

March 17 Chapter Meeting

Using permaculture techniques in your own back yard

Sarah Gibbs, a permaculture designer, will present our March program on using permaculture techniques in our back yards.

Sarah operates “NatureScapes” in Blacksburg with her husband, Phil Callicott, a sustainable builder. They use permaculture principles to design and install gardens that are beautiful, productive, and environmentally sustainable.

Permaculture seeks to mimic natural systems, interdependencies and relationships to create resiliency and productivity. In a permaculture garden, you will see plants fulfilling multiple roles, from encouraging soil health and attracting beneficial insects to producing food and herbs, both medicinal and culinary. “Permaculture” is a contraction of two words: permanent agriculture and/or permanent culture.

You will learn ways in which permaculture can produce large amounts of food in small areas.

The picture below shows one garden design featuring cabbage as an ornamental plant.



President’s Message

March Magic

True magic is not the pulling of rabbits from hats; it is the transformation of things. [anon]

There can be no doubt that March is a month of transitions, and therein can be found a question. Is it possible to see in this one month a metaphor of possible relevance to our chapter? Ok, let’s save that connection for a moment. Let’s first look at March a bit more closely.

By the time you are reading this newsletter you have already “sprung forward” in our annual switch to Daylight Saving Time. Also evident on your calendar is the notice that spring begins on the 20th. Who knows what the actual weather will be at that point, but the earth has certainly tilted in our favor—at least for those of us in the Northern Hemisphere. The days and nights are presently about equal length; but, the length of darkness is fast receding and daylight is increasing. Everyone who watches nature knows what that means. The big show is about to begin.

Symbolism is also big in March. St. Patrick’s Day occurs on March 17, and as good fortune would have it, *so does the Blacksburg Chapter’s March public meeting*. As you probably know, this long-standing celebration marks the date when Saint Patrick died in the year 461 A.D.

Some will say that on the 17th of March everyone is Irish! That would be the case certainly for anyone caught up in

Upcoming Programs

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 Lifelong 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.



Terry Wildman is ready for the March 17 meeting with green Shamrock beads and cap

a St. Patrick's Day celebration, say in Boston, or in any Irish bar for that matter, but think about the possibility at our own public meeting on March 17 at the Blacksburg Community Center! Think green! I'll have to admit, green is not my preferred route to sartorial elegance, but on this day I'll be sporting at least some green. Just think, even if green is not our

best garment color, at least we'll be in solidarity with the beautiful shades of, let's just say it, Irish green, that will transform the elegant contours of the greater New River Valley for a magical moment in time. This is what March signifies, and offers, even though the transition seems unruly at times.

Other symbols abound—the daffodil and the shamrock, rabbits and colorful eggs. I didn't know this, but the mighty Ash tree has apparently been a metaphor for the Celts. The Ash tree has a massive root structure, grows to great heights, and the wood has been prized for many uses. As a symbol connected to the month of March, it signifies growth, expansion and higher perspective.

Organizations, like the Blacksburg AARP Chapter, do experience their own transformations over time, and do sometimes seek to grow, expand their horizons, and seek perspectives that are, well, higher, for lack of a better term. In our own language we have this year embraced the notion of "living well," or perhaps better said we have decided to work toward a better understanding of what it means to live a full and rich life during those years that sometimes become associated with resignation and more limited horizons. In this we are in sync with AARP at the national and state levels, where the language and programming has shifted to *Real Possibilities* and *Life Reimagined*.

So, returning to the earlier question is it possible that March itself, with all its energy and change and symbolic meaning, could serve us in a metaphorical sense—shed some light on what we're trying to do as an organization? I'll have to admit, I've always loved getting to March, appreciated its role in getting us to the "better" months ahead, but probably failing to appreciate enough the actual transformation going on underfoot. I think I've been getting a little better at this, not so impatient, but still with things to learn. The underlying lesson for an organization though, is that unlike nature, which will move along quite well doing its necessary "March" thing, we as people, seeking some elevated purpose, really do need to embrace the change itself, and perhaps consciously become more like this magical month.

Terry Wildman

More About March

Did you know?

March is Women's History Month

March is National Nutrition Month (the theme for 2015 is "Bite into a healthy Lifestyle")

Do you know these folks, born in March?

- Glen Miller
- Sam Houston
- Alexander Graham Bell
- Knute Rockne
- Michelangelo
- Yuri Gargarin
- Clair Booth Luce
- Harold Wilson
- Albert Einstein
- Andrew Jackson
- James Madison
- Grover Cleveland
- David Livingston
- Wyatt Earp
- William Jennings Bryant
- B.F. Skinner
- Jerome Niles
- Harry Houdini
- Tennessee Williams
- John Tyler
- Vincent Van Gogh
- Jack Johnson

Can you match these birthplaces to the names?

- Susquehanna, Pennsylvania
- Waxboro, South Carolina
- Caprese, Italy
- Rockbridge County, VA
- New York City
- Ulm, Germany
- Galveston, Texas
- Caldwell, New Jersey
- Upstate New York
- Monmouth, Illinois
- Voss, Norway
- Columbus, Mississippi
- Gzhatsk, Russia
- Salem, Illinois
- Huddersfield, England
- Port Conway, Virginia
- Groot Zundat, Holland
- Edinburg, Scotland
- Budapest, Hungary
- Carilinda, Iowa
- Charles City County, VA
- Blantyre, Scotland

See the key to matching on p. 5.

Refire: The Senior Chronicles

A modest proposal for our membership By Terry Wildman and Don Creamer

What does life look like when you're trying to make the most of it? Or not....?

In particular, what does it look like when, statistically, we're looking ahead at a dwindling number of years? Are those just years to endure, or can they be enlivened with some special spark?

These are the kinds of questions that a new book on the market is asking readers to consider. Using the evocative language that authors often employ when trying to get your attention, Ken Blanchard and Morton Shaevitz tell us in their book title to...

Refire! Don't Retire

Blanchard and Shaevitz then added a subtitle that essentially asks us to think about how we can *make the rest of our life be the best of our lives*. The book conveys its message through the story of a couple, Larry and Janice Sparks, who are realizing the need to do just that when a close family member passes just shy of his 45th high school reunion. This family member has apparently not done very much to, well, actually live, except maybe to focus on work and wealth accumulation. A wake-up call for Larry and Janice to be sure.

Some folks seem to like this book—find it useful, evidenced from the reviews one can read on Amazon. Throughout the book one can follow, at least vicariously, Larry and Janice's journey to approach life with a bit more gusto, to take more risks, to essentially get out of their comfort zone.

Some of us in the Chapter were recently drawn to the book's basic message, in part because it illuminates to some extent the meaning behind the phrase "Living Well@50+," which we're using as the theme of our September 8 conference. Of course, a limitation of Larry and Janice's *particular* story is that it is just one among many. And, their transformation toward living a fuller and richer life in their senior years is just that—theirs.

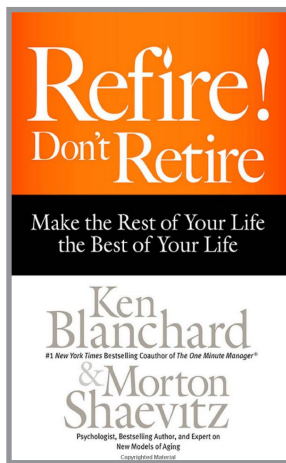
So we were thinking, what if we had a whole collection of stories, all authentic, all written from a first person view, and all aimed at exemplifying ways of experiencing

life as playful, joyful, risk taking, funny, loving, spontaneous, uncomfortable, creative, peaceful, and...well, you get the idea.

Suppose we had dozens of such stories, or more, taken from a moment in time, a small slice of experience that demonstrates some of the *qualities of a good life* in the above paragraph. And, supposes they came from us, our own Blacksburg AARP Chapter, and from those who would like to join us. Suppose we just started writing? This could be the start of **REFIRE—The Senior Chronicles**.

This is the way it could work

1. One person writes a short story, really just a brief vignette. Then another story appears...and another. We are posting two such stories on our Chapter website right now, from two of your chapter members. Check it out! Yours can be next. (www.blacksburgaarp.org/)
2. *Your* story, with a short creative title, is submitted to an email address offered by the *Senior Chronicles* editor. Right now that would be our Vice President and Web Editor: Don Creamer dgc2@vt.edu
3. The story is read by the editor and then posted on the Chapter website, on a new page dedicated to the **Senior Chronicles**. Keep this in mind: the stories you submit can be accessed by anyone, so write them with that in mind. That said, the whole point is to share ways, large and small, that we're doing things with our lives that is meaningful, exciting, joyful, scary, satisfying, and, importantly, *fun to write about*.
4. Of course, as a prospective writer, you can review already posted stories to get an idea of how different topics are treated, and how your own writing style can add to the creativity of the collected stories.
5. As stories begin to be submitted, the Chapter program committee may consider scheduling occasional "writing group" meetings that deal with the writing process, and how to frame experiences to create an interesting and informative story.



please turn to page 4

6. If we can really get into this notion of sharing our stories, the *Senior Chronicles* begins to develop as a way to illuminate and reinforce the concept of “Living Well,” enhance communication among Chapter members, and increase our ability to reflect on lived experiences.

So, please consider getting involved. This is admittedly an experiment. It sounds a little risky, maybe. But it could be fun, revealing of the many ways to make the most of life, and intellectually challenging.

We may think that most of what we do day-to-day is just mundane, not worthy of careful attention and description, but, we could be just be dead wrong about that!

Volunteers Needed: Membership Committee

The Membership Committee would like to develop a membership recruitment strategy and needs volunteers to help. Do you have ideas for ways to welcome a new generation of members or to identify people who would like to discover a community of people with similar interests? Can you think of ways to welcome members beyond Blacksburg so that the organization can truly embrace the New River Valley? What programs or activities could make AARP appeal to more people? If you would like to talk about ways of helping, please contact our president, Terry Wildman: wiley@vt.edu.



The AARP Tax-Aide Program

The 2015 tax-aid program continues until April 15 at 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

Legislative Report

by Val Coluni and Alison Galway

Both the General Assembly and Blacksburg Town Council passed some legislation and resolutions that align with AARP objectives. Our local AARP liaisons have been active in encouraging these actions.

General Assembly

***Care Act** has passed the General Assembly and now awaits the Governor’s signature. This Act provides a hospital patient to name a family caregiver. The hospital must notify that family caregiver if the patient is to be discharged to another facility or back home and must offer the family caregiver instruction on medical/nursing tasks.

***Work and Save** has passed the General Assembly and now awaits the Governor’s signature. This Plan directs the state to convene a work group to review retirement savings options that encourage retirement savings for individuals who may not have access to an employer-based retirement plan. It is hoped that the study group would come up with an appropriate recommendation for the 2016 General Assembly.

****Public Guardianship Program.** This program a one of last resort for adults who are incapacitated and who do not have a suitable family member or friend to help them make medical, financial, and daily living decisions. This vote expands access as the General Assembly has approved increased funding for this program within the proposed budget. It does not fully satisfy the need, but it’s a great start.

*Primary AARP Legislative Objective

**An AARP Legislative Objective

Blacksburg Town Council

The Blacksburg Town Council passed Resolution 2-D-15 committing to “Support Development of Affordable Housing on Givens Lane” by Fieldstone Planned Residential Development on approximately 1/3 of Blacksburg Estates property. Blacksburg zoning, tax, and utility support (estimated value over 15 years at \$605,045) was needed to apply for a Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), a competitive (one per state) award due March 2015, receipt of which makes the project financially feasible. Qualified tenants would be at 40–60% of Area Median Income for seniors and less than 60% of AMI for workforce residents. Even so, some current residents would not be able to afford the new housing arrangements.

Getting Better with Technology at AARP TEK Website

Are you interested in using an iPad or smartphone in new ways? Have you been wondering why so many ordinary people as well as celebrities use Twitter? Have you been tempted to tweet but don't know how to get started? Do you want to do more on Facebook than look at other people's pictures and posts?

AARP knows that lots of people who are 50+ would like to know more possibilities for using their smartphones and tablets. They would like to get started with social media or expand what they are already doing. However, we don't all have a grandchild handy to show us how. AARP can help with the "TEK" area of its website: www.aarp.org/aarptek. TEK stands for Technology, Education, and Knowledge.

Technology Education Center

The Technology Education Center includes informative materials such as a training video on using an iPads. It offers numerous links in the categories for Staying Connected, Online Safety, Buyer's Guide, and Digital Entertainment. For example, the options under Digital Entertainment include

[Enjoying eBooks \(Video\)](#)

[The New Golden Age of Radio](#)

[How to Watch TV Without a TV](#)

[Which Video-Streaming Device Is Best for You?](#)

[Transform Your Smartphone into a Holiday Album](#)

Social Media Education Center

You can go to the social media education center at www.aarp.org/home-family/personal-technology/tek/social-media-education-center/ There you will find instructions for beginners as well as specialized instructions for

Facebook

Twitter

Google+ and Hangouts

Pinterest

Social Video

Blogging Basics

For example, you can see a brief introduction to using Facebook. You can also download a pdf step-by-step guide to signing up for Facebook. You can find instructions for playing online games.

Personal Technology

The Personal Technology area of the AARP website offers advice about tech gear, such as earphones, gear to make your home "smart," and a key finder. Another section describes new technology for cars, such as blind spot monitoring.

One Thing at a Time...

These examples are just a sampling of what you can learn about technology at aarp.org/aarptek. All of the information is tailored for users who are 50+.

With so many opportunities, where to start?

It would be easy to get overwhelmed by dabbling everywhere. So pick one thing that you'd really like to learn and pursue it steadily. When you feel comfortable with your knowledge, add something else.

Maybe you'll teach a grandchild a thing or two about technology one of these days.

Key: Birthplaces of People Born in March

Miller-Iowa; Houston-Rockbridge Cty, VA; Bell-Edinburg; Rockne-Norway; Michelangelo-Italy; Gagarin-Russia; Luce-NYC; Wilson-England; Einstein-Germany; Jackson-SC; Madison-Port Conway, VA; Cleveland-NJ; Livingston-Blantyre, Scotland; Earp-Monmouth IL; Bryant-Salem, IL; Skinner-PA; Niles-Upstate NY; Houdini-Budapest; Williams-Columbus, MS; Tyler-Charles City Cty, VA; VanGogh-Holland; Johnson-Texas (see page 2)

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!

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

Visit Your AARP Chapter Website at www.blackburgaarp.org



Blacksburg Chapter #2613
Terry Wildman, President
P.O. Box 10082
Blacksburg, VA 24062

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

 **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