



*Serving the greater New River Valley, Virginia*

## March 15 Chapter Meeting

### Animal-Human Relationships

At the Virginia Tech Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine (VMCVM), Dr. Bess Pierce leads the Center for Animal Human Relationships, an academic center conducting instructional, research, and outreach programs to foster a greater understanding of the mutual benefits and the challenges associated with human-animal interactions. At our March meeting, she will share some of her experiences with dogs in a variety of work settings.

She served more than 22 years on active and reserve duty in the US Army Veterinary Corps. Early in her military career, she developed a passion for working dogs and their handlers, which continues to this day. Dr. Pierce has experienced a variety of assignments worldwide including California, Japan, and the Military Working Dog Center in San Antonio, Texas. She is currently a colonel in the US Army Reserve, assigned to the Public Health Command Region-Europe.



She joined the VMCVM faculty in 2007.

All members of the chapter with active email addresses now are receiving occasional messages from AARP Blacksburg Chapter. Be sure that this address is in your contacts lists or your address book. If you have not gotten one or more of these messages, check your Junk Mail file where they may reside, then add aarp-blacksburg@gmail.com to your addresses.

## President's Column by Don Creamer



*"The word March does not have to do from the homonym, which means to walk deliberately. Instead, the name of the month dates back the Roman calendar. March was named for Mars, the Roman god of war."*

*"March was the first month of the year until the Gregorian calendar began to be used in 1752."*

*"March was called Hlyda or Lide in Old English, which is a reference to the loud winds."*

For some, the best meaning of the month of March is that it no longer is February. The weather in February this year did not treat us kindly, but Spring is on the way.

Intense planning for AARP was the hallmark of February for me. We have arranged for Dr. Bill Thomas, a world-renowned geriatrician, to come to Blacksburg on April 23. The event is sponsored by AARP Blacksburg and the Lifelong Learning Institute (LLI) at Virginia Tech with the collaboration and support of our organization partners. You can learn more about Dr. Thomas by visiting his website: <https://drbillthomas.org/>. You can register for the Blacksburg event at <https://drbillthomas.org/event/dr-bill-thomas-virginia-tech/>. The event is free to the public. My thanks to Pat Hyer for her invaluable help all along the way to making this event happen. She is a logistical and visionary genius.

I continue to work with the LLI Program Committee that now is focused on the curriculum for Fall 2016. Brian Jacks,

## Upcoming Events

- March 21: AARP dinner (p. 3)
- April 1: Easybridge classes (p. 2)
- April 9: The Big Event (p. 5)
- April 23: Dr. Bill Thomas, aging expert (p. 2)
- May 12: Sharyn McCrumb (p. 2)

## Renew Membership

If you enjoy receiving this newsletter and other communications from the Blacksburg AARP chapter and appreciate the chapter's programs and activities, please pay your local dues by the end of March. The mailing list thereafter will include only paid members. Use the form on the last page. If you are unsure whether you wrote that check for \$15, ask Tom Alston, membership chair: [tpalston@gmail.com](mailto:tpalston@gmail.com)



## Blacksburg Chapter #2613

Chapter meetings are the third Tuesday of each month at the Blacksburg Community Center, Patrick Henry Drive at 11:30 am. There are no meetings in July or August. Board meetings are the first Tuesday of each month at the Blacksburg Community Center at 10:00 am.

Please bring a **food donation** (a can or box of non-perishable food) to the AARP chapter meeting. We collect food at each monthly chapter meeting for the food banks in Blacksburg and Christiansburg.



The Lifelong Learning Institute at Virginia Tech and AARP Blacksburg invite you to an exclusive matinee performance of Dr. Bill Thomas' Age of Disruption Tour. One of the nation's leading crusaders in the fight against ageism, Thomas' performance debunks the myths of aging, explores the "super powers" of older age, and invites audiences to join the effort to eliminate stigma and discrimination based on age and ability.

Blending myth and science, live music and storytelling, Dr. Thomas asks the question "what if?" What if we all lived in a world that saw aging not as a process of decline but as a vivid and enlivening process that presents us with extraordinary risks, and rewards?

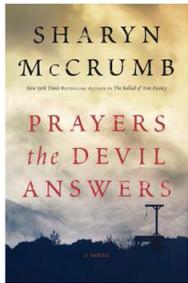
Date & Time: Saturday, April 23, 10:00–11:30 a.m.

Location: Goodwin Hall, Virginia Tech campus, corner of Prices Fork Road and Stanger Street  
Parking available adjacent to the building, no pass required

Fee: The event is free and open to the public.

Please register at <https://drbillthomas.org/event/dr-bill-thomas-virginia-tech/>

## Sharyn McCrumb to Visit Blacksburg Public Library



Are you a fan of Sharyn McCrumb? If so, please save the date: **Thursday, May 12 at 6:30 PM at the Blacksburg Library.** Sharyn McCrumb, *New York Times* Bestselling Author of *The Ballad of Tom Dooley*, *The Rosewood Casket*, and many other acclaimed novels, is coming to talk about her newest book titled *Prayers the Devil Answers!*

*Prayers the Devil Answers* is a Depression-era novel about a female sheriff of a rural Tennessee mountain town. *Atria Book* describes this newest release as "atmospheric and suspenseful" and with "rich prose, captivating folklore and masterful historical detail." Set to be released in early May, *Prayers* and other titles will be available for purchase at the library.

For more information about Sharyn McCrumb, please visit [www.sharynmccrumb.com/](http://www.sharynmccrumb.com/). Please contact Elizabeth Sensabaugh at the Blacksburg Library with questions at (540) 552-8246.

## Seniors Learn to Read eBooks in LLI–Library Class by Elizabeth Sensabaugh

In February of this year, Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library partnered with Lifelong Learning Institute (LLI) at Virginia Tech to offer a course titled *Enjoying eBooks and audio books on your Mobile Device with OverDrive and the Blacksburg Library*. Four library staff members worked with a group of eleven seniors and their varied devices to help them become more comfortable with technology and OverDrive, a resource that the library offers at no charge to patrons.

OverDrive provides digital access to audio and ebooks, and the goal of the course was for participants to each leave with an OverDrive book on her device. Participants brought a variety of devices including iPads, Kindle, Kindle Fire, Nook Color, android devices, and smartphones. A brief power point presentation was delivered by library staff to demonstrate some of the OverDrive features and then the students worked together in groups (determined by similar devices) to select and place books on their devices.

Following the course a survey was given to all participants. The feedback that the group provided was favorable and there was interest in further teachings about other library resources including Hoopla, Genealogy & History, OneClick Digital, Freading and more. We look forward to partnering with LLI in the near future! However, please know that you don't have to wait for another LLI course offering to learn more about your device or library resources. Book-a-Librarian appointments at the Blacksburg Library can be scheduled by calling (540) 552-8246. A designated library staff member will work with you one-on-one to assist you!



(President's Column *continued*)

Volunteer Coordinator with the Virginia AARP, has proposed to conduct a one-session event on Life Reimagined. I continue to seek your input for LLI programs that can be sponsored as a LivingWell@50+ event.

Members of your Board are very busy with plans for the Health and Wellness Fair scheduled for September 14, 2016. Jennie Reilly, Angela Little, and Wendy Baldwin are fully engaged in this planning and inform me that planning is yielding real progress. See elsewhere in this newsletter for their update on the event.

Thais Beams and Nola Elliott are spearheading plans for the June picnic that will constitute our main celebratory event for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Blacksburg chapter. The event this year will be held at the home of Terry and Sue Wildman. Their address will be published later when the final details of the event are complete. We plan that the event will be partly catered with Jimmy John's sandwiches. Attendees will be invited to bring side dishes and desserts. We anticipate inviting attendees to bring whatever they prefer to drink, but this decision has not yet been made.

Members of your Board of Directors have been very busy lately, all in the name of AARP Blacksburg. We owe a special debt of gratitude to Val Coluni and Alison Galway for their work on the Legislative Committee. With the General Assembly in session, they have been very busy keeping up with legislative initiatives with support of AARP Virginia. See their report on our website at [www.blacksburgaarp.org/legislative-report0316.pdf](http://www.blacksburgaarp.org/legislative-report0316.pdf) and on page 5. Nola Elliott and Ben Crawford continue to represent us well as they carry out Federal advocacy liaisons.

Other members, on the Board and not, are contributing significantly to AARP programs and activities. Thank you.

I applied recently for a position on the AARP Chapter Advisory Team (CAT) to serve the Southern region that includes Virginia and several surrounding states. I interviewed during the last week of February with the chairperson of CAT and believe that involvement in this role would enhance our chapter standing with the state and national offices of AARP. However, I learned during the first week of March that I was not selected for this position.

Think Spring!

## **AARP Hosts Dinner in Shawsville March 21, 5–7 pm, Hale's**

**I**n 2016 we will host quarterly social dinners with the AARP Virginia office. AARP members throughout the New River Valley are invited to attend and meet others in the area. Learn what AARP is doing in our region and meet new people in a fun setting. The Monday, March 21, dinner

## **Health Fair Committee Announces New Sponsors** *by Angela Little*

**T**he AARP Health and Wellness Fair Committee is working hard to enlist exhibitors for this year's Fair. We are excited to have our first two Gold Sponsors registered, The Hearing Clinic and Radford Health and Rehab Center. Dr. Richard Harrell of The Hearing Clinic in Blacksburg will be providing hearing screenings to attendees. We appreciate his faithful support of this event since 2010. The Radford Health and Rehab Center has but raised their level of engagement to Gold! Look for more sponsors to be highlighted in the next issue of the newsletter. To learn more about the event, email [anglitttle33@gmail.com](mailto:anglitttle33@gmail.com).

As we continue our planning, we would like to recognize our 2016 Fair partners. A major attraction of the Fair is the participation of our partner—VCOM—who brings faculty and students to provide free medical services and screenings such as blood pressure, sugar, body mass and nutrition advice, bone density, stress management information, and musculoskeletal exams. They also assist exhibitors in setting up, serving refreshments, giving directions and help in other ways to make the Fair a success.

Since VCOM no longer has space to host the event, Christiansburg Parks and Recreation Center has stepped in as our new partner to provide the space. The staff, especially Tammy Caldwell and Brad Epperley, have been working with our committee to make space to accommodate all of our needs, including screenings and demonstrations. We think the facility is an ideal location to hold our Fair.

Several Virginia Tech students have enhanced our committee. AARP Field Study Intern, Abbey O'Farrell, has tutored us on how to use Google Docs and Google Sheets. Her guidance has been phenomenal. Five Service Learning students are working with us in various capacities based on their skills and interests. We welcome and thank Madelyn Newcomb, Jacob Daugherty, Ian Linkous, Max Swomley, and Jared Lett.

We are using other health fairs in the area to promote AARP and to advertise our upcoming fair. We will participate next in the Carilion New River Valley Medical Center Women's Lifestyle Expo at the NRV Mall on April 9 from 10–2.

is at Hale's Restaurant, 7643 Roanoke Street, in Shawsville. Come and go as you have time.

See the our website ([www.blacksburgaarp.org](http://www.blacksburgaarp.org)) for details—and register today if possible! Please also share this invitation with friends, contacts, and family. Thank you.

Register here: <https://aarp.cvent.com/Shawsville3212016VA> or call 1-877-926-8300

## Have Fun and Improve Your Memory: Learn To Play Bridge—free lessons begin April 1

article and photos by Susan Bricken

Where are my car keys? What is my brother's phone number? What was I supposed to get at the grocery store? This sort of thing may not have been happening to you, but I noticed it was happening to me with increasing—and disturbing—frequency. Many of us fear that our memory is slipping or eroding. We can either live with that fear every day or fight it at every opportunity. I chose to fight, so I looked into what, if anything, I could do to maintain my memory function as long as possible.

I learned that—no surprise here—the speed with which the brain processes information slows down with age. I also learned, however, that the brain can continue to develop at any age—contrary to the conventional wisdom, you can teach an old dog new tricks. Indeed, superstar brain researcher Professor Marian Diamond, former Director of Lawrence Hall of Science at the University of California, Berkeley, believes that the major discovery that, with proper stimulation, the brain can continue to develop at any age has revolutionized our thinking about aging by emphasizing the importance of growth and learning throughout life.

Asked whether she thought that learning to play bridge would constitute stimulation, Professor Diamond replied, “Absolutely. Learning any new hobby and continuing the education process will stimulate the brain, and the game of bridge would be a fun way to do it.” For many years, Diamond has been enthusiastically promoting her “use it or lose it” theory, encouraging her students to remain active, mentally as well as physically, for the rest of their lives.

In short, assuming that your doctor has ruled out the likelihood that any slowing of your memory has a medical cause, the key to maintaining, or even improving, your memory is to take up an activity that requires you to learn and to think. The activity that I chose is the game of bridge. I began playing nearly two years ago at the Blacksburg Bridge Club.

I found bridge to be an astonishing game. Learning to play it is much like learning to speak English—it is quite easy to learn enough to get by and have fun, but there is a lot to learn to get really good at it. Since bridge entails constant learning, use of memory, concentration, and judgment, it is a perfect mental exercise. In fact, bridge has been proven to increase memory and concentration skills and to help develop improved judgment and logic.

There is a lot to recommend bridge in addition to the game. Playing is low in cost. Regular games get me out of the house and fill a lot of otherwise slow afternoons. And, the social interaction with the other players provides the chance to meet people, to travel, to make new friends with whom to attend social functions, and more.

Best of all, though, is the game of bridge itself. It is endlessly challenging, infuriating, and fascinating. Ask any of the Blacksburg players who are already hopelessly addicted, some of whom regularly drive 1½ hours to get to the games. One way or another, you will have so much fun you won't even remember that it's actually good for you.

Now is a great time to get started. The Blacksburg Bridge Club is offering Easybridge!™ lessons to introduce you to this fabulous pastime. The first four lessons are FREE. The lessons are for complete beginners, for people returning to bridge after some years, and for social players who want to learn modern bridge. It will be held on **Fridays from 12:30 to 3:00, starting on Friday, April 1, 2016.** *Easybridge!* books (winner of the American Bridge Teacher's Association 1998 Book of the Year Award) will be available. You'll be playing bridge your very first day and meeting other new players in the community. These lessons are open to everyone and every age, so bring your friends and family with you and learn together. If you need a partner, someone will be there to play with you, and fun is guaranteed every week. Free parking and free refreshments. The Blacksburg Bridge Club is located in the Blacksburg Recreation Center, 725 Patrick Henry Drive, Blacksburg. To register or for more information, contact Susan Bricken, [sbricken@yahoo.com](mailto:sbricken@yahoo.com), 540-998-9751.

This story also appeared in *The Roanoke Times* March 5, 2016.

### Easybridge Classes Begin Friday, April 1

4 free lessons

12:30–3:00, Blacksburg Recreation Center

No partner necessary

Contact Susan Bricken:  
[sbricken@yahoo.com](mailto:sbricken@yahoo.com), 540-998-9751

### Members of the Blacksburg Bridge Club





**1. Financial Exploitation.** Bills are still being discussed in the House and Senate. Passage looks extremely favorable. Bills require the State Division of Social Services to report to law enforcement any financial exploitation beyond a specified dollar amount. AARP has a 2016 Legislative Priority to support legislation that strengthens laws to increase prosecution of abuse perpetrators. These bills would accomplish that.

**2. Catawba Hospital.** The General Assembly has rejected the Governor's request for budget funds, which could lead to the closing of the hospital. Instead they requested funds to develop a statewide plan to identify the services needed to properly care for the elderly who have special needs.

**3. State Pipeline Surveying Law.** This law allows natural gas pipeline companies to send crews onto private property without the owner's consent so long as they give advance notice about their intent. Our two representatives (Senator Edwards and Delegate Yost) submitted bills to repeal this 2014 law. Their bills were not approved. This situation is very contentious. Further efforts are underway by a number of community organizations to deal with this situation.

**4. Registered Nurses.** AARP had a 2016 Legislative Priority to give advanced practice registered nurses full authority to practice to the full extent of their training and skills in order to more effectively serve those in underserved areas and/or in their homes. A number of bills were submitted to accomplish this, but the General Assembly rejected all of these. Some minor actions were approved but far short of satisfying the increasing needs within many of our communities.

**5. State Ombudsman Program** (to provide help to those in nursing homes/adult care homes) and **Respite Care Program for Caregivers** (to provide a small financial grant to those care givers who are taking care of the needy in their homes). AARP had 2016 Legislative Priorities to seek funds through budget amendments to continue and/or expand these programs. The General Assembly did not approve either one of these requests.

**6. Low-Income Housing.** Blacksburg Town Council unanimously voted final blessing on development of low-income housing, completing a package of \$1.4 million of Town and Montgomery County tax incentives. In addition, the Federal government provided \$5.5 million in incentives. Planned for 11 acres in north Blacksburg, Fieldstone (Pinnacle Construction and Development of Charlottesville) is a 144-apartment complex that will be restricted to households whose income is less than 40% of the area's median, or to people older than 55 whose income is less than 60% of the area's median.

**T**he Big Event is Virginia Tech's largest service event with 8,050 student volunteers completing 1,043 community service projects in 2015. The Big Event gives students a way to simply say "thank you" to our community and show appreciation to ALL residents and non-profits in Blacksburg, Christiansburg, and the New River Valley completely free of charge.

Examples of previous projects include general yard work, painting fences, washing windows, cleaning, and mulching at homes, churches, and other community locations. Projects cannot last longer than 4 hours and may not involve power tools. If needed, tools can be provided by The Big Event

No project is too big or too small for The Big Event, and there are no socioeconomic requirements to qualify! Simply complete the form online, and we will be in touch with you before the event to confirm the project details.

Request your project online January 1-March 15, 2016.  
bigevent@vt.edu www.vtbigevent.org 540-440-1244

## The AARP Tax-Aide program

The 2016 tax-aide program begins February 1 and ends April 15. The location is the Christiansburg Recreation Center (Senior Activity Room). If you need help with your taxes, please call to schedule an appointment: 382-2349.

Counselors will be available for preparing taxes according to this schedule:

1:00 – 4:00 pm, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday

9:00 am – noon, Saturday

If you are interested in volunteering with this program, please contact Pat Ballard: pballard@vt.edu • 382-1189

## Chapter Officers 2016

President • Don Creamer, dgc2@vt.edu

Vice President • Ben Crawford, ben.crawford@vt.edu

Secretary • Sally Anna Stapleton, sanna418@gmail.com

Treasurer • Pat Ballard, pballard@vt.edu

## Board of Directors

• 2016—Tom Alston, Tina King, Sally Anna Stapleton

• 2017—Pat Hyer, Jerry Niles, Shirley Peterson

• 2018—Wendy Baldwin, Ryan Martin, Ray Van Dyke

Visit Your AARP Chapter Website at [www.blacksburgaarp.org](http://www.blacksburgaarp.org)



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 Blacksburg, VA 24062

**Nonprofit  
 Organization  
 U.S. Postage  
 PAID  
 Blacksburg, VA  
 Permit No. 32**

**AARP** Member Application for 2016

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse/Partner: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Annual (*Calendar Year*) Dues: **\$15.00** (*includes spouse or partner*)

New \_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_ 90+ years old (free) \_\_\_

Please consider an additional donation to support our AARP chapter and its projects. \$10\_\_\_ \$25\_\_\_ \$50\_\_\_ \$100\_\_\_ Other \$\_\_\_

Donations to the Blacksburg Chapter help us carry out our mission and community service activities while keeping member dues as low as possible. However, donations to the chapter are not tax deductible.

Please make your check payable to "Blacksburg AARP Chapter #2613."  
 Mail the check and this form to: .

Tom Alston - P.O. Box 10082 • Blacksburg, VA 24062