



AARP Chapters are separately incorporated affiliates of AARP



newsletter

November-December 2019

Nov. 19 Chapter Meeting Mental Health Challenges Facing Today's Collegiate Student-Athlete *Gary Bennett*

Athletes are often viewed as being invulnerable to mental health challenges. However, research funded by the NCAA has revealed that collegiate student-athletes experience symptoms of depression, anxiety, and substance abuse at rates very comparable to those of non-athletes.

In 2000, the Virginia Tech Athletics Department became one of only a few Division I programs to fund a position for a mental health professional. Since that time, the position has grown from a half-time person to three clinicians.

This program will explore the evolution of the VT program and will also examine the types of mental health issues commonly addressed in the VT Sport Psychology department.

Gary Bennett, PhD, is a licensed clinical and sport psychologist affiliated with the Virginia Tech Athletics Department.



President's Column *by Jerry Niles* Creating the Connections

At our last Chapter meeting, on October 15, approximately 45 people attended. As I got ready to begin the formal part of our meeting, I was struck by the warm buzz that filled the room. As members finished up their brown bag lunches and Carol Lee donuts and chatted with others, catching up on personal news from an old friend or engaging in the back and forth that comes with initiating a connection with a new member, I delayed opening the meeting for several minutes. I hesitated to interrupt this compelling social connection. I did eventually open the meeting because we had a wonderful program ahead of us including a talk and conversation offered by a local pharmacist, who did a splendid job of guiding us through the maze of prescription drug policy. As I think about what happened in that meeting, and other chapter meetings, I concluded that the signs of social connections that were overflowing in the room on that day were in fact a very powerful medications in their own right.



I have had similar experiences in chapter social events and in board meetings as I have listened to the group buzz rising from the social exchanges that occur so naturally. I think about how fortunate I am to have the opportunity to be a part of those activities.

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Upcoming Events

- Nov. 19, Food Drive at the chapter meeting (pet food)
- Dec. 10, AARP Holiday Luncheon (p. 5)
- Dec. 11, LLI preview of spring classes and events (p. 4)
- Jan. 16, Registration for LLI classes opens

Upcoming Chapter Programs

- (Third Tuesday, 11:30 am)
- January 21: Making your home more accessible to facilitate daily living and remaining in your home longer
- February 18: Sterling Nesbitt, Adventures in ancient Africa: On the tail of the origin of dinosaurs
- March 17: Janet Brennend and Casey Suthers, NRV Agency on Aging, Navigating Resources for Community-Based Home Health and Home Care Programs
- April 21: Curt Laub, Bugs and Us—Insects and Our Culture
- May 19: Dean Spader, Project Draw-down: 80 Viable Solutions to Climate Change

In this issue

- Volunteer Spotlight: Val Coluni (p. 2)
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Time to renew membership

Use the form on p. 5, or go online to <http://www.blacksburgaarp.org/join-us>

Membership is for the year 2020.

November Food Drive

For the November Food Drive, we will collect pet food for homebound seniors. This program is being sponsored by the Agency On Aging.

Shannon Hammons, Marketing Rep for the Agency On Aging, is hoping to attend our November 19 meeting to kick off this drive. If you are unable to attend but would

like to participate, please contact Sally Anna Stapleton, Chairperson, Community Service Committee (sanna418@gmail.com)

Items Needed

- Bags of dry dog or cat food
- Bags or boxes of cat litter
- Most seniors have small dogs so buy accordingly.

Volunteer Spotlight: Val Coluni

Val Coluni had long been an inactive member of the national AARP, without a chapter affiliation, when a personal predicament launched him into advocacy and a major role with the state and local chapter.

In 2008, he was laid off from a part-time job and applied for unemployment insurance in Virginia only to learn that the Virginia Employment Commission would reduce unemployment benefits of individuals who received Social Security. State regulations specified that Social Security benefits offset state unemployment benefits.

Val found the rules unfair and probably illegal because the state was pre-empting federal benefits. In a telephone call, he engaged in a heated dispute with the state senator who had proposed the legislation. Val learned that the senator had wanted this legislation because he was a business owner whose expenses went up when his former employees applied for unemployment benefits. The senator's solution was to penalize individuals who drew Social Security and were eligible for unemployment.

Val's advocacy attracted the attention of David DeBiasi, director of one of the AARP advocacy units in Richmond. AARP intervention led to the elimination of the regulation about unemployment benefits, a decision that affected not just Val but many AARP members. DeBiasi noted that Val is passionate and articulate and invited him to join the state AARP Advocacy Committee.

On the state committee, Val attended several strategy meetings each year and traveled to Richmond to lobby, in small teams with other AARP advocates, for legislation that aligns with state AARP legislative priorities. He also attended hearings, called on local organizations and legislators, and made some presentations.

At least since 2015, he has written a "legislative report" for the AARP Blacksburg newsletter (in conjunction with Alison Galway until late 2016). His topics have reflected AARP legislative priorities concerning seniors. One of his favorite topics is fraud and scams that affect seniors. He has warned us about tax fraud, elderly

financial exploitation, and bogus calls that ask for private information. He has also informed readers about legislation affecting health care, family caregivers, and respite care. His columns have frequently addressed Social Security and ethics. He has updated us on redistricting and other issues that determine how much power voters have in elections. He attends chapter board meetings and presents his report for discussion there. He thinks AARP was influential in Virginia's decision to expand Medicaid, among other priorities.



To prepare for his legislative updates, Val consulted *Bloomberg Businessweek*, *Kiplinger*, *Time* and *Money* magazines, *The Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Roanoke Times* editorial page. In selecting topics, he avoided topics that were covered well locally, such as guns and pipelines. He followed the guidelines offered by the state advocacy committee: is it Real? Meaningful? Relevant? Important? Sustainable?

Val credits his work with AARP as developing his humanity. He was glad to intervene, for example, to help a woman who could not afford her prescriptions. With the help of AARP and a pharmacist, she was able to get them.

Val received the Blacksburg Chapter Service Award in 2018 for his service in advocacy and informing local members of relevant issues.

Val and his wife of 58 years, Ginny, moved to Blacksburg from Sarasota, Florida, in 2000, advised by Virginians they met in Maine that the town would be a good place to live. They have two daughters and five grandchildren. A son died tragically at age 48. Ginny was a nursery school teacher and active in Master Gardeners. Val's career was in human resources. He led employee workshops to improve organizational effectiveness, developed hire selection procedures, and designed election campaigns for National Labor Relations Board federal elections, among other initiatives.

Thank you, Val, for your service to AARP and for your impact in making lives better for seniors.



photos by Peter Magolda



President's message, *continued*

Research supports the notion that nurturing casual relationships (connections) that are made possible by being part of a group like an AARP Chapter, a church, or a civic group of some type has demonstrable positive benefits for one's wellbeing.

When we are young, social connection is inherent in the way our lives are structured in the institutions of the family, school, and work. As we age and leave work, we may move to a new location, our families begin to spread out, and the way and with whom we engage may change. While our core friendships and family relationships remain central, we shouldn't overlook the power of the casual connections to the people we see in other contexts like the walking trail, in the grocery store, the doctor's office, or a Lifelong Learning class. Those relationships provide a different but important sustenance to our sense of being part of a community, having some value and meaning beyond ourselves alone. In addition, these kinds of ad hoc connections can evolve into something more substantial.

When I was much younger, I watched an aging family member become socially isolated. I felt puzzled sad and helpless about it because I wasn't sure what I was seeing. If I had better understood the nature and power of social connectedness, I may have been more helpful. In another more recent instance, I was reminded of the challenges that others face when age-related illness strikes and interferes with the ability to interact with others by moving easily around the community. The person shared that he was able to practice behaviors that helped him, like eating well, exercising daily, staying as mentally sharp as possible, and following medical treatments. However, he reported that finding adequate social engagement was the biggest challenge for him. These two experiences serve as a powerful reminder to me about how important it is to be a part of social networks not only for myself but for others.

Social connectedness is inherently reciprocal. If you have a positive social interaction with another person, it not only benefits you, but it most likely affects them positively as well. In the end these kinds of relationships help contribute to the meaningfulness of one's life. As we age, social connectedness helps us stay grounded in the thought that we really do matter.

May I suggest that you take some time to audit your social connectedness. Try looking at it from two perspectives. First, think about yourself as a receiver. How are you connected, and how do the connections affect your life? Are you satisfied with your status? Do you need to do anything to make it richer for yourself? Second, think about yourself as a "giver" of social connectedness and how it may affect the lives of others. Do you do enough to nurture relationships that are important to you? Might you contribute to others on a daily basis? Do you have a wide range of social connections? Do you value casual encounters?

We are encouraged to watch our weight, monitor our blood pressure, keep track of how much and keep track of a variety of other indices. Now you can add monitoring your social connectedness to your list.

Warm Hearth Plans New Apartments, Encourages Community Engagement

While retirement communities have long been viewed as the place to live when you get older and need help, times are changing, and the benefits to seniors of retirement communities are changing as well. They are designed to provide physical activity, learning opportunities, and social engagement. Warm Hearth Village is a nonprofit senior living community offering a full continuum of living options. A new option is Walnut Pointe, independent living, maintenance-free apartments scheduled for construction in 2020. We are currently leasing these apartments to the public with no waiting list. The wait for independent living options at the Village typically exceeds 12 months; this is an excellent opportunity to bypass the waiting list and join in the active lifestyle at Warm Hearth Village.



"We encourage those visiting our community to plan a move while they are active and able to take full advantage of the amenities available," says Ellen Rorrer, Marketing Consultant. These amenities engage residents and keep them active, thus increasing their overall physical and mental well-being and ultimately, their longevity. The fitness center offers a variety of classes, one-on-one training, and specialty training to help combat illness and chronic disease as well as increase mobility, flexibility, and balance. "At Warm Hearth Village, the fitness center is bustling with people in the pool, using the cardio equipment, and participating in classes that range from our Rock Steady Boxing class for Parkinson's sufferers to yoga and meditation," shares Kenny Harrah, Fitness Director. Our mild climate makes year-round access to outdoor recreation possible. A prospective resident from Michigan looked in awe at our beautiful changing fall leaves against the blue sky and said skies there are so grey in the fall that he and his wife basically hibernate in the cooler months. That's not the case in Blacksburg where residents use walking paths most of the year that connect neighbors to each other and to nature.

The Village Center at Warm Hearth Village is open to the community. Anyone 55 and older can join the fitness center and take advantage of the array of offerings and the expertise of trained staff. Out-patient rehabilitative therapies are available to community members recovering from illness or injury. They may use the therapy team and the warm, saltwater pool. The community room is filled regularly with educational, musical, and community events. It hosts classes in the VT Lifelong Learning Institute, Mountain Jam, The Lions Club, and many more. Tall Oaks Hall is available to the community, and catering services are provided onsite. The Huckleberry Café serves breakfast and lunch and provides a healthy, lighter fare with indoor and outdoor seating. Community members are welcome to eat here.

We invite you to come take a look, whether planning a move here or just looking for a way to stay active and engaged. You're sure to see someone you know and find something you enjoy.

Call Ellen Rorrer at 540-443-3465 or visit retire.org to learn more.

Legislative Update by Doug Feuerbach

Prescription Drug Pricing

According to an October 23 article in the Washington Post, the drama in Washington to pass legislation to lower the high cost of prescription drugs continues with the White House and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi still working behind the scenes to reach bipartisan agreement. There is consensus, though, that any deal would almost certainly fail to make it through Congress. The impeachment proceedings are also not helping to smooth out interactions between President Trump and Pelosi. Meanwhile, Pelosi continues to advance her own bill in the House.



Interestingly, there is consensus between political parties that both the cost of prescription drugs and the rate of increase is too high. The disagreement is in the details of how to fix it. Polling data shows that Americans of both affiliations are very concerned about the cost of prescription drugs and that they want their elected officials to do something about it. This is what seems to be keeping the negotiations alive. Both sides want to sway voters heading into the 2020 election.

In 2019, there was only one bill introduced in the Virginia General Assembly (by Senator John Edwards) to stop prescription drug gouging. The bill made it out of committee unanimously but failed to pass.

LLI Spring Preview Wednesday, December 11

German Club Manor, 3:00–5:00 pm

The Lifelong Learning Institute at Virginia Tech will present a preview of spring 2020 classes and events on Wednesday, December 11, from 3 to 5 pm at the German Club Manor on Southgate Drive.

You will hear about 30 classes planned for spring on a range of topics including history, science, literature, technology, and personal growth. You will also hear about 25 events, ranging from an introduction to hobby drones to a trip to Richmond to the American Civil War Museum and White House of the Confederacy. You will also hear more about charter travel options to Chicago and the Canadian Rockies. You will meet selected instructors, who will preview their classes.

This preview offers a great opportunity to enjoy some refreshments, chat with other learners, and plan your spring LLI classes.

Have you thought about ways to increase your social connectedness, as Jerry Niles advises in his president's column? You can begin at the preview and continue by enrolling in spring LLI classes and events.

The Peace of Wild Things

by Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's
lives may be,

I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the
great heron feeds.

I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with
forethought of grief.

I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

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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.

Weather policy: If the public schools are closed, AARP will not meet.

Chapter Officers 2019

President • Jerry Niles, niles@vt.edu
Vice President • Don Creamer, dgc2@vt.edu
Secretary • Pat Hyer, hyerp@vt.edu
Treasurer • Pat Ballard, pballard@vt.edu
Assistant Treasurer • Ruth Anne Niles, rniles2@icloud.com

Board of Directors

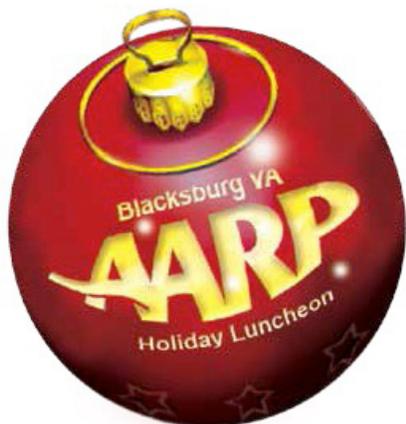
- 2019—Tamara Hodsdon, Jim Montgomery, Wanda Smith
- 2020—Isabel Berney, Jeananne Dixon Bame, Hugh VanLandingham
- 2021—Doug Feuerbach, Judith Jones, Lisa Moose, Leslie Pendleton

Newsletter editors: Carolyn Rude, Sandra Griffith

AARP Website www.blacksburgaarp.org

AARP Holiday Luncheon

Tuesday, Dec. 10, 11:30 am



Menu

Plated garden house salad
 Chicken breast in sun-dried tomato cream sauce
 Roasted vegetable lasagna
 Savory mashed sweet potatoes
 Roasted root veggies
 Rolls and butter
 Fruit pies sliced
 Coffee, iced tea, and water

Location

Warm Hearth
 The Village Center
 2387 Warm Hearth Drive
 Blacksburg, VA 24060

Date: Tuesday, December 10, 2019

Time: 11:30 am–1:30 pm

Program

Announcement and Introduction of
 AARP Community Award Recipients

Price: \$20 per person

Guests welcome!

Reservation deadline: December 2, 4 pm

Luncheon Reservation, Membership Dues

You can write one check

Total the Luncheon, 2020 dues, and optional donation and make your check out to **Blacksburg AARP Chapter # 2613**.

Send with these forms to

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

Holiday Luncheon Reservation Form

Reservation deadline: December 2, 2019, 4 pm

Name _____ \$20.00

Spouse/Partner/Guest _____ \$20.00

Guest _____ \$20.00

Luncheon Total _____

Reservations cannot be accepted after December 2, 2019, 4 pm.
 For more information, contact Terry Wildman, wiley@vt.edu

Membership Dues \$15/household

Name _____

Spouse/Partner _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone: _____ Email _____

Email Spouse/Partner _____

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 low. However, donations to the chapter are not tax deductible.

Luncheon Total _____

Dues _____ 15 _____

Donation _____

Total _____



Blacksburg Chapter #2613
 Jerry Niles, President
 P.O. Box 10082
 Blacksburg, VA 24062

**Nonprofit
 Organization
 U.S. Postage
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Blacksburg Chapter  Member Application for 2020

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: .

AARP Blacksburg Chapter • P.O. Box 10082 • Blacksburg, VA 24062