

## Health care reform Topic for May 19 Meeting

It appears probable that some form of health care reform will occur this year as Congress and the President are giving it a very high priority. There are a number of controversial issues that must be worked out before this is accomplished.

All Americans will be impacted by what takes place with such reform. If you are interested in finding out on what is happening with reform and sharing your opinion, come to the meeting.

**Time and Place:** Bring-your-own brown bag lunch begins at 11:30 a.m. with coffee and water

provided. The program will start promptly at noon and will run until 1:30 p.m. Blacksburg Community Center, front room (note different room).

Keynote Speaker

**Bill Kallio**

**State Director, Virginia AARP**

Topic: Pending health care reform legislation, key issues involved, and AARP priorities.

Comments and Questions from written questions submitted from the audience.

Responses from legislative aides to Rep. Boucher, Sen. Warner, and Sen. Webb.

friends.

Come early by 11:30 a.m. for fun & fellowship with music & our usual display of classic cars with the cooperation of the New River Valley Model A Club.



**Circle the date:**  
**TUESDAY, JUNE 16**  
**CHAPTER PICNIC**

The Annual AARP Blacksburg Picnic & White Elephant Auction will be Tuesday June 16 from Noon to 1:30 p.m. at the Nellies Cave Park Shelter in Blacksburg.

Beverages, plates, knives & forks will be provided. Bring a covered dish or two of the following to share with other Chapter members: meat, salad, vegetables, or desert. Also bring all of those attic/basement treasures which you think will sell to buyers who will be bringing cash to purchase gift for family &

## Interested in Volunteering to Babysit?

The Mom's Club of Blacksburg is looking for volunteers for babysitting during their summer monthly meetings when VT students are on break (June 10th, July 9th and Aug. 12th). The meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month, from 10 a.m. until noon.

Meeting Location is at Fieldstone United Methodist Church; 3385 North Franklin Street; Christiansburg, VA 24073; Phone 540-260-3402. Directions From Blacksburg: Follow South Main Street (Bus 460) toward the "midway" commercial district. You will pass Montgomery Regional Hospital on the right - continue South to the light at Merrimac Road. Turn LEFT at this light into Fieldstone.

There are two playrooms, one for 0-2 year-olds and one for 3 and up. Mothers provide craft activities and snacks. Please contact Leslie Kornblith at 961-0428, email Leslie-s@hotmail.com if interested in volunteering for one or more summer months.

## AARP 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, Patrick Henry Drive, at 10:00 a.m.

P.O. Box 10082  
Blacksburg, VA 24062  
<http://civic.bev.net/aarp/>

**Directory of  
Officers, Board of Directors, and Committee Chairs**

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Email</u>	<u>Telephone</u>
<b>Officers</b>			
President	Paul Smeal	psmeal@vt.edu	552-4085
1st Vice Pres.	Jim Wightman	wightman@vt.edu	552-2207
Treasurer	Brian Allen	mballen@prodigy.net	552-4422
Secretary	Virgil Cook	vcCook@vt.edu	382-5205
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Class of 2011	John Hillison	hillison@vt.edu	552-8941
Class of 2011	Sue Farrar	suefarrar@verizon.net	381-1830
<b>Committee Chairs and Appointees</b>			
AARP of Virginia			
Liason	Ben Crawford	ben.crawford@vt.edu	961-5733
Assoc. Treasurer	June Schmidt	schmidtj@vt.edu	552-1590
Caring	Harriett Cooper	chayabrona@verizon.net	552-3446
Chaplain	Ken Dawson	kedawson@verizon.net	552-1476
Chapter Awards	Joe Fontenot	cajunjoe@vt.edu	552-3726
AARP Driver Safety	Curt Finch	crfinch@vt.edu	552-8179
Financial			
Planning	John Hillison	hillison@vt.edu	552-8941
Health Care	Larry Alexander	aalexand@radford.edu	951-8172
History	Doris Abraham	dsta118e@verizon.net	382-3392
Hospitality	Curtis Roane		552-2260
Legislative	Dan Fleming	dbfleming@vt.edu	951-1525
Membership	Jim Wightman	wightman@vt.edu	552-2207
News Editor	Edd Sewell	eddsowell@gmail.com	951-1746
Nominating	Class of 2009		
Program	Carl McDaniels	cmcd@vt.edu	552-5818
Public Relations	Norman & Nancy Eiss	nsjeiss@verizon.net	951-4015
VT Retirees Assoc.			
Liason	Margaret Kates		552-4107
Web/List Owner	Connie Anderson	connie@vt.edu	951-1623

# AARP Driver Safety Course Scheduled for June 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>

The AARP Driver Safety Course is again going to be offered at Blacksburg United Methodist Church, 201 Church Street. This 8-hour course will be held on Thursday June 4<sup>th</sup> and Friday June 5<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. To pre-register for the course call Judy Davis at 552-5424 or Curt Finch at 552-8179. Enrollment is limited so please sign up early.

Course fee is \$12.00 for AARP members and \$14.00 for non-members, payable by cash or check to "AARP" at the beginning of the course. Bring your AARP card to class on the first day to qualify for the \$12.00 enrollment fee.

This classroom course assists drivers age 50 and over in refining current driver skills and developing defensive driving techniques. The course does not include any formal examinations. Course graduates may be eligible for multiyear discounts to their auto insurance premiums. All courses are taught by certified, volunteer driver safety instructors.



*Photo to the left is from the April chapter meeting. If you missed it, you missed an excellent opportunity to talk with delegates Dave Nutter and Jim Schuler. DON'T miss the May meeting when our guest will be Bill Kallio who is state director for AARP. He will talk about upcoming legislation on health care.*

**NEW! INDOOR DOG CONTROL UNLEASHED CLASS.** Teaching dogs to focus and work with distractions based on Leslie Mc Devitt's book Control Unleashed: Creating a focused and Confident Dog. Dogs Must Be 6 Months Or Older. Dogs must attend with Dog Carrier (crate).  
Activity # 312230 – D3 Dates: May 20 – July 1 (WED) Time: 7:00-8:00 pm  
Place: Blacksburg Community Center  
Fee: \$50R/\$60NR (Must register by May 18) For more information email: Anne Gouiller-Moore at keshnzag@gmail.com

# May is Older Americans Month and Mental Health Month

Tina King, Executive Director  
*New River Valley Agency on Aging*

Because May is Older Americans Month and Mental Health Month, it is a great time to bring attention to the issues that affect older adults and create community-wide opportunities to help older Americans improve their quality of life. This year's theme for Older American's Month is "Living Today For a Better Tomorrow." We, as a nation, state, and community, must work together to give older adults the tools needed to make healthy decisions in order to have a better tomorrow.

By 2030, one in every five Americans will be age 65 or older. Although the risk of disease increases with advancing age, poor health is not an inevitable consequence of aging. Many illnesses, disabilities and even death associated with chronic disease are preventable.

Nearly 40% of deaths in America can be attributed to poor health habits such as lack of physical exercise, poor eating habits and smoking. Older Americans can prevent or control chronic disease by adopting healthy habits such as exercising regularly, maintaining a healthy diet and ceasing tobacco use.

In addition to benefitting from a regular exercise routine that includes strength, balance, stretching and endurance exercises, practicing good nutrition is vital for older adults to maintain good health. By

improving their diets, older Americans can reduce the occurrence of chronic diseases. Reducing saturated fats and eating a balanced diet of fruits, vegetables, and grains can help older Americans stay healthy.

Tobacco use increases the risk of heart disease and cancer and is the single most preventable cause of death in the United States. Older adults who stop smoking will gain immediate and long-term health benefits.

While it is important for older Americans to have good physical health, it's equally important that they maintain good mental health. Nearly 20 percent of Americans age 55 and older, experience depression and anxiety disorders.

Studies have shown that engaging in social activities and volunteering within the community can greatly improve mental health. Benefits include improved mental and physical health, greater life satisfaction, lower rates of depression and lower mortality rates.

The U.S. Administration on Aging and its National Aging Services Network support a number of successful programs throughout the country that are helping older adults live better today and in the future. These programs keep people independent and out of nursing homes through streamlined access to health and long term

care information and options and provide home and community-based systems of services that include the support for family caregivers.

By working together in our community, we can improve the health, and well-being of our older adults. For information about local programs and services, contact the New River Valley Agency on Aging at 540-980-7720 or go online to [www.nrvaoa.org](http://www.nrvaoa.org).

Speaking of tools to help older adults make healthy decisions, the following information from Mental Health America will provide some great tools for better mental health for persons of all ages.

The theme for Mental Health Month is "Live Your Life Well." Because good mental health is so essential to a person's well being, Mental Health America offers 10 "Tools" that are specific and research based to help combat stress and promote health and well-being. The ten tools can be found on the website, [www.LiveYourLifeWell.org](http://www.LiveYourLifeWell.org).

Patrick Halpern, Executive Director, with the Mental Health Association of the New River Valley, related that with increasing economic troubles piled onto the stress of work and family demands, more and more Americans are suffering. In fact, 58 percent of Americans reported struggling in their lives at the end of 2008, according to the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index. This represents an increase of more than 22

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million Americans who reported struggling earlier in the year.

This May, in honor of Mental Health Month, Mental Health America, is launching the "Live Your Life Well" campaign that provides 10 straightforward tools and ways to apply them in everyday life. From relaxation techniques to journaling, exercise to simple ways to get better sleep and improve eating habits, the site offers a wide range of resources to build resiliency and well-being. The 10 Tools of "Live your Life Well" also includes information on seeking the help of a mental health professional.

The tools do not require drastic changes to your life or a large time commitment. The website provides clear, easy-to-understand information on how to incorporate these changes into your life, and all of the information is free.

To learn more about each of the Tools and how to incorporate these steps into your life to better manage stress, visit the Live Your Life Well website at [www.LiveYourLifeWell.org](http://www.LiveYourLifeWell.org) or contact the Mental Health Association of the New River Valley at: 540-951-4990.

A Shred-A-Thon will be held on Saturday, May 16 from 9:00 am-1:00 pm at the Carilion New River Valley Medical Center in conjunction with Child Safety Day/Community Health Day. Shred unwanted personal documents, bank statements, and credit cards to help prevent identity theft.

## Thank you to the Blacksburg AARP from the Literacy Volunteers of the New River Valley

President Paul Smeal & Members of AARP Blacksburg:

My sincere thanks for the warm welcome you provided Literacy Volunteers at your April 2009 meeting. I was so pleased to come back from vacation with my family to see several reams of paper for our printing needs, several dictionaries for our adult learners and several boxes of books. This past weekend, we had a small book sale in Blacksburg, and raised \$1203 thanks to supporters such as you and your members!

I hope our presentation left you and your members inspired to do more for the adult learners in the New River Valley struggling to read even the simplest of words. According to recent statistics acquired

from the Montgomery County Jail, 56% of the inmates held at the jail in the last three years left public education early, and some of the remaining inmates may have literacy issues since public schools are graduating a fair number of students with a "special" diploma. By having more volunteers helping to increase literacy levels in the NRV, we can change lives for the better. We hope you will consider joining me at our next volunteer orientation. The date and time will be listed in the Current section of the Roanoke Times, and on our website at <[www.lvnrv.org](http://www.lvnrv.org)>. If members are unable to volunteer, a donation would be most appreciated. My sincere thanks for the support you and your members so graciously give our organization.

Donna Webster,  
Executive Director  
Literacy Volunteers  
of the New River Valley

### AARP Chapter Membership Report

filed May 5, 2009

Member Profile:

Category	Count
2009 Members Dues Paid	248
LifeTime Members	46
Life Members	7
Comp Members	15
Honorary Members	5
Newsletters May, 2009	213

#### New Members:

Stephanie Gilmore  
Membership Committee:  
Jim Wightman (Chair),  
Connie Anderson,  
Jim Gaines,  
Sue Farrar,  
Don Creamer

RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) of Montgomery County & Radford invites you to join us for our Open House on Thursday, May 28 from 10:00 am-noon in the Health and Human Services Building at 210 S. Pepper Street in Christiansburg. You will have the opportunity to meet with RSVP volunteers and representatives of 14 local agencies that utilize volunteers. The door prizes include a \$50 Kroger Gift Card and a Longaberger Tote Bag. "Life Isn't Over When You Retire."

# The Byrd machine is alive and well in Virginia

from the Roanoke Times, April 27, 2009

**By Dan B. Fleming, a professor emeritus of education at Virginia Tech and co-author of "By the Good People of Virginia ...' Our Commonwealth's Government." He lives in Blacksburg.**

Members of the Virginia General Assembly, primarily Republicans, this year again displayed their opposition to moderate, progressive legislation. Beyond limitations on smoking in restaurants and curbing of payday lending, little else was done beyond agreeing to a budget that was dependent on federal stimulus dollars to prevent more carnage in state funding of services.

Worthwhile proposals that were rejected included: creating a bipartisan commission on legislative redistricting, easing requirements for absentee voting, allowing the governor to serve consecutive terms, providing background checks on people with a criminal history or mental problems at gun shows, and placing limits on legislators and state employees to become lobbyists after leaving office. All of the above are considered in many, if not most, states as a given. For example, Virginia is the only state that has a one-term governor.

The final blow was the refusal of the House Republicans to accept \$125 million of federal money to help unemployed workers despite the very slight cost to state businesses. The rejection was accompanied by a

rant against the federal government intruding into state affairs. For students of Virginia history, dislike of federal programs is a familiar story as Harry Byrd and Carter Glass were two of six senators in 1935 voting against establishing Social Security.

Virginia under the Byrd machine was a one-party land run by Democrats opposed to public participation in government and supporting massive resistance to racial integration of schools. It was the Republicans led by Linwood Holton who fought for reforms of election laws and more money for schools and public services. Moderate Democrats, such as William Spong, and liberals led by Henry Howell finally helped break the Byrd monopoly of their party.

Today, roles have reversed and the Republicans have become the party of the old Byrd Democrats, marching in lockstep opposition to a variety of needed reforms. Democratic legislators are also not blameless, with business interests still calling many of the shots for both parties through massive campaign contributions. For example, both parties joined to eliminate the estate tax levied only on a few families. The tax revenue lost by this action could have allowed many interstate rest stops to remain open and saved many teacher aides from being laid off.

The seeds of today's anti-tax, anti-government attitudes

were planted in the state decades before the Civil War and produced a conservative society clinging to nostalgia and suspicious of outside ideas. These attitudes seem alive today as shown by the recent actions of the Republicans in the General Assembly and at times by the Democrats as well.

Virginia ranks high nationally as a home for corporations, has excellent bond ratings and has been consistently ranked among the best-managed states. On the other hand, it is weak in business regulation, with limited protection for the consumer and the environment.

It ranks among the wealthiest states yet is near the bottom of the nation in state funding of many public services. This results in local governments having to scramble for funds, relying on unpopular real estate taxes and fees to make up for inadequate state funding.

Virginia has great assets and strengths, but it needs to do much more in preparing for the future. For example, the state should increase funding in areas such as preschool education instead of spending billions for building and operating new prisons. This is sound economic policy, not liberal sentimentalism. Reform of our unwieldy structure of government and tax system is long overdue, but little is being done as big issues are too often overshadowed by red herring cultural disputes of little consequence.

In this fall's state elections, voters will have a very clear choice as to which path they want their state government to follow based on the actions of the General Assembly.

# Health Care Reform Issues for May 19 Meeting

It appears likely that some form of health care reform will pass Congress this year.

Several key issues must be resolved including how to pay for any new program and whether there will be a public plan option to accompany private plans. Other problems include ethical issues such as “right to die”, whether to include millions of illegal immigrants under the plan, and how soon to phase in such a plan. Currently there are not nearly enough medical personnel for a vast expansion of coverage.

Medicare costs have soared and must be curtailed or future generations will be financially devastated. Even now, some doctors are refusing to take new Medicare patients due to low reimbursements. Medicare and Medicaid must be substantially changed as part of overall reform as a flood of WW II baby boomers will soon be retiring. Below are several issues that are currently being considered.

Below are several questions that will be asked of Bill Kallio, State Director of Virginia AARP at the May 19 meeting. Hopefully attendees will bring additional questions to ask as well.

## 1. Will there be a form of health care rationing?

During the reform debate, you will hear the terms cost effectiveness and what is best practice for expensive operations and medical tests. As a result,

restraints may be placed on care based on what is cost effective. For example, if you are age 90, should you have a hip replacement or if you are near death, how long should you remain on life support at government cost? In other words, you may have a form of health care rationing by some government agency deciding what is effective. This may result in waiting lists for some procedures considered less essential than others and less flexibility of going to specialists.

## 2. Will there be a public plan option along with many private plans?

The single payer plan favored by many is not under serious consideration by the leaders of either political party.

Most Republicans, healthcare and insurance interests oppose a public option as an alternative to private plans. They contend that such a plan will muscle out private insurers by cutting payments to medical providers in order to charge lower premiums leading to the federal government dominating the insurance market. This could result in a single-payer government-run plan insuring everyone. It still seems certain that those can afford more comprehensive health care coverage will be able to purchase supplemental plans of varying costs and benefits.

Most Democrats support a public plan option along with private plans to protect against unfair insurance industry practices and to help deliver more efficient and less costly healthcare services. They maintain that without a public

plan, users would face an array of choices that would bewilder potential buyers producing much greater paper work and confusion for providers and users alike. Proponents also argue that the public option would be transportable anywhere in the nation.

Health care reform leaders in Congress such as Senator Kennedy say we must develop an acceptable path to pay for such reforms. Even though many savings may occur from health delivery system improvements, prevention and wellness efforts and eliminating fraud and abuse activities, this will not be enough. Kennedy says, “achieving this historic breakthrough (health care reform) will also require shared responsibility and sacrifice from everyone.” Below is a question about a proposal to help fund reform that will require some sacrifice from those with higher incomes.

## 3. Will there be higher premiums and payment for services based on ability to pay?

For example would a billionaire such as Warren Buffet have to pay more for knee replacements than a widow living in near poverty.

Of course there are other controversial issues under debate including mandating coverage for everyone, tort reform with a cap on punitive damages, what to do with illegal immigrants, closing the “doughnut hole” for prescription drugs and the list goes on.

Carl McDaniels

**Announcements**—President Paul Smeal called attention to a Parks and Recreation’s brochure on summer programs. The number of programs has risen from about 850 last year to 915 this year. He also noted the Summer Solstice Run, sponsored by the Town of Blacksburg, as an opportunity for chapter visibility. The chapter can provide t-shirts for AARP participants who run or walk.

**Call to Order**—President Smeal called the meeting to order at 10:05.

Officers Present: President Paul Smeal, Secretary Virgil Cook.

Board Members: Don Creamer, Sue Farrar, John Hillison

Non-board-member committee chairs and appointees: Doris Abraham, Harriett Cooper, R. B. “Ben” Crawford, Nancy Eiss, Curt Finch, Dan Fleming, Margaret Kates, Carl McDaniels, Curtis Roane, June Schmidt, Edd Sewell

**Approval of Minutes**—The minutes of the April 7 meeting were approved as published.

**Treasurer’s Report**—President Paul Smeal distributed the report in Brian Allen’s absence.

March 31 balance, \$3,914.56; credits, \$114.60; debits, \$287.88; balance at the end of April, \$3,741.58.

The larger expenses included \$112.12 to Kopy Corner for duplicating the newsletter and \$95.00 for liability insurance.

Carl McDaniels reported that

setting up eligibility for Kroger cards is a complicated process. He suggested that we refer the issue to Brian Allen for further investigation.

A motion that the report be received passed.

**Membership**--Don Creamer distributed the report for Chair Jim Wightman. The total membership is 321, but only 246 are dues-paying members. We had one new member. Don has mailing labels for those who failed to renew their membership. We should also be looking for new members. John Hillison will affix the mailing labels for the newsletter.

Angela Little has offered space at the Triad program on May 19.

**Legislation**--Dan Fleming. Virginia is now the leading state for the percentage of citizens who do not have health insurance provided by their employers.

There was a two-hour meeting yesterday of the New River Valley Long-Term Coordinating Committee. The committee wants our help for two events: October 31 on caregivers for children at New River Valley Community College and November 17, a memory day, focusing on Alzheimer’s.

Carl suggested that they hold the November 17 meeting here as our regular program.

To show both the complexity of medical, billing statements and the high cost of procedures, Dan distributed a bill showing the expense of one procedure, some \$7,000 for a procedure in the doctor’s office. He raised an important question. Will there be rationing under healthcare

reform? Probably so.

An important issue is who gets what treatment near the end of life. Dan distributed a list of possible questions to be asked at the May 19 program. AARP Expects premiums to double over the next 10 years. Carl observed that we must look to see what other countries are doing.

The battle is over whether people will have a series of private options or both private and public options. Dan observed that projections from the University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center predicts that by 2030 the poverty rate for the very old will be very high, especially for women. The issue boils down to whether healthcare is an essential.

**Programs**--Carl McDaniels. There will be no Table Top presentation at the May 19 meeting because of the importance of the program on healthcare and the emphasis on membership. We will have music and an antique-car show at the June 16 picnic. President Smeal asked about the October program and its candidate forum. Since town-council elections have been moved to November, perhaps we could have candidates appear before the chapter members.

**History**--Doris Abraham. Doris is seeking material on the history of the chapter. The newsletter and the board-meeting minutes are good sources, but she still needs other sources. There are several newsletters from 08 missing. She does not keep the Table Top material. She would

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Paul Smeal, President  
AARP Chapter #2613  
P.O. Box 10082  
Blacksburg, VA 24062

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**Membership Renewal or New Member Application**

Membership in the Blacksburg AARP Chapter requires membership in National AARP.

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

Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

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

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Membership (based on calendar year):

\_\_\_\_\_ New membership dues: \$12.50 [Spouse/Partner Free]

\_\_\_\_\_ Renewal membership dues: \$12.50 [Spouse/Partner Free]

Complete and attach check made out to Blacksburg AARP, and bring to the next Membership Meeting or mail to:

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

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like a membership list for each years. She asked for suggestions of what to keep.

**Driver's Ed**—Curt Finch. There will be a course at Blacksburg United Methodist

Church on June 4 and 5. We need a minimum of 12 students.

**Caring**--Harriett Cooper. Harriett reported that she sent out one sympathy card during the month.

**Newsletter**--Edd Sewell. It is clear that everyone seems to

want a list of the officers in every issue.

**State Office Liaison**--Ben Crawford. Ben commended the op-ed commentary by Dan Fleming in the Roanoke paper on the General Assembly session.

**Hospitality**--Curt Roane. The correct date and time for the picnic is Tuesday, June 16, 12:00-2:00. Curt needs help with preparation such as sweeping and spreading tablecloths.

**Publicity**--Nancy Eiss. Nancy expressed her pleasure with the article in the Newspaper.

Carl McDaniels congratulated President Smeal for being named Citizen of the Year.

Adjournment—the meeting was adjourned at 11:23

Respectfully submitted: Virgil A. Cook, Secretary