

Blacksburg News



March 2007, Volume 24, Issue 3



Ben Crawford got Jim Wilson and Frank Lau on cell phone camera, as we took a brief respite.

Tax Aide Program Up and Running

The Blacksburg AARP TaxAide program is finally settling down after a rocky start. Personal issues, equipment deficiencies, new formats, and the usual lack of software training, slowed us down. Jim Wilson, Charlie Coale, Jim Hardell, and myself have now jelled into a force for good tax preparations! And we have survived an AARP/IRS inspection. Pat Ray has been great on the phone, helping to set up the schedule.

As of Sunday the 11th, we should be up to 63 tax preparations, with 4 weeks to go, so we should at least equal last year's output of 126.

The YMCA Thrift Store has worked well. Our home base continues to be the Senior Center, but because of space and equipment limitations, we shall look into expanding the YMCA station to handle more equipment next year. The overall goal will be to handle walk-ins instead of appointments.

Thanks for your support, and please promote our FREE service — tax preparation and e-file. It saves our clients hundreds of dollars on average.

— Frank Lau

If a yellow dot is on your mail label, you owe 2007 dues.

March Meeting Focuses on Spring Gardening

When March roars in, many of us get that familiar itch to get out into our yards and gardens and start to dig or plant or weed. Satisfy some of that yearning by attending AARP's meeting on Tuesday, March 20.

Franklyn Moreno, President, and Angie Hall, Coordinator, of the New River Valley Master Gardeners, will present a program entitled "NRV Master Gardeners Helping our Community." Remember, 11:30 AM is brown bag lunch time, with our program starting at noon.

And put down a note for our subsequent program on April 17th, when Dianne Rhody-Scott presents a program on Adult Foster Care.

— Harriett Cooper

Don't forget

Volunteer Recognition Celebration

Blacksburg Community Center
Saturday, March 31

10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

- Plenty of good finger food
- Entertainment by the Sweet Adelines
- Nominate your outstanding volunteer for recognition
- Pick up nomination forms at YMCA

See story, page 7

2007 Blacksburg AARP Chapter Board

Officers

President: *Jim Gaines* gaines@vt.edu
1st Vice President: *Jim Wightman* jpdad@bev.net
2nd Vice President: *Angela Little* anglittl@naxs.net
Secretary: *Virgil Cook* vcCook@vt.edu
Treasurer: *Brian Allen* mballen@prodigy.net
Associate Treasurer: *June Schmidt* schmidtj@vt.edu

Board of Directors

Class of 2007:

Don Elson elsond@vt.edu
Tom Jeffers kats7772000@yahoo.com
Harriet Damant hdamant@verizon.net

Class of 2008:

Curt Finch crfinch@vt.edu
Margaret Kates connie@vt.edu
Frank Lau franklau1@msn.com

Class of 2009:

Dan Fleming dbflem@vt.edu
Nancy Eiss neiss@vt.edu
Jo Ann Underwood joa@vt.edu

Committee Chairs

Caring:

Lula Roberts lula.roberts1@verizon.net
Kathy Jeffers kats7772000@yahoo.com

Chaplains:

Ken Dawson kdawson@vt.edu
Norman Grover ngrover@vt.edu

Chapter Awards:

Don Elson elsond@vt.edu
Jim Owens jowen@vt.edu

Community Service:

Mike Sporkowski eagle1@vt.edu

Financial Planning:

Dale Oliver jdoliver@vt.edu

Health Care:

Jo Ann Underwood joa@vt.edu
Harriet Damant hdamant@verizon.net

History:

Jim Gaines gaines@vt.edu

Hospitality:

Cerrie Coil cerrie@verizon.net
Mary Ellen Moore mem@vt.edu

Blacksburg AARP Chapter “Virginia Large Chapter of the Year, 2006”

Chapter meetings are the *third* Tuesday of each month at the Blacksburg Community Center, Patrick Henry Drive, at 11:30 a.m. Bring a bag lunch; the club provides napkins, coffee, and tea; the program starts at noon.

Board meetings are the *first* Tuesday of each month at the Blacksburg Community Center, Patrick Henry Drive, at 9:30 a.m.

The newsletter is distributed each month except July, August, and December.

AARP Blacksburg Chapter #2613
P.O. Box 10082, Blacksburg, VA 24062
Web: <http://civic.bev.net/aarp/>

Legislative:

Dan Fleming dbflem@vt.edu

Membership:

Jim Wightman jpdad@bev.net

Nominating: *Class of 2007*

Program:

Harriett Cooper chayabrona@verizon.net

Public Relations:

Norman and Nancy Eiss neiss@vt.edu

Telephone:

Harriett Cooper chayabrona@verizon.net
Margaret Kates connie@vt.edu
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Virginia Tech Retirees Association Liaison:

Jim Wightman jpdad@bev.net

Ways And Means:

Margaret Kates connie@vt.edu
Jim Moore mem@vt.edu

Webmaster:

Connie Anderson connie@vt.edu

State Legislative Update

The General Assembly completed their work, until the Governor acts on passed legislation and they return to Richmond on April 4th to consider his recommendations. More than 3,000 bills were introduced and more than 1,000

Town Government Update

Two major initiatives are coming up for public hearings in the next couple of months.

The Long Range Planning Committee of the Planning Commission has prepared a Mixed Use Zoning Ordinance for consideration. A public hearing was held by the Planning Commission on Tuesday March 6. After the hearing and discussion, the Commission voted to send the Ordinance to the Town Council for a public hearing — which will be held April 10. The draft ordinance is available on the town's website. Citizen comments are welcome at any time via email, phone, or letter, or at the public hearing.

The Comprehensive Plan Task Force has completed its revision of the Comprehensive Plan for Blacksburg. A public information session will be held on March 14, 4 to 6 p.m. at the Rec Center. Public hearings will be held by Planning Commission and Town Council at their regular meetings in April and May. The revised plan is available on the town's website; hard copies are housed at the public library and at the town hall. Citizen input is welcome at any time via email, phone, or letter, or at the public hearings.

The Town's 2007-08 budget is now in preparation. Interested citizens should contact a council member for more information.

were passed. Many of these were perfunctory resolutions commending individuals and events.

Virginia AARP-backed legislation had mixed success. Their long-term-care bills passed both the House and Senate unanimously and are expected to be signed by the Governor. These bills are the first step in allowing Virginians to have options in receiving long-term-care services, particularly the choice to stay in their homes as long as possible.

Other AARP-backed bills approved include establishing a Senior Alert Program similar to the Amber Alert program for missing children, and improvements in the Virginia Caregiver Grant Program increasing the eligibility threshold to qualify for a caregiver grant of \$500. Another bill establishes a sex offender registry for nursing homes.

Payday lending reform backed by Virginia AARP and other groups ended up being killed after disagreement between the House and Senate over capping interest rates for loans. This issue is expected to be back on the legislative agenda again next year. The proposed increase in the minimum wage was also killed.

Electric re-regulation was passed overwhelmingly despite strong opposition from consumer and environmental groups including Virginia AARP, the Virginia Inter-

faith Council, and the Sierra club. Critics including Tech professor Irene Leech, President of the Virginia Citizens Consumer Council maintain the legislation was rushed through with insufficient consumer protections. Utility companies have spent millions in campaign contributions and gifts to legislators, particularly those holding key committee assignments related to the legislation. Veteran *Virginian Pilot* reporter Margaret Edds state: "In a quarter-century of Assembly watching, I don't think I've seen a bill of such magnitude sweep through with narrower scrutiny or less understanding." Delegates Dave Nutter and Jim Shuler opposed the bill and, disappointingly, Senator John Edwards supported it, including in the committee that handled the legislation.

Other bills of interest found an increase in the health insurance credit for retired teachers and a gradual increase in the state income tax threshold, thus removing many low-income residents from the tax rolls. Also passed was eminent domain legislation, further protecting homeowners from having their property seized by the government except for very limited use. Local member Nancy McCord was very active in helping get this reform passed.

—Dan Fleming, Legislative Chair

New River Haiku

Spring

As twilight peepers
Raise their chorus, hidden safe
On streamside branches.

Gathering up on
Poverty Creek, chill water glides,
Reading the sky.

— Elizabeth H. Spencer

My creed is this:

Happiness is the only good.
The place to be happy is here.
The time to be happy is now.
The way to be happy
is to help make others so.

— Ingersoll

When the Eyes (Ayes) Don't Have It

Color blindness is an interesting physiological phenomenon, with some interesting results. During World War I it was found that color-blind observers could often detect camouflaged enemy gun emplacements from an airplane that a person with "normal" eyesight could not see.

Coming closer home — my father's grandfather, a prominent clergyman in Charleston, South Carolina, is reported to have appeared before the family one Sunday morning, ready to go into the pulpit, wearing a brilliant red vest — which in those days, and in that church, and in Charleston — could have caused a "conflagration." The family had a hard time convincing him the offending garment was not a "clerical" brown.

His type of color blindness was evidently passed to his daughter through a recessive gene, and did not strike again until I came along — evidently through a combination of recessive genes through my father and my mother, both of whom had "normal" eyesight.

The earliest indication that I can remember that I did not see some colors the same way others do was when, as a boy, I asked my father to indicate for me the different shades of color of some postage stamps in my collection. What was perfectly clear to my father was anything but distinct to my eyes. We did not think anything of it at the time.

The next time was in the physics laboratory as a student at VPI, in an experiment involving the use of an optical pyrometer to measure the temperature of an incandescent object by matching the color of the object with the color of the glowing filament in the pyrometer. Dr. Robeson thought I was rather stupid

not to be able to detect the different shades of color. Still, no one suggested color blindness.

It was a more serious problem when I was a research engineer in the General Electric laboratory in Schenectady. Various companies were competing for the contracts to supply their particular alloy heating wires, and rods for the electric ranges, heaters, and electric furnaces. I was given sample wires from the various companies and a report from the manufacturing company showing the temperature at which their material fused. I set up a test board with standard lengths of each metal, and used an optical pyrometer to check the temperature at which each sample fused. My results did not jibe with those of the different competing companies. Still, no one knew what the trouble was.

Fortunately for me, I transferred at that time to the railway locomotive division in Erie, Pennsylvania.

Several years later, when I became convinced that people were more important for me than the engineering problems I was dealing with, the "Hound of Heaven" kept pursuing me and I forsook my first love — engineering — and studied for the Presbyterian ministry. In graduate work at the University of Edinburgh, I indulged, from time to time, in Scotland's national game of GOLF, on the Braids Links. My friends noticed that after we teed off, I always picked up the yellow tees — never the red ones. Red tees in green grass blended in my vision. Even a red rose in a green bush blends unless I get close. Fortunately, traffic lights are seldom arranged against a green, or red, background.

The common form of color blindness is now easily detected by

the use of a simple chart. That kind of testing was not around soon enough for me.

I still don't know which company got the contract for heating elements from the General Electric Company, and frankly, I don't much care, because I always burn the toast regardless of whose electric toaster I use.

— Ellison Smyth
from *Retrospect, or Growing up in Blacksburg and Other Tales through a Long Life*

LTC Insurance Guides Available from SCC

Virginians considering long-term care insurance (LTC) coverage for themselves or their parents now have a useful new guide from the State Corporation Commission (SCC)'s Bureau of Insurance.

Consumers can request free individual copies of the *Virginia Long-Term Care Insurance Rate Guide*, as well as *A Shopper's Guide to Long-Term Care Insurance*, by calling the Bureau of Insurance toll-free at 1-877-310-6560. Consumers who are hearing- or speech-impaired may call through the SCC's Telecommunications Device for the Deaf and hard of hearing (TDD) at 804-371-9206.

Consumers may also find the *Virginia Long-Term Care Insurance Rate Guide* and additional information about long-term care insurance on the Bureau's website at <<http://www.scc.virginia.gov/division/boi>>

— Dan Fleming

In the Spring a livelier iris changes on the burnish'd dove;

In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.

— Alfred Lord Tennyson
Locksley Hall

Membership Notes

Our chapter membership now stands at 400! Our good news is that 222 members have already renewed their membership for 2007. 95 members paid their 2006 dues but now owe for 2007. A convenient membership renewal form is found on the last page of this Newsletter. Won't you take a moment now and fill out the form, attach a check, and mail it to the address noted on the form? You may want to consider becoming a LifeTime member at the bargain basement price of \$100 per single / couple and never have to worry again about whether you owe the present year dues.

Our local chapter dues run for the calendar year commencing January 1st. Members not paying their 2007 dues by March 1st will have a yellow dot on their March Newsletter; a red dot on their April Newsletter. Those members not paying their 2007 dues by April 15th will be dropped from the membership list and will not receive a May Newsletter.

New Members joining since our January Newsletter include Jeff & Sandra Birch; Elaine & Virgil Cook; Bill & Peggy Lavery; Nancy McCord; Evaline & Joe Trice; John Tuttle; and John & Pat White. Be sure to welcome them to our chapter.

A surprising number of AARP national members do not know there is a local chapter. If you know of such persons, encourage them to become members of this local chapter. In fact, why don't you recruit a new member into your chapter and receive \$1 off next year's dues? Any questions about membership can be directed to Jim Wightman at 552.2007 or jpdad@bev.net.

— Jim Wightman



From left: Nancy Andrews, President Jim Gaines, and Ann Alexander at the February chapter meeting.

Jim's Jots: The President's Message for March 2007

Crime, unceasingly, targets senior Virginians

On Thursday, April 19, 2007, from 8am-1:30pm, at the Christiansburg Rec Center (1600 North Franklin St.) Center (1600 N. Franklin St.) the Virginia Attorney General's Office and the Western Virginia TRIAD partnerships will hold a conference for seniors and those interested in issues involving senior citizens.

Lunch and seminars are provided at no charge. Angela Little has provided our chapter with 30 copies of the registration form, and we can get more if we need them. Elaine and I have attended two of these programs, and they are truly great.

The local contact is Montgomery County, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, 210 S. Pepper

St., Suite D, Phone no: 382-5775. The registration form must be mailed by April 12th. Please attend if at all possible.

Driver Safety Instructors

We simply must create a cadre of driver safety instructors. We have been feeding on instructors from other chapters all these years, and it is time for us to return the favor. Curt Finch is our chairman for this effort, and he is currently in training to become a driver safety instructor. Our chapter contains literally hundreds of people who would be great instructors, so please come forward. Call me at 552-6851 if this plea rings a bell with you, and I will get you started. Thanks.

— Jim Gaines

Benjamin Franklin, at the age of sixteen, was already a published writer. Under the pen name of Silence Dogood, supposedly a widow who ran her late husband's shop, Franklin proposed the scandalous idea that a woman could run a business just as well, or even better, than a man. Even more scandalous, he suggested that women might also succeed as doctors, lawyers, or even preachers!

Blacksburg AARP Board Minutes, Chapter 2613

March 6, 2007

1. **Call to order**—Jim Gaines, President, called the meeting to order at 9:35. Members present: Brian Allen, Connie Anderson, Virgil Cook, Harriett Cooper, Nancy Eiss, Donald Elson, Curt Finch, Jim Gaines, Margaret Kates, Carl McDaniels, Mary Ellen Moore, Dale Oliver, June Schmidt, Jo Ann Underwood, Jim Wightman
2. **Approval of the Agenda**—*Additional item: June Schmidt requested that an announcement on voluntary recognition be added.*
3. **Approval of previous minutes**—President Gaines called for the vote. The motion passed.
4. **Volunteer Recognition** — June Schmidt. The Volunteer Recognition celebration will take place on March 31 from 10:00–11:30 a.m. at the Blacksburg Community Center. Chapter representatives on the committee are Angela Little, Dale Oliver, and June Schmidt. There are also representatives from the YMCA, the Red Cross, and RSVP of the New River Valley. To date, there are 20 nominees. Dale Oliver is serving on the selection subcommittee. There was a good write-up about the program in the Roanoke paper.
5. **Treasurer's report**—*Brian Allen* We are in good shape; our balance is up.
6. **Driver Safety**—Curt Finch. We need people to teach the courses and groups to sponsor the courses. Anyone can sponsor a course — the AARP chapter, Warm Hearth, a bank, the Rec Center. Several have expressed interest in becoming instructors, but several had time constraints and other volunteer activities. An instructor must have passed the course and gone through training and an apprenticeship.
7. **Web Site**—Connie Anderson. No new links have been added since the last report, but everything is doing fine.
8. **Membership committee**—Jim Wightman. Our membership now stands at 400, which includes 11 – Complimentary; 8 – Life; and, 5 – Honorary members. 26 members [2 singles and 12 couples] have paid Lifetime (\$100) dues; 8 members have paid their 2008 dues; 222 members have renewed their membership for 2007; 95 members now owe for 2007. Note that 25 members did not pay their 2006 dues. Those 2005/2006 members not paying their 2007 dues by March 1st will have a yellow dot on the address label of their March Newsletter; a red dot on their April Newsletter. All persons not paying their 2007 dues by April 15th will be dropped from the membership list and will not receive a May Newsletter.
9. **Program committee**—Harriett Cooper.
 - March 20, Frank Marino of Master Gardeners
 - April 17, adult, foster care
 - May 15, Frank Lau on pitfalls in 2007 taxes
 - June 19, annual picnic
 - September 18, representatives from Woods Edge at Warm Hearth
 - October 16, candidates for the General Assembly in the November election
 - November 20, electric-utility deregulation
10. **Legislation**—Dan Fleming. Dan was absent because of his wife's surgery. The report will appear in the newsletter.
11. **Awards**—Don Elson. Connie Anderson's name has been submitted to the Volunteer Awards Committee.
12. **Caring**—Tom and Kathy Jeffers. Tom and Kathy were absent, but Brian Allen reported that Penny Thomas's tumor, which he mentioned at the January meeting, was benign.
13. **History**—Carl McDaniels. No report. Jim Wightman suggested that the board purchase plastic boxes for the history material. The board informally agreed.
14. **Adjournment**—The meeting was adjourned at 10:36. Next board meeting 9:30am, Tuesday, April 3, 2007.

Respectfully Submitted: Virgil A. Cook Secretary

Volunteer Recognition Celebration

Saturday, March 31, 2007 • 10:00-11:30 a.m.

at the Blacksburg Community Center

The Volunteer Recognition Celebration will be March 31, 2007, at the Blacksburg Community Center from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. This special event is sponsored by our Chapter, the YMCA at Virginia Tech, the RSVP Programs of the New River Valley, and the American Red Cross. Mark your calendar now and plan to attend. The purpose of the celebration is to recognize outstanding volunteers from throughout the New River Valley.

Angela Little, Gail Billingsly, Anne Gouiller-Moore, Dale Oliver, June Schmidt, Kim Snider, and Bonnie Vanderberg serve on the committee planning the Celebration. They ask that you make a special effort to attend.

The planning committee has sent notices about the event to organizations throughout the New River Valley, requesting them to nominate outstanding volunteers. A highlight of the event is the award-

ing of the Jim and Lenna Moore Citizenship and Community Service Award. Both Jim and Lenna were exemplary in their service to the community and to our AARP Chapter. Previous award winners from our chapter include Robert Blanton, Jim and Mary Ellen Moore, and Ben Crawford.

The Celebration will feature awards recognitions, light refreshments, and entertainment provided by the Sweet Adelines. There is no cost for the event. Besides the five organizations sponsoring the event, mentioned above, others contributing to it include the Blacksburg Community Center and Carilion Hospital.

The planning committee looks forward to your joining us on March 31 to celebrate and to honor the outstanding volunteers of the New River Valley. The nominee from our Chapter is Connie Anderson.

— June Schmidt

Ellett Valley was Home to Resort Hotel and Confederate Hospital

Five miles east of Blacksburg, in Ellett Valley, is an area once called Devil's Den. Located here was one of the South's finest social capitals, Montgomery White Sulphur Springs. The area had been called Devil's Den as far back as 1831...The stream flowing through the valley today is known as Den Creek, and the road is called Den Hill Road ...

There are many springs on this property, including three sulphur, one chalybeate, and one freestone. As medicine in the 1700s was primitive by today's standards, people were constantly looking for cures for their ills; this may be the reason James Randall

Kent (who had acquired the land through purchase and inheritance) considered building a hotel and cabins, and opening a resort where people could come to "take the waters" for their health.

Another encouragement to build the resort was the building of the Virginia-Tennessee Railroad line close by. ... all that was needed was an auxiliary line into the resort area. People could detrain at the Big Tunnel station, board the resort rail cars, and, by gravity, glide down into the resort area. Mules would pull the cars back up the incline to the station, and the trip could start all over again.... Guests

Punctuation

Back in remote decades of time the flow of prose, the lilt of rhyme, were interrupted by a strange imperative — to rearrange our phrases, sentences and all according to grammatical agreement by the mighty powers who occupied our ivory towers.

When we went to Primary school and overlooked a certain rule we'd find our teacher in a rage at our mistaken verbiage. The poor old dear fell into fits if we mistook an 'it's' for 'its'. And commas where they shouldn't be would disconcert tremendously.

She cared, oh did she ever care!
Her doctrine was quite doctrinaire!
Our writings to her eagle eye had no choice but to satisfy.
Under her stern and ruthless face, perfections was the commonplace; each comma had to stand the test or she was terribly distressed.

So yet today, some decades on,
if I awake before the dawn,
I might see colons passing by
up in the punctuated sky,
or spot some other tidy marks
that dance around like meadowlarks.
Shall I escape? Oh no! Instead,
there's punctuation in my head!

— Gordon King

... could board the train in Lynchburg in the morning and be at the Springs in time for supper. ...

In May of 1862, Montgomery White Sulphur Springs General Hospital officially came into being, for the care of sick and wounded soldiers of the Confederacy. MWSS was an ideal location...because of its clean air, rail location, and distance from the fighting zones.

— Dorothy H. Bodell, from *Montgomery White Sulphur Springs*,

Jim Gaines, President
AARP Chapter #2613
P.O. Box 10082
Blacksburg, VA 24062

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VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION CELEBRATION

March 31, 2007

10:00-11:30 a.m. at the Blacksburg Community Center

New Member, or 2007 Membership Renewal, Application

Membership in the Blacksburg AARP Chapter requires membership in National AARP. Contact Jim Wightman at 552-2007 or jpdad@bev.net if you need a national AARP application.

Date _____

Name _____ Spouse _____

Address:

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ email _____

- Membership New member of Blacksburg AARP chapter
 Renewal of membership in Blacksburg AARP chapter
 Single membership dues \$10 for 2007
 Joint couple dues \$15 for 2007
 Lifetime membership \$100 per couple

Recruited by (if appropriate) _____

Complete, attach check made out to Blacksburg AARP, and mail to AARP Chapter #2613, P.O. Box 10082, Blacksburg, VA 24062. If you are already a member of the Blacksburg Chapter, please pass this form on to a friend who may be interested in membership.

If a yellow dot is on your mail label, you owe 2007 dues.
