



Serving the greater New River Valley, Virginia

May 16 Chapter Meeting

Brain Health

The May meeting will feature a presentation on brain health. This is an AARP presentation that Wendy Baldwin will deliver. The presentation includes a very accessible summary of what we know about the importance of brain health and practical steps you can take to support brain health. With improving life expectancy most of us are going to face the challenge of changes in cognitive functioning. This is an engaging overview of the risks to brain health as well as specific, concrete steps you can take to support brain health.



free hot dogs and hamburgers

AARP night: Salem Red Sox June 6

Join AARP leaders and members Tuesday, June 6, at Lewis Gale Field when the Salem Red Sox face the Lynchburg Hillcats. AARP will be highlighting the important topic of maintaining brain health as we age.

AARP members and their families who attend the game are invited to stop by the pavilion any time after the gates open at 6:05 pm for free hot dogs and hamburgers while supplies last! The first pitch is at 7:05 pm and there will be many fun activities taking place throughout the evening.

AARP Volunteers and staff will be greeting guests at the door and directing members to the 3rd base pavilion for the picnic dinner and resource sharing. AARP will be there all night with printed materials to share and we will provide branded giveaways to members (even after the food is all gone).

Tickets to enter the ballpark gates to participate in this event must be purchased either at the box office on game night or in advance online at: www.salemsox.com.

President's Message by Terry Wildman

A Recipe for Skeptics

When I first started thinking about writing this piece for the May newsletter, the first idea I had was to somehow address the one thing that seems to have a large chunk of the population all riled up these days. It has been hard to miss the spectacle of people all over the country (and world, for that matter) marching and protesting the impression, if not fact, that mechanisms we've had in place to understand and protect the environment are now being slowly and deliberately disassembled in favor of a—well—different mindset.

Part of the problem is those pesky scientists who are and have been collecting all manner of data showing that we've got a little greenhouse thing going on here that is warming us (our little planet, that is) at an increasing and not entirely natural rate. This notion of a "rate of global warming" is, of course, a little tricky to understand given our commonsense notion of what "warming" typically means, or even cooling for that manner. Small temperature changes (i.e., one, two or even three degrees) are hardly detectable in our day-to-day experiences, and would certainly not be the cause of much discussion, except perhaps in those cases involving small changes at or near the freezing point if we're driving on a wet early spring night, or hoping for a good peach crop.

But, let's for the moment give these climate scientists a break and concede that the earth as a whole is getting warmer—after all we do have pretty reliable tools for measuring such things, and let's further concede that the change is in the range typically reported. So what's the big deal? The change of a few degrees is still small in absolute terms, right? But wait, we do know something about small changes as when a power outage occurs and things in our freezers start to get a bit sloppy as soon as a certain temperature point is breached. Typically the mess is pretty small and we move on as soon as power

please turn to page 3

Upcoming Events

- "Firehouse primaries" for local elections: Republican May 20, Democratic June 10 (p. 5)
- June 6, AARP night at the Salem Red Sox (p. 1)
- June 13, statewide primary election (p. 5)
- June 15, AARP-Blacksburg picnic, 5-8 pm (p. 4)

Volunteers needed: Health Fair 2018

Looking for a purpose? Looking for fun activities? Want to serve the senior community and learn lots of fascinating information?

Look no further! We would love to have you join us on the Health Fair Committee. Yes, it's not until September 2018, but do you remember the great successful event we had last September? It takes a lot of planning, but "Many hands make light work." To have another informative event, we'll need many hands.

Give Jennie Reilly a call or email and we'll collect your ideas and match your interests to the variety of tasks. jenmik@vt.edu; 540-382-0645 (H); 230-5565 (C).



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.

Iris: The Flower that Celebrates Spring and sometimes autumn

by Don Rude

Thou art the Iris, fair among the fairest,
Who, armed with golden rod
And winged with the celestial azure, bearest
The message of some God.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The words of Longfellow express the delight that I have long taken in the beautiful flowers that are now beginning to bloom in my Blacksburg garden. As a retiree moving to Southwest Virginia, I came intending to fill much of my new free time with gardening, and I was delighted to learn that the area is particularly suited for the cultivation of irises of all varieties.

I first came to be fascinated with these charming plants as a small boy, taken to visit a relative's spring garden. The unusual shape of the flowers, each of which has three upright petals (standards) and three downward curving ones (falls), caught my attention. I remember being fascinated with their velvety sheen and with the beards that projected upward from each of the falls. Much later on, my Mother obtained rhizomes for me, and I grew them all through my junior high school years. When Carolyn and I purchased our first home, a friend who was redoing a garden gave us many rhizomes all identified by name, and my early fondness for the plant was reborn as an obsession (*hobby* would be too weak a word). They are wonderful in so many ways and ideally suited for cultivation here in Southwest Virginia. Please let me tell you why.

First, unlike many other spring flowers, iris have an extended growing season because there are many categories of plants that bloom at different times in the spring.



Don Rude admiring his beauties



"Delta Lady," blooming in October

Bulbous Dutch iris and bearded iris produced from rhizomes bloom before beardless iris, which are also grown from rhizomes. Bearded iris are classified by height and include miniature dwarf iris 3 to 6 inches; standard dwarf irises 6 to 16 inches; median irises 17 to 27 inches; and tall bearded iris (anything over 27 inches). All have similar flowers.

Size determines the order of bloom, which is triggered by soil temperature with a bloom season that sees miniature dwarf irises blooming with daffodils in late February or early March and tall bearded iris blooming up until Memorial Day. The beardless varieties, including Siberian, Japanese, and spuria irises, bloom after bearded irises. Reputable iris dealers will tell you whether a variety of iris blooms early in the season or late, so with careful planning one can have iris in bloom for at least two and a half months, March to May.

What is even better is the fact that hybridizers have worked to develop varieties of iris that repeat bloom in the summer and autumn. These reblooming varieties are wonderful to behold when they surprise a visitor in late October, sometimes even peeping through the first snowfall.

All types of iris come in rich variety of colors ranging from pure white irises to such deep purple that the flowers look black. They provide a rich color palette—blue, pink, yellow, white, purple, maroon, near black—that brightens the spring garden.

The plants are easy to care for. They should be planted in a shallow hole with the top of the rhizome exposed to the air. Most garden fertilizers satisfy their needs, and they grow quickly. The rhizomes should be divided every three to five years. If a clump becomes too big, the nutrition in the soil will be inadequate. When you divide the rhizomes, you can share them, and your friends can enjoy the beauty of these wonderful flowers in their own yards. A good time to divide iris (or to ask your iris-growing friends if they are dividing and sharing their rhizomes) is July.

Volunteers needed: Steppin' Out

Steppin' Out provides a great opportunity for AARP to share information about Social Security, Medicare, Livability, Aging in Place, and Safe Driving.

If you can help staff our booth for 2 hours on August 4 or 5 between 10 am and 8 pm, email Wendy Baldwin wendybburg@gmail.com. It is a great way to see old friends and attract new AARP-Blacksburg members. There will be an informational meeting ahead of time so you know just what to do and say to make this a fun and important event for our chapter.

President's Message *continued*

returns. Nice that the problem is reversible in this way! Earth warming? Well, scientists are not so optimistic about reversibility.

Now, what happens when unimaginably large amounts of ice, located at the two poles of the earth likewise start to melt, and there is no way to empty the bucket? Bodies of water around the earth will rise, of course, maybe not equally in all places, and maybe not at an exactly predictable rate, but people in coastal areas and on low lying islands—try the Marshall Islands—already have a good sense of this that perhaps residents of Kansas or Indiana don't yet see. Of course, the Midwest and other regions have their own challenges with wild swings in weather, excessive heat, drought, floods, and tornados that are also potentially connected with a warmer earth, and likely to worsen—potentially that is. Potentially also is the shifting of ideal crop climates northward. Good for the top tier states and Canada perhaps.

For some, especially skeptics, it's bad enough that a little warming can cause such mischief, but a bridge way too far to concede, as virtually all climate scientists have reported, that our modern coal and gas fueled ways of life are causing the warming, leaving us holding the bag (a potentially very expensive one) in terms of working out how to get off this slippery climate slope. World leaders have been looking at this and have already decided it is time to pony up and clean up before it's too late. In the US we've seen some pretty good success with air quality regulations in the past, but will we see continued progress? Folks wearing masks in Beijing and Delhi are likely asking this question, and Los Angeles still shows up on lists you wouldn't want to be a part of.

Here is where this gets a little tricky. I, like most anyone writing or talking about this topic, have a point of view. It turns out that a person or two—actually more to be honest—who are pretty close to me (i.e., sharing the same gene pool) have quite different points of view on this subject. It doesn't take much to learn that even subtle hints that the "other" is "out to lunch" or "backward" when they don't agree with your point of view, is not going to end well. Doesn't work any better when you're less than subtle either!

In looking for a better way forward, I found it interesting to draw a bit from Michael Shermer, who writes a monthly editorial for *Scientific American* and is the publisher of *Skeptical Magazine*. Being a self-described skeptic, he makes the point that the difference between "believing" something and "knowing" something is more than just a subtle distinction. Actual tools, he says, are needed to separate truth and falsity, to detect pure baloney, and to move beyond magic or supernatural thinking. Currently, the only reliable tool we have is science, and given that, it's helpful to know a bit about how it works, and also critical to invite skeptics of whatever stripe (e.g., science or climate deniers, vaccine holdouts, GM food critics) to participate in the game.

It turns out that scientists and climate skeptics pretty much begin at the same point, by setting out the null or negative case (i.e., there is no ongoing change in earth temperature at all beyond normal historic variations). Many skeptics or deniers at this point may simply rest their case, displaying no method to discern truth at all. Scientists, on the other hand, using a variety of methodologies inherent in various relevant disciplines (e.g., environmental

science, geology, geophysics, meteorology, ecology) then proceed to collect data over a period of time, thousands of investigations, and compare what they find with the null case. If, for example, one thousand properly vetted investigations just on the temperature question alone are completed and 980 of them find temperature increases well beyond what would be expected under normal conditions, then the hypothesis of no change has to be rejected. A few investigations, just by chance alone, might be unable to reject the null, but certainly would not hold sway against the 95 or 99 percent of remaining investigations.

Put another way, when science or climate deniers—quite often our own politicians—try to support their arguments by dragging out scientists who may agree with them, and those scientists are in the vast minority of such investigators, then it may be time for a change of mind or at least give one's constituents the courtesy of going back and carefully looking at what the 98 percent of scientists who don't agree with your own beliefs have found.

Also, instead of hiding possible inconvenient data from the public, encourage them to join you in a joint look at "what's what." Discover the truth together! Neither side of inquiries like this will win all the time. And, especially, don't constrain critical government agencies, like the Environmental Protection Agency, or the Food and Drug Administration, from making their decades of research available to all!

Let me conclude with an interesting set of points that Shermer made in a blog post about a month ago, titled "Science Makes America Great." Basically he says that governing itself should be viewed as a methodology, like science, and not so much ideologically driven. Shermer points out that when some of our forefathers imagined a governing system, it was from their perspective as practicing scientists themselves—for example, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison. In this system each state had the freedom to conduct its own experiments, and at the Federal level we've seen numerous experiments in war (e.g., WWII, Vietnam, Iraq), social policy (e.g., the New Deal, the 18th, 19th, and 21st constitutional amendments, Social Security), and we're now going to be participating (maybe) in a worldwide experiment aimed at managing global warming. All of these experiments were debated—some still are—and for most we kind of know how the experiments worked out. The 18th amendment, for example—democracy works best when everyone can vote—yes!

Just this month the magazine *Mother Jones* included an article that exemplifies the way some states are experimenting with energy issues. Iowa, where the wind does blow, is delving into wind energy in a big way with major investments that for one of its key utilities will soon be delivering almost 90 percent of its customers' energy from renewables. Other states in the "wind zone" are following suit. Then, Wyoming, with its coal friendly legislators, is taking the opposite approach by taxing wind energy and creating barriers for utilities that may want to add renewables to their portfolio. At some point we will know how all this turns out.

Science is a slow, patient, deliberate, persistent self-checking process. Let's hope that the fruits of this process, and some of its deliberate dispassionate nature can be useful in governing as well, staving off potential disasters.

June picnic: Thursday, June 15

Scenes from the 2016 picnic photos by Peter Magolda

We will gather at the farm home of Terry Wildman and Sue Magliaro for a picnic and live music. The chapter will provide chicken BBQ. Please bring an appetizer, side dish, or dessert to share. If you want a beverage other than lemonade or tea, please bring that, too.

Date / time Thursday, June 15, 5:00–7:30 pm

Location 3335 Elk Creek Drive, Christiansburg; phone: 540.320.5599 or 540.382.5577

Food chicken BBQ. Bring an appetizer, side dish, or dessert to share + your beverage.

Sign up Go to tinyurl.com/aarp-picnic17 to tell us how many people will come, which food you will bring, and whether you need a ride.

Directions From exit 114 on I-81 south, turn south on Route 8 toward Floyd.

Go 2.7 miles south on Rt. 8. Turn right on Childress Road (Rt. 693). Aly's restaurant is located on your left at the intersection. Drive 3.3 miles on Childress Road.

Turn left onto Elk Creek Drive, the entrance to Childress Estates. *Look for colorful balloons here.* Follow Elk Creek Drive to the cul de sac, about a third of a mile. Turn right on the first gravel driveway at the cul de sac (more balloons!) and at this point you will see the parking area.

From Radford, the best route is south on Tyler Road (passing the Radford hospital), which dead ends at Childress Road. Turn left on Childress Road, go uphill about a quarter mile and turn right onto Elk Creek Drive.



Musicians



Legislative Report *by Val Coluni*

1. Free Speech: Legislator (Candidate for VA Governor) vs

Voters. “Rally to end illegal immigration.” Two local restaurants cancelled the legislators’ previously approved and scheduled rally at their businesses as a result of phone calls and emails from local voters and one organization who threatened to boycott their business if the rally took place as previously scheduled. The locals felt the legislator was using divisive rhetoric to stroke controversy (“We will hunt down illegal immigrants”; showing mug shots of three illegal immigrants who were charged—not convicted—in the death of a Lynchburg teenager). Eventually the rally was held at the county court house. Were the voters guilty of denying “free speech”?

2. Gerrymandering—Which Helped the Birth of a Power-

ful Political Caucus. Both political parties have used the tactic of drawing boundaries of voting districts to their political advantage—to protect their incumbents and/or gain partisan advantage. A recent article in the *Washington Post* shows how this tactic significantly weakens our democracy. After the 2010 elections this party through gerrymandering was able to redraw districts to contribute to the election of a most conservative legislator and also aided others from the same party. Some of these individuals are now part of the Freedom Caucus, which is now playing a major role in current federal legislative efforts in Washington! Currently, there are major lawsuits in the Federal Courts to revise the boundaries of these voting districts and citizen efforts to remove the decision making from the politicians.

3. Felon Voting Rights. Recently Governor McAuliffe issued an executive order to restore voting rights for numerous eligible felons all at the same time. This was a deviation from past practice. Some in the Virginia Assembly protested to the Virginia Courts and the Court ruled that this was unconstitutional and the order was voided. The Court ruled that the restoration of rights must be done on a “case-by-case” basis. Our General Assembly remains somewhat divided on how we should proceed on this subject even to the point of raising the issue “should voting rights be restored at all?”

In our past petty larceny could cause you to lose the right to vote. Later on a U.S. amendment prohibited race from being used to prohibit voting rights. The issue is still a controversial one today: should convicted felons get their voting rights back? Today 1 out of 5 African Americans in Virginia are disenfranchised from their voting rights. Our Governor will soon inform us how he plans to proceed on this issue. Some feel that on this issue we are clinging to past traditions. Do you have any advice for the Governor? Contact your representative ASAP!

Republican and Democratic Parties to Hold “Firehouse Primaries”

The statewide Primary Election on June 13 is for statewide office holders, including Governor and Lieutenant Governor. Both parties have multiple candidates for these offices. The primaries will determine who is on the ballot in November.

Local primary elections for Montgomery County Supervisors are held separately, as “firehouse primaries” or “unassembled caucuses.” Unassembled caucuses are structured like primaries or elections: you show up, cast a ballot, then leave. Both parties will hold their primaries at the Montgomery County Government Center, 755 Roanoke Street, Christiansburg, VA 24073.

Voters will select nominees for District Supervisors to be voted on in the November 7 General Election. Districts A, C, and D have primaries. Multiple candidates are running for the Republican nomination for District C and for the Democratic nomination for District A. You can participate only in the caucus for the district in which you reside. You must be a registered voter. Bring a valid ID and voter registration card.

Republican Primary, May 20, 10 am–2 pm

District C Candidates: Zach Milton, Steve Fijalkowski, and Carl East
You are in District C if you vote at Meadowbrook Library, Christiansburg Church of Christ, Hall’s United Methodist Church, or Falling Branch Elementary School.

More information: www.montvagop.org/board-supervisor-candidates-2017/

Democratic Primary, June 10, 8 am–3 pm

Absentee voting: Montgomery County Democratic Committee meeting May 18, 7-8:30 pm, Montgomery County Health Department, 210 Pepper Street, Christiansburg

District A Candidates: Annette Perkins and Sara Bohn

You are in District A if you vote at Slusser Chapel Church of God on Mt. Tabor Road, Blacksburg Branch Public Library, or Margaret Beeks Elementary School.

More information: mcdemocrats.org/2017/04/23/its-caucus-season/

Importance of the Firehouse Primaries for Supervisors

The Supervisors make a lot of decisions regarding taxes, schools, and land use in Montgomery County. They adopt and enforce policies for police, sanitation, and health. They affect our daily living in many ways.

The primaries, more than the General Election in November, will determine who serves on the Board of Supervisors.

Chapter Officers 2017

President • Terry Wildman, wiley@vt.edu

Vice President • Wendy Baldwin, wendybburg@gmail.com

Secretary • Pat Hyer, hyerp@vt.edu

Treasurer • Pat Ballard, pballard@vt.edu

Board of Directors

- 2017—Pat Hyer, Jerry Niles, Shirley Peterson
- 2018—Wendy Baldwin, Ryan Martin, Lisa Moose
- 2019—Tamara Hodsdon, Peter Magolda, Jim Montgomery, Wanda Smith

Website: www.blacksburgaarp.org Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AARPBlacksburg/>




Blacksburg Chapter #2613
 Terry Wildman, President
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Check the date on your mailing label to see whether you are paid up for 2017.

Note that local dues are separate from the dues you pay to the national organization.

Blacksburg Chapter  Member Application for 2017

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: .

Ryan Martin • P.O. Box 10082 • Blacksburg, VA 24062