

February 17 Chapter Meeting

Living Well @ 50 Plus Activities, Attractions, and Facilities for Seniors in the New River Valley

Kevin Byrd, Executive Director of the New River Valley Planning District Commission, will help us think about how to live well at 50+ by telling us about the Commission, significant projects in our region, and projects the commission is involved with in developing and promoting active living in the New River Valley.

At the Planning District Commission, he oversees a broad range of federal, state and local planning programs. These include

housing, transportation, natural resources, economic development, land use planning, and GIS services.

Mr. Byrd began working for the Commission in 2005 as a Regional Planner and was appointed as Executive Director in October 2009. He has over 10 years of community development experience in the public sector at the town, county, and regional levels of government along with private sector consulting experience. He has a Master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Virginia Tech and Bachelor of Science degree from Appalachian State University.



Kevin Byrd

President's Message

Gardening and Mindfulness

As I'm writing this message on a Saturday morning, a look outside reveals the dazzling sight of ice-covered trees and shrubs. Fortunately, just enough ice to decorate, not damage. A great time to delve into all those seed catalogs accumulating in our mailboxes these past few weeks. That's right! By the time you read this, spring is close enough to start making some active choices about what your garden will look like this year. No matter the size, window box to large track, there is always the opportunity to try something new along with the old standbys. Right now, I'm looking into some new tomato varieties and techniques that just might get me to that first tomato sandwich a bit earlier. At this point I would do almost anything!

Ok, so the point is not really about plans for my garden, but if the reminder gets you going, so much the better. The more important thing just might be the activity of gardening itself, which demands ongoing attention and care—and if we're paying close attention, the almost constant potential for surprise. Similar to interacting with our pets, dealing with living things that can grow and change almost daily tends to force us out of those automatic routines of life and back into the present. Such focus on the "here and now" can be refreshing, therapeutic, and healthy.

Some years ago I was drawn to a book that began, right on page one, by summarizing a seemingly simple

Upcoming Programs

March 17: Using Permaculture techniques in your own back yard

April 21: Redistricting in the Old Dominion

June 16: Chapter picnic and white elephant sale

Save the Date: Sept. 8

Living Well@50+ Conference
A large-scale, community-wide conference at the Inn at Virginia Tech will explore ways for seniors in the New River Valley to live well at age 50 plus. The conference will launch Virginia Tech's Life-long Learning Institute.



Blacksburg Chapter #2613

Chapter meetings are the third Tuesday of each month at the Blacksburg Community Center, Patrick Henry Drive at 11:30 a.m. 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 a.m.

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.

Remembrance of friends who died in 2014

By Sandy Birch, Chaplain

Every once in awhile, when I'm staring up at a starry sky on a clear, dark night, I'll see a shooting star. Officially, we're looking at the visible path of a meteoroid as it enters the atmosphere, but a shooting star is a much better image—more colorful, dramatic maybe, even romantic. This breathtaking sight may suggest a soul rising into a new world and memories of our dear friends

Let us think of our friends today.

Virle Payne died on January 22, preceded in death by her husband, another dear friend Alfred Payne. She was an instructor at Virginia Tech until 1967 when she joined the faculty at Radford College and directed the preschool. Throughout her life she influenced the lives of many students, parents, and children. Virle had an adventurous spirit and traveled extensively, from walking the Great Wall of China to canoeing on the New River. Virle was 96.

Jean White passed away on January 30. She was a devoted member of Blacksburg United Methodist Church, enjoyed her monthly meetings with the Agronomy wives, and was an avid Hokie fan, holding season tickets for over 47 years. Those who knew and loved her take comfort in knowing that she is with her Lord and loving husband, Harlan, in Heaven. Jean was 77.

Dorothy Jones died on March 29, beating the odds—surviving and thriving for five joyful years following a stage four ovarian cancer diagnosis. Following her marriage in 1954 to her high school sweetheart, Dorothy followed Phil to Champaign, Illinois, Bloomington, Indiana, Madison, Wisconsin, and finally to university life in 1977 at Virginia Tech where Dorothy served as a surrogate mother to and event planner for Phil's many doctoral students in the College of Education. Dorothy was 80.

Robert Dyer passed away on May 29 with his wife of 63 years, Doris, by his side. He made his career as a teacher and then an elementary school principal in Knoxville City Schools and after retirement, he became a Lieutenant Colonel in the Civil Air Patrol while perfecting his golfing skills. In 2005, Robert and Doris moved to Blacksburg to be near their daughter and grandchildren. Robert was 89.

Clara Ann Hawkins died on October 2. She completed her registered nursing degree in 1949 and provided nursing care to many patients in North Carolina, Iowa, and for 15 years at the Virginia Tech Student Health Center

before retiring in 1989. She was a longtime member of Blacksburg Baptist Church and gave of her time and talents through many of the church's organizations including the Women's Missionary Union and Agape Circle. Clara was 87.

Lee Brown died peacefully at his home on November 5. He served in the United States Army during World War II, landing in Normandy on D-Day. Lee had a distinguished career in life insurance and financial planning in New Orleans. In 2005, he and his wife Annette were flooded out by Hurricane Katrina and then moved to Blacksburg where they resided at Warm Hearth. Lee was a long-time member of Rotary International and a dedicated volunteer at the Blacksburg Lewis-Gale Hospital. He was 101.

Betty Dean died on November 27, preceded in death by her husband, James Dean, long time dean of students at Virginia Tech. She was an active member of the Blacksburg Country Club where she loved to play golf and bridge. Betty will be missed by her daughter, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren—and her loving cat Popsickle. Betty was 88.

Betty Wilson passed away on November 30. After receiving her degrees from Radford University, she returned to her home place in Marion and taught high school and served as a guidance counselor for 36 years. Betty was very active in the Lutheran Church, locally responsible for many activities at Luther Memorial Lutheran Church, serving on many church statewide committees, and volunteering for a number of local organizations including RSVP, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and Literacy Volunteers of the New River Valley. Betty was 82.

Mary Moore celebrated her first Christmas in heaven with her late husband, Joseph, after passing away on December 23. Mary and her husband moved to Blacksburg in 1972 when he joined the Civil Engineering faculty at Tech. She was a faithful member of the Blacksburg Baptist Church and was a loyal volunteer of the Interfaith Food Pantry and the gift shop at Montgomery Regional Hospital for many years. She partied with Dorothy Jones in the Purple Passion Red Hat Society, now known as the No Name Dames. Mary was 92.

Rest in peace dear friends. May we think of you—and all of our departed loved ones—as we gaze at the stars and maybe...just maybe... see one of you slip away.



Terry Wildman with his gardening catalogs

experiment conducted in a Connecticut nursing home. A portion of the residents were given a choice of house plants to care for and were encouraged to make other small decisions in their daily routine. Eighteen months later, compared to a control group that did not have these opportunities, the plant-caring residents were more alert, better adjusted, and more of them were still alive.

Ellen Langer, Harvard Professor, describes in her 1989 book *Mindfulness* how the startling results of this one simple intervention in a nursing home set in motion a whole body of work that is now approaching three decades in length. One of the most respected psychologists of all time, Jerome Bruner, reviewed her book, noting that “Langer’s attention to this subject, mindfulness, is treated in a manner that ‘naturalizes’ or brings to clear light a human scourge—everyday functional stupidity. If this sounds overly harsh, another review provided a helpful clarification suggesting that mindfulness can be thought of as the antidote “to the rigid, reactive, repetitive patterns that keep the best of us sealed in un-lived lives.”

It is an interesting and actually very practical question to consider the extent to which we are trapped by our reliance on conceptual categories at the expense of perceptual experience. This is by no means a new concern. One of the giants of American philosophy and psychology, William James (1842–1910), spoke to this directly in his statement that “the intellectual life of man consists

almost wholly in his substitution of a conceptual order for the perceptual order in which his experience originally comes.” Of many examples, James points out how something as fluid as time has been carefully divided, and defined, in terms of abstract category systems—night and day, summer and winter—that we use for conceptual simplicity, but also live by. So a question we might consider is whether in our daily life and in our institutions we strike a good balance between reliance on conceptual categories and direct perceptual experience.

Mindfulness can be thought of as the antidote “to the rigid, reactive, repetitive patterns that keep the best of us sealed in un-lived lives.”

A tight conceptual order—when to eat, when to sleep—and a custodial enforcement of these categories was shown by Langer in her studies to be less than healthy to the elderly, and I and others have suspected that high abstraction and custodial enforcement of externally defined learning goals is equally suffocating to the young, even in institutions of higher learning. Today, there seems to be growing attention in the media—even in the most recent AARP magazine—that mindfulness training and practice may be just the thing to nudge us out of overreliance on patterns that we continue to follow without much thought.

Now, I must think about applying these lessons to my gardening. This is a valued practice that may be in danger of becoming a bit too automatic. In recent seasons certain of my plants have been whispering to me; perhaps I need to listen more carefully.

Terry Wildman



Photo by Charles Bostian and used by permission

AARP about town

AARP at the Virginia Tech Health Fair January 14

Hundreds of attendees stopped by the Blacksburg AARP Chapter booth at Virginia Tech Health Fair in McComas Hall on January 14.

John Hillison, Jerry Niles, and Terry Wildman are pictured.



Invasion of the Red Scarves: AARP Rally Day in Richmond

Tuesday morning Ben, Don and Terry were approaching the entrance of the Assembly Building in Richmond when a photographer standing outside remarked, *"here comes the invasion of the red scarves!"*

Well, indeed, more than 100 AARP chapter members from around Virginia and their team leaders were descending on lawmakers in what is the annual Rally Day in Richmond. Held this year on January 27, the plan was for all the AARP representatives to meet at a local church near the Assembly Building, have breakfast, get oriented, and then visit as many lawmakers as possible during a two-hour period. Our task for this event was to encourage state representatives to support a measure that would give additional support to caregivers in Virginia.

And yes, all of us were outfitted with a nice warm scarf in "AARP red." At each brief meeting, Val Coluni, our team leader, introduced us as representing AARP although with our scarves prominently showing we probably could not have fooled anyone as to our identity.

We did learn before leaving Richmond that both the house and senate bills did come out of committee clean, so it looks like caregivers may be receiving some additional help from health providers, particularly hospitals. In brief, here is what the law will require when passed and signed:

- Hospitals will provide patients with the opportunity to designate a family caregiver
- Hospitals will notify the caregiver when the patient is discharged to go home, or moved to another facility.

- Hospitals will offer caregivers the opportunity to receive instruction, including a demonstration if needed, regarding any nursing/medical tasks they will need to perform at home.

So, stay tuned as these developments in health care move forward.

One remaining note—our team from the Blacksburg chapter had a nice opportunity to visit with the top leadership of AARP Virginia, and especially to discuss with them the September 8 conference we're planning, and to hear of their active support of this event.



L-R Val Coluni, Don Creamer, Terry Wildman, and Ben Crawford, in their red scarves, meet with Senator John Edwards (center) in Richmond

HD Broadcasts in Christiansburg: Opera, Ballet, Art

The Regal Cinema in Christiansburg (110 New River Road) is now showing HD broadcasts of Metropolitan Opera and ballet performances as well as art exhibitions on screen. Along with performances at the Center for the Arts (www.artscenter.vt.edu/Online/) and School of Fine Arts (www.performingarts.vt.edu/) at Virginia Tech, these events bring big city culture to the New River Valley.

Metropolitan Opera (tickets \$22 senior)

2/14	Iolanta / Duke Bluebeard's Castle	12:30 pm
2/18	Iolanta / Duke Bluebeard's Castle	6:30 pm
3/14	La Donna del Lago	12:55 pm
3/18	La Donna del Lago	6:30 pm
4/25	Cavalleria Rusticana / Pagliacci	12:30 pm
4/29	Cavalleria Rusticana / Pagliacci	6:30 pm

Ballet (\$15 senior)

2/17	The Winter's Tale, Royal Ballet	7:00 pm
3/8	Romeo and Juliet, Bolshoi Ballet	12:55 pm
3/19	Swan Lake, Royal Ballet	7:00 pm
5/5	La Fille mal gardée, Royal Ballet	7:00 pm

Exhibitions on Screen (\$15)

2/24	Rembrandt	7:00 pm
	National Gallery, London, & Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam	
4/14	Vincent Van Gogh	7:00 pm
	The Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam	

For more information, see www.fathomevents.com.

Film Schedule, Lyric Theatre, Blacksburg

See the lyric.com/calendar/ for more information; note some variations in showtimes because of special events.

Selma	February 6–10, 12
The Imitation Game	February 13–19
American Sniper	February 20–16
Whiplash	February 27–March 5



Chapter Officers 2015

President • Terry Wildman, wiley@vt.edu
Vice President • Don Creamer, dgc2@vt.edu
Secretary • Sally Anna Stapleton, sanna418@gmail.com
Treasurer • Pat Ballard, pballard@vt.edu

Board of Directors

2015—Don Creamer, Terry Wildman, Nola Elliott
2016—Tom Alston, Tina King, Sally Anna Stapleton
2017—Pat Hyer, Jerry Niles, Shirley Peterson

The AARP Tax-Aide program

The 2015 tax-aide program begins February 2 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 he schedule for preparing taxes according to this schedule:

1:00 – 4:00 pm, Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday
9:00 am – noon, Saturday

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

Dues are Due!

If you haven't yet paid your dues for 2015, please use the form on the back of this newsletter to get information about the amount and where to mail your check. Thanks!

Visit Your AARP Chapter Website at www.blacksburgaarp.org



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P.O. Box 10082
Blacksburg, VA 24062

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 **Member Application for 2015**

Name: _____

Spouse/Partner: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Today's Date: _____

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

New Renewal 90+ years old (free)

*Please make your check payable to "Blacksburg AARP Chapter #2613"
and mail check and this form to:*

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