



Rador Vaden (left) displays his award with June Schmidt at the Volunteer Recognition Celebration.

Rador Vaden Honored for Service to Community

An enthusiastic group of more than seventy individuals participated in the Volunteer Recognition Celebration held March 31 at the Blacksburg Community Center. The Celebration was sponsored by the Blacksburg Chapter AARP, the RSVP Programs of the New River Valley, the YMCA at Virginia Tech, and the American Red Cross. The purpose was to recognize outstanding volunteers from throughout the New River Valley.

Twenty nominations were received from various New River Valley organizations in recognition of their outstanding volunteers. Rador "Red" Vaden, nominated by the Mount

see Celebration, page 4

Lockhart to Discuss Accidents at April Meeting

Dr. Thurmon E. Lockhart, Associate Professor in Virginia Tech's Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering, will discuss "Physiological Changes and the Occurrence of Accidents in Older Adults" at the April 17th meeting, 11:30 a.m. in the Blacksburg Senior Center meeting room. Bring a bag lunch.

Dr. Lockhart will speak about his fascinating research, in which some of our own members have participated, and also suggest how his work can help you prevent accidents. There will be a short presentation about the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life preceding Lockhart's speech. — Harriett Cooper

State Legislative Update

On April 4, the General Assembly completed their work, acting on the various amendments and vetoes from the Governor.

One bill passed that received great attention was the controversial power re-regulation bill. The Governor made changes to encourage the use of other forms of power generation such as solar, wind, or hydro power plants and for facilities to capture carbon emitted by fossil-fuel burning plants. One addition particularly disliked by consumer groups exempts large commercial and industrial consumers of electricity from having to cover the cost to utility companies that add renewable sources to their power generation mix. The cost of such environmentally sound practices would be borne by residential and other smaller consumers, letting large users off the hook. The Governor said large industries need the break to remain competitive in the global marketplace. Perhaps this helps explain why Virginia was recently selected as the most business-friendly state in the nation. The General Assembly backed the modest amendments from Kaine by a vote of 82 to 16 in the House and 37 to 2 in the Senate. In the House, Jim Shuler voted for the final bill, and Dave Nutter opposed it. In the Senate, John Edwards voted for it.

see Legislative, page 4

2007 Blacksburg AARP Chapter Board

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1st Vice President: *Jim Wightman* jpdad@bev.net
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Recycle Bulbs and Batteries Downtown

Don't throw your dead batteries and burned-out fluorescent bulbs in the trash!

The Downtown Merchants of Blacksburg want to help keep toxic heavy metals out of the local waste stream and ground water.

We will recycle old household batteries (alkaline or rechargeable) and fluorescent bulbs free of charge. Just bring them to any downtown merchant.

— Leslie Hager-Smith, Director
Downtown Merchants of Blacksburg

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.

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

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 Sporakowski 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

Legislative:

Dan Fleming dbflein@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
Rhoda Lau mommakit4@msn.com

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

Additions to Murphy's Law:

The Dilbert Principle: The most ineffective workers will be systematically moved to the place where they can do the least damage — management.

Ehrlich's Law: The first rule of intelligent tinkering is to save all the parts.

Tai chi Helps Prevent Falls and Promotes Heart Health

We all know that exercise strengthens our bodies, relieves stress, etc., but as we grow older and busier, we find that we are less able to exercise. People may avoid exercise because of a recent surgery or physical trauma, but recent studies are showing that the gentle movements of Tai chi safely provide a plethora of health benefits even for those who have had recent surgeries.

Tai chi has been practiced in China for hundreds of years as a way to improve health, longevity, and general well-being. Today, some 10 million people in China practice Tai chi. Since awareness of this martial art is increasing, Americans are beginning to recognize its benefits.

Tai chi is a martial art that uses slow, fluid movements, combined with deep breathing and mental focus to achieve a state of harmony with the mind and body. It places little stress on joints, muscles, or the cardiovascular system, making it an ideal exercise for older adults.

Many studies suggest a strong relationship between practicing Tai chi and improved balance and agility. A study published in January 2007 shows that Tai chi improves joint flexibility, neural response mechanisms, and musculo-skeletal control among the elderly, particularly those with arthritis, or those who have had surgical procedures on their backs, hips, and/or knees. Test participants showed quicker responses to loss of balance, as well as an ability to maintain balance and avoid damaging falls.

They also reported relief from joint pain and arthritis.

A study done in South Korea showed that participants, whose ages averaged 78 years, who practiced Tai chi three times a week for twelve weeks decreased their chances of falling by 50%. In addition, their walking speed increased by 25%. These numbers should prove exciting since 30% of people over the age of 65 suffer a fall each year, and, of those falls, one in ten results in a bone fracture.

Bob Walker, who teaches the Tai chi course at the Blacksburg Senior Center, has practiced Tai chi for 11 years. "If you do Tai chi," he says, "it will give you a real sense of your body, of where your body is in time and space. It gives you a sense of self that other exercises don't give you." He has noted personal improvements in his coordination as the result of his Tai chi training. "I find myself moving in a Tai chi manner, shifting my weight more gently. We tend to do things very fast these days. Tai chi slows you down."

As Mr. Walker suggests, Tai chi offers other benefits, such as improved heart health and improved sleep. A study that targeted seniors with significant heart problems or surgeries showed that practicing Tai chi regularly improves cardiovascular strength. Participants were able to walk further

without being short of breath, because Tai chi's focus on deep breathing increases blood oxygen levels, so the body is able to nourish its tissues more effectively. Tai chi also provides exercise for muscles in the lower-body that assist in walking.

Tai chi has been shown to improve sleep quality, duration, and efficiency. Test participants complaining of sleep trouble reported vast improvements in the quality of their sleep after practicing Tai chi; and since it is typically practiced in groups, Tai chi offers pleasant social interaction — as well as the reduced risk for some diseases that results from that interaction. Bob Walker encourages people to attend his class at the Senior Center and to do so faithfully, so as to gain maximum benefit.

The Seniors Program at the Blacksburg Rec offers tai chi classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9–10 a.m. Enrollment is limited. For more information, contact Senior Programs Supervisor Joy Herbert at (540) 961-1134 or <jherbert@blacksburg.gov >

Sources

Bruno, Leonard C., and Rebecca J. Frey. "Tai chi." *The Gale Encyclopedia of Medicine, Third Edition*, ed. Jacqueline L. Longe. 5 vols. Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006.

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"Tai chi reduces falls." *Australian Nursing Journal*, vol. 13, no. 2 (Aug. 2005), p. 27(1).

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—Ryan Donnelly

A study done in South Korea showed that participants who practiced Tai chi three times a week for twelve weeks decreased their chances of falling by 50%.

"Tai chi will give you a real sense of your body, of where your body is in time and space. It gives you a sense of self that other exercises don't give you."

Celebration

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Tabor Ruritan Club, received the Jim and Lenna Moore Citizenship and Community Service Award for exemplary volunteer efforts.

Rador Vaden has had perfect attendance with the Ruritan Club for more than 41 years and has served the club in every way feasible, from holding office to raising funds. Besides routinely helping with the famous Fish Fry events and making apple butter, Red drives more than 10,500 miles and provides more than 750 hours of community service each year visiting the sick and disabled in hospitals and nursing homes. In 2005 he was honored as a Tom Downing Fellow in Ruritan National, an honor awarded to less than one percent of members. Known throughout the New River Valley for his personal warmth and tireless spirit, Red was honored as the 2005 Grand Marshall of the Blacksburg July 4th parade. *Congratulations*, Red on an outstanding volunteer record!

The Celebration featured the entertainment of the Sweet Adelines, the awards ceremony, and light refreshments. The Reverend Jonathon Webster, Chaplain of Carilion NRV Medical Center and Pastor of the Snowville Christian Church, spoke on the importance of volunteering. Along with the four sponsoring organizations, the Blacksburg Senior Center provided the facility, and Carilion Hospitals of the New River Valley provided monetary support.

Thanks to all who helped make the event a success: Angela Little, Dale Oliver, and June Schmidt from AARP, Gail Billingsley and Anne Guiller-Moore of the YMCA, Bonnie Vanderberg of the Red Cross, and Kim Snider planned the event. AARP members Cerrie Coil and Mary Ellen



Awardees at the Volunteer Recognition Celebration held on March 31st at the Rec Center. Front row, from left: Connie Anderson, Martha Gunsten, Rador "Red" Vaden, Peggy Leister, Elizabeth Mills. 2nd row: Fred Douglas Lewis, Kathleen Absher, Clovis Linkous, Majorie Vitale, Patricia Boothe, Penny Sweet, Dale Mull. 3rd row: Barbara Holcomb, Panzie Whittaker, Don Mullins, Robert Joyner, Harold Wayne Scott.

Legislative Update, from page 1

Tech professor Irene Leech, president of the Virginia Citizens Consumer Council, said the governor definitely improved the bill. She added, however, that the legislation was developed so quickly "that it was virtually impossible to be fair to residential consumers." A conservation coalition said that, despite Kaine's efforts, the legislation remains "deeply flawed." The bill, they said, strongly favors new power plants over smart energy management. "Consumers and the environment still lose," said the coalition, made up of the Sierra Club, Piedmont Environmental Council, and four other conservation groups.

Moore handled registration, Connie Anderson helped with name tags, and Doris Abraham, Violet Drake, and Mary Ann Hinshelwood served refreshments.

Another approved bill of interest to property owners included modest changes by the Governor to prevent private property from being taken by the government, using eminent domain, and given to another private person or organization, primarily for economic development. Blacksburg chapter member Nancy McCord, president of the Virginia Property Rights Coalition, was very pleased by the final result but is concerned about future attempts to tinker with the passed legislation. (See related story, page 7.)

Lawmakers rejected a proposed amendment by the Governor to postpone the phase-out of touch-screen voting machines until July 1, 2008. As a result, registrars will have to begin the phase-out beginning July 1 of this year.

— Dan Fleming

Eminent Domain Reform:

Yesterday, April 4, both Houses of the General Assembly accepted the Governor's recommended changes to HB2954, SB781, and SB1296. All that is needed now is the Governor's signature which is simply procedural. Here are the specific changes this legislation provides along with a brief explanation of why they were included or needed in Virginia.

The Legislation:

1. Prohibits taking private property if the primary purpose is for private benefit, an increase in tax base or revenues, or an increase in employment. This directly addresses the abuses allowed by the *Kelo* decision.
2. Limits the use of the power of eminent domain to well-established, traditional public uses such as schools, roads, parks, public services, and utilities and to specific named entities both public and private that take part in development of public facilities. This reverses the expansion of eminent domain in Virginia that had led to *Kelo*-type takings prior to the ruling.
3. Restricts the amount of land taken to no more than is necessary for the public use. This directly addresses abuses such as occurred in the *Ottafaro* case where only 18% of the property taken was needed for the road.
4. Allows owners to defend themselves in cases where the government's stated public use is merely a contrived justification for taking property for an improper/illegitimate purpose. This directly addresses the abuse allowed by Virginia courts in the *Ottafaro* and *Lacy* cases. As you remember, in: *Ottafaro*, the City took the Ottafaro's property for a road and then leased 82 % of the property to a private developer for a big box store and other retail establishments.
5. Provides that whenever property is taken, the public interest must "dominate" private gain. Addresses *Lacy* because this taking was clearly carried out strictly for private gain.
6. Prohibits the taking of property if the primary purpose is for private financial gain. Addresses *Ottafaro* and *Hoffman* because the taking in both of these cases was for the private gain of a developer whom the government favored.
7. Tightens the definition of blight, only allowing property to be taken if it endangers public health or safety and, when a structure is involved, it can only be taken if it is beyond repair or unfit for human occupancy or use. This removes the broad definition of blight found in the current Virginia Housing Authority Code, which allows homes and entire neighborhoods to be taken because some property is deteriorating (this can simply mean old) or because it may become blighted at some point in the future. Under this tightening of the

Lacy, the property was taken for a so-called "public road" that served as a driveway for the person who asked for and paid the County for, the taking.

Virginia Code, localities can still take and/or require the repair of dilapidated and/or vacant buildings by simply enforcing laws that are already on the books.

8. Prohibits the taking of a non-blighted property, just because the property is located in a blighted area. This directly addresses abuses that have occurred throughout the Commonwealth in redevelopment/conservation areas under current Housing Authority Law. In these areas, perfectly good homes and businesses have been condemned and made available to private developers simply because other property in the area was blighted.
9. Reaffirms that the right to property is a fundamental right. This will force courts to give private property the highest judicial protection, which was the intention of our Founders. Thomas Jefferson said, the defense of private property "is the standard by which 'every provision of law,' past and present will be judged." He would undoubtedly be happy to see property rights given their intended position.

— Nancy McCord
President, Virginia Property Rights Coalition

Driver Safety Course Coming in June

Back by popular demand, the driver safety course returns to the Blacksburg Community Center at 725 Patrick Henry Drive. Everyone 50 or over really needs to take this valuable course. Enrollment is limited, so sign up early by calling Jim Gaines at 552-6851.

This 8-hour classroom refresher course assists drivers age 50 and over in refining current driving skills and developing defensive driving tech-

niques. No tests are required to pass the course.

The course will run Wednesday, June 13, and Friday, June 15, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Enrollees must attend sessions on both days to receive completion certificates.

A red dot on your mail label means that you need to pay your 2007 dues by April 20th or your chapter membership will be cancelled.

Blacksburg AARP Board Minutes, Chapter 2613

April 3, 2007

1. **Call to order:** President Jim Gaines called the meeting to order at 9:32. Members present: Brian Allen, Connie Anderson, Cerrie Coil, Virgil Cook, Harriett Cooper, R. B. “Ben” Crawford, Curt Finch, Dan Fleming, Jim Gaines, Margaret Kates, Frank Lau, Angela Little, Carl McDaniels, Mary Ellen Moore, Dale Oliver, JoAnn Underwood, Jim Wightman
2. **Approval of the Agenda:** Additional item: Brian Allen requested time to report on the volunteer-recognition ceremony, and Angela Little requested time to report on the PATH survey. Dale Oliver moved approval of the agenda with the additions. The motion passed.
3. **Approval of Previous Minutes:** Jim Wightman moved approval of the March 6 minutes. The motion passed. Curt Finch reported that there are driver-safety courses scheduled for June 13 and June 15. The announcement will appear in the newsletter.
4. **Treasurer’s Report:** Brian Allen reported that we are in good shape. Our balance is up from \$4243 to \$4264. He paid \$191.95 to Poca-hontas Press for the newsletter, less than we paid to Kopy Korner. He also paid Sweet Adalines for performing at the volunteer-recognition program. Dale Oliver moved acceptance. The motion passed.
5. **Newsletter:** Mary Holliman will not be charging for her time editing the newsletter. She can send the newsletter to the printer in Christiansburg over the Internet, saving her both time and expense. Jim Wightman suggested that we explain to Kopy Korner — either verbally or by letter — our reasons for no longer using its services and to thank Calvin for his services over the years. President Gaines said that he would do so.
6. **Web Site:** Connie Anderson reported that she has posted information about the program for April 17.
7. **Membership:** Jim Wightman stressed that 101 people still have not paid their dues for 2006 and 2007. Those who have not paid their 2007 dues by April 20 will be dropped from the rolls. He then gave the following report:
“Our membership now stands at 397, which includes 11 Complimentary; 8 Life; and 5 Honorary members. 30 members [2 singles and 14 couples] have paid Lifetime (\$100) dues; 8 members have paid their 2008 dues; 234 members have renewed their membership for 2007; 76 members now owe for 2007; 25 members did not pay their 2006 dues.
“Those 101 members who are now 3 months in arrears for their 2007 dues will have a red dot on their April newsletter. All persons not paying their 2007 dues by **April 20th** will be dropped from the membership list and will not receive a May Newsletter. This “purging” of our membership list will obviously result in a substantial decrease in our membership numbers. The Board of Directors has discussed this problem several times over the past two years.
“We welcome as new members this month: Allen and Judith Bame, Mary and Robert Giles Jr., and John Tuttle.
“The Dycks and Forkners have moved from this area.
“We were saddened to learn of the
- deaths of members Norman McNabb, Mary Anna Taylor, and William Walker.”
8. **Programs:** Harriett Cooper reported that the April program would feature Dr. Thurman Lockhart of the College of Engineering. He will discuss Physiological changes of aging and how such changes contribute to accidents.
May 15: Delegates Dave Nutter and Jim Shuler on the recent session of the General Assembly
June 19: annual picnic
September 18: Forum on the upcoming legislative elections. Carl McDaniels raised the possibility of a candidate forum, if we can obtain some state support. Ben Crawford suggested that we ask for the AARP Voter Express van for that day so that we can have people register at that time.
October 16: Pitfalls of the 2007 tax return
November 20: TBA
December 18: holiday luncheon.
9. **Publicity:** No report. Norm and Nancy Eiss were absent.
10. **Legislative:** Dan Fleming reported that the most controversy centered on the smoking ban. The governor sent a 60-page document to the legislature on the re-regulation of the electric utilities. Many believe that the members really do not know what they have passed. One provision encourages the utilities to use alternative fuels, but some businesses argued that any surcharge would be too much for them to pay. Consequently, private consumers will bear the brunt of the cost. The state universities argued that raising the wages of employees to meet a

see *Minutes* page 7

Membership Notes for April

Our chapter membership now stands at 397. Our good news is that 242 members have already renewed their memberships for 2007. Our less-than-good news is that 76 members paid their 2006 dues but now owe for 2007. Our local chapter dues run for the calendar year commencing January 1st. Members who are now 3 months in arrears have a red dot on their April Newsletter. Those members not paying their 2007 dues by April 20th will be dropped from the mem-

bership list and will not receive a May Newsletter. The Board of Directors regrets having to drop a single member but non-dues paying members don't keep the lights burning. 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 having to

worry again about whether you owe the present year dues.

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 the 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

Jim's Jots for April

Work Day, May 10, in conjunction with Habitat for Humanity. We will be working on new construction in Pulaski County. Let's meet at the Blacksburg Rec. Center at 8:30 a.m. and move on from there. One other thing: We are gathering info for the YMCA on what classes we would like them to present in their "University" offerings. Please let me know if you have a request.

Connie Anderson Thanks AARP Members

Thank you all very much for making me your AARP nominee to represent the "volunteer spirit" at the 2007 Volunteer Recognition Celebration. Twenty individuals from the New River Valley area were presented with a volunteer pin, a framed certificate, and a featured article in the program. The range of time and talent exhibited by these nominees is

overwhelming for their dedication and devotion to volunteer work.

The Volunteer Celebration Committee included AARP Chapter members Don Elson, Angela Little, Dale Oliver, and June Schmidt. Ben Crawford served as the "official" photographer and Doris Abraham collected all the names in proper order for the nominee's group picture.

See *Connie*, page 8

Minutes, April 2007, from page 6

minimum-wage requirement would be a hardship.

11. History. Carl McDaniels reported that we have acquired storage boxes for our records. The boxes enabled us to move the material to high shelves. Consequently, the Rec Center will allow us to continue storing the records.

12. Awards. No Report. Don Elson is out of town.

13. Other Business. Jim Gaines reported that there will be a Habitat service day on May 10. Our package from AARP is on the way, and the notes from Habitat are supposed to be on the way. There will be an announcement in the May newsletter.

Dale Oliver reported that the awards program on March 31 went very well. There were about 70 in attendance. Twenty people were recognized.

Jim Gaines reported that the YMCA reception for AARP went well. The Y wants input on what courses we would like offered at the Open University this fall. They are asking other groups the same question.

Jim Wightman asked whether it was time to publish a membership list. Members suggested distributing the list at the annual picnic in June. Someone else suggested publishing it in the newsletter. Jim Gaines will ask Mary Holliman about the fea-

sibility of including the list.

Angela Little reported that Bill Finley from RSVP contacted her. They are working with the New River Health District and Dr. Hershey on the PATH (Partnership for Access to Healthcare in the New River Valley). They need volunteers to help with a survey of how people access healthcare in the New River Valley. People would attend a retreat to get information on how to go about getting the information. Members agreed that an announcement should go in the newsletter.

14. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 10:56. Next meeting, Tuesday, May 1, 9:30.

—Virgil A. Cook, secretary

