

Meet the Campbell-Earley Family



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Cover photo: Tammy Portrait Artist

"I study building and community design and how to better accommodate older adults," Nichole explained. "So right now I'm doing a case study of Haile Plantation, looking at all its social spaces – the cafes, the pubs, all that – and trying to identify what design attributes help define their use for older adults."

Her study involves both focus groups and individual interviews with older adults living in Haile. "The reception from the community has been really great," she said.

By Felicia Lee

The project came about to help guide community developers.

"Haile is what is classified as a New Urbanist community," she said. (New Urbanism promotes the development of walkable, sustainable, mixed-use communities.) "A developer was interested in finding out how to better develop New Urbanist communities for older adults, as the population has been changing so much recently. To start developing an improved community model, I had to study a New Urbanist community.

It was also fortunate that Haile attracts residents of all ages and has several social spaces, Nichole said. "So this is a perfect place to do a case study to help develop this new community model," which she has coined "Ageless New Urbanism."



Photos by Tammy Portrait Artist

June 2014, Article [excerpt] about Dr. Nichole Campbell

Nichole's unusual career choice was triggered by an ugly building. "The whole thing is kind of funny because nobody's ever heard of what I do for a living," she said. "The long story is my first career was as a promotion director of an ABC television station. When I got promoted to management at 23 or 24, there were not any windows in my entire department and functionally the building was really awful – TV stations are notoriously ugly places. I was coming in before the sun was up and leaving after the sun went down, and I really started being impacted by my environment. So I started reading a lot on architecture and design and how that influences people's health and behavior, and it inspired me to switch fields."

Her interest in senior-friendly environments was a direct offshoot of her interest in livable spaces. "If you think about it, it makes perfect sense," she said. "If you're designing something for people

in wheelchairs, there are certain design attributes, like no steps at front entrances, that can also be helpful in many other contexts, such as a young mother who has a toddler and an infant and is constantly carrying groceries and pushing a stroller into the house. And a lever door handle is very convenient for people with arthritis, but it's also convenient for someone who's carrying something, like an infant. When my children were young, I'd open doors with my elbow and to do things like that, because I didn't have extra hands available."

"If I studied college students, what's good for them is not necessarily good for little kids or older adults," she added. "But if I study older adults, what's useful for them is more useful for a greater number of people. It's just more helpful to study that group so you can accommodate a wider range of individuals when you design buildings."