than 10 miles a week. I’m a trail leader for Friends of Columbia Gorge, taking people to spectacular sights and discussing history, geology and botany. I decided to go back to college a third time and study respiratory care at Mt. Hood Community College. I find I can still compete with younger minds. I also take religion classes to feed my spiritual side. Recently I began walking a friend’s dog, Rocket. It’s nice to have a companion who’s enthusiastic, but lets you be the follower sometimes. Age doesn’t define the limits of how I live.

Fun fact: Oregon, Delores’ home state, is among the top brain-healthiest areas of the country with a No. 7 ranking on *America’s Brain Health Index*. 
Alvin H. Reiss  
81, New York, N.Y.

Words keep me young. As an accomplished journalist, songwriter, editor and author, I listen carefully to spoken words and play with words in numerous ways — writing words, punning words, inventing word games, writing song lyrics and much more. As a word person I love libraries and recently joined the board of the Westchester County Library System. Professionally I use words as editor of Arts Management, which I co-founded nearly 50 years ago, as a magazine and theater writer. I entered a new phase of my creative life when I completed a full-length musical about life in an over-55 community. I take exercise classes and also belong to a Hikers and Walkers club. Thanks to my wife I eat a wholesome diet and keep my weight steady. Over the years I’ve written books, humor, magazine articles and columns, had several musicals produced, taught college courses and lectured around the world. I’ve never lost my missionary zeal for turning others on to creative involvement. I love life. Take my WORD for it.

Fun fact: Word has it that Alvin is among the majority of New Yorkers who strive for better brain health. The state is ranked No. 17 on America’s Brain Health Index.

Ernestine Shepherd  
75, Baltimore, Md.

I transformed myself from an average middle-aged woman with a sedentary lifestyle, into the World’s Oldest Performing Female Bodybuilder by Guinness World Records. At 56 I started aerobics to lose a few pounds. My teacher introduced me to a former Mr. Universe who got me into weight training. I worked out two hours each day before going to my job as a school secretary. I became a personal trainer, professional model and competitive bodybuilder. I won my first bodybuilding contest in 2008. Now I’m a motivational speaker for seniors’ groups, church groups, conventions and workshops, talking about how a bad trip to find a new swimsuit turned my life around. I’m happier and more fulfilled than at any other time in my life. I want seniors to know it’s never too late to be fit in life. My advice is to be determined, dedicated and disciplined. Do cardio and weight training. But first and foremost, be positive and filled with spirit.

Fun fact: It’s not surprising that Ernestine hails from the state that ranks No. 1 in the nation when it comes to brain health, according to America’s Brain Health Index.
Dr. Mary Turner Maher
83, Mendota Heights, Minn.

Despite debilitating arthritis, three joint replacements and a reconstructed foot, I keep my mind, body and spirit strong through hard work, exercise, nutrition and education. I earned my Ph.D. after raising five children and battling colon cancer. My professional career included working as a school psychologist, director of special education and assistant superintendent. After retirement, I continued to work with low income and culturally diverse urban charter schools as a psychologist. Now I tutor low-income children with reading difficulties. I’ve survived cancer, declared war on osteoarthritis and follow a regimen that includes walking, golfing, biking, swimming and horseback riding. I began playing the violin at 80, still take lessons and practice daily.

Fun fact: More Minnesotans can take a cue from Dr. Maher’s efforts, as her home state ranks No. 26 on America’s Brain Health Index.