

Letter to the editor published January 16th in the Lawrence Journal (Kansas)

Headline: Celebrate Age

To the editor:

I read with dismay the Jan. 6 front-page spread on retaining youth. The author not only equated “healthy aging” with Botox, hair dye and cosmetic surgery but also put her “stamp of approval” on the stereotype by having herself injected with Botox.

The accurate phrase would be “unhealthy pursuit of eternal youth.” Healthy aging begins with banishing the fear of aging and embracing the changes our bodies were designed to make. Aging is another step in the cycle of life. Every other step — birth, school-age, teenage, young adult, adulthood — is eagerly anticipated and celebrated EXCEPT old age.

Go to the card store and look at the birthday cards. Each milestone is confetti and balloons until age 40. Then one is “over-the-hill” and doomed to saggy body parts. Visit the cosmetics section and try to find a cosmetic line that doesn’t offer some form of “age defying” beauty product. Flip through the glossy advertisements and count the number of “geriatric” models used for products not related to aging.

America is obsessed with looking younger, fighting the signs of aging, fearing the next step. We should celebrate wrinkles and gray hair as badges of honor, not to be hidden with dyes or Botox, but to be worn proudly. Instead, we perpetuate the stereotype and fear by glamorizing surgery, injections and chemicals. Google “ageism” and learn about the socially accepted practice of discrimination against a group of people we will all eventually belong to: the older adult.

Gina Bailey-Carbaugh,
Lawrence