

Blacksburg AARP
Board Minutes/Notes

December 5, 2023

Blacksburg Recreation Center

Attendees: Don Creamer, Terry Wildman, Leslie Pendleton, Jerry Niles, John Burton, Pat Hipkins, Nola Elliot, Debra Martin, Wilma Dotson, Judith Jones.

President Leslie Pendleton called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM

The minutes: The November 2023 board meeting minutes were considered and approved.

Old Business

Holiday Luncheon: Terry Wildman reported that the headcount for the luncheon was 53. Forty-two members had paid to attend. Leslie circulated a finished draft of the program for the luncheon which was approved with minor modifications.

Charitable Giving: Judith Jones updated her committee report from the previous meeting to increase the amount of Food Drive from \$800.00 to \$940.

Standing Rules: Leslie led a brief discussion of the role of our "Standing Rules." Comments ranged from changing the title to "Guidelines" (we can't) to whether we need them at all. No action was taken.

Google Drive Docs: There was a fairly lengthy discussion of the use of Google Drive for our chapter's business. Google Drive has few fans on the board. Don Creamer seemed to think that most if not all of what we do on Google Drive could be moved to our website. Questions about security for such things as our membership and financial records resulted in tabling the discussion pending more information.

New Business

2024 Memberships: Leslie noted that, to date, there have been 58 renewals for 2024. It was also noted that 139 members from 2022 have not renewed. We also have 28 Lifetime members, 16 Life members (yeah, they're different), 31 Complimentary, and 1 Honorary.

Member Memorials 2023: Sandy Birch's list of 2023 Memorials was circulated. Combined with the previous Membership discussion, there appears to be a need for a better process to update our Membership files. This is a rather frequent discussion. It was decided that we will need to find a time/place/group to vet the membership list. It was also decided that it was better to err in the direction of being too permissive than to exclude someone who should not be excluded.

Mt. Tabor Ruritan's Dolly Parton Imagination Library Project: Wendy Baldwin presented a case for partnering with Mt. Tabor Ruritan to get approval for a Dolly Parton Imagination Library (DPIL) project. The project gives a book a month to every child from birth to age 5. She proposed that we join with partners to

- Include in our donations.
- Disseminate information at our "Table" (Health Fairs, etc.) particularly related to identifying and enrolling children.
- Help develop a Parent and Grandparent initiative to encourage children (and adults) to read.

It was moved and passed to support all three of the requests. Wendy also asked members with business connections to help get sponsors/partners to get involved.

Committee Reports:

Membership activities and data. The Membership Activities and Data database will move to John Burton from Cyndy Graham effective immediately.

Programs. Wendy and Pat Hipkins presented the year-end Program Committee update. (See attached)

Community Service. Judith reminded the group of the Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Veteran's Memorial Cemetery in Pulaski.

Membership. Wilma Dotson announced that the local NAACP will have a potluck dinner on Thursday the 14. She will attend.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55.

AARP program committee update, December 2023

Fall 2023:

- Sept: Prisoner book project: Brian Britt (VT)
- Oct: ARPA and other development in Blacksburg: Kim Thurlow (Town of B'burg)
- Nov: Winter/backyard birding: Chris Sokol (NRV Bird Club)
- Dec: Holiday Party

Winter-Spring 2024:

- Jan: Safety tips for the elderly, especially those living alone – Todd Brewster, Blacksburg Chief of Police
- Feb: Solar energy feasibility; doing our part for climate change – Carol Davis, Sustainability Manager, Town of Blacksburg
- Mar: Community impacts of Dialog on Race – Martha Ann Stallings, Chair of the DoR Education Issue Group
- April: Memory, Cognitive Flexibility (specifics TBA) – Ben Katz, VT Department of Human Development & Family Science
- May: Consumer Issues (specifics TBA) – Dan Casey, Metro Columnist, Roanoke Times
- June: Picnic

Carryovers for Fall 2024 (top choices in BOD vote 03/23):

- Precycling, recycling and politics: Turns out that recycling isn't all it is cracked up to be! How to make sense of this; what to do? Pat / on hold for fall?
 - Two ways to go on this:
 - 1.) What are the hurdles to effective recycling, and what are possible political/logistical solutions?
 - 2.) What are some engineering solutions? Ask VT engineers who are working on biodegradable packaging and/or upcycling plastics into soap.
- Robotic surgery and non-invasive diagnostics – someone from Intuitive Surgical. Wendy / on hold for fall?

Pat and Wendy will meet soon to review the > 40 suggestions given to the program committee, in addition to the two topics above, and prepare a ballot w/ 10-15 topics for members to vote on at our February meeting.

(03/23 also-rans, in order):

- Overview of Addiction in SW VA (Beth Macy, Dopesick / Raising Lazarus)
- Osteopathic Medicine; VCOM; Medical Services in Rural Appalachia
- The American Revolution in the NRV
- Pets for Seniors: Pros and Cons; and the benefits of Therapy Animals
- The Wine Industry in the NRV
- Spring Wildflowers (Rhoades)
- Transmission of Airborne Particles (Lindsey Marr)

Additional topics currently under consideration:

Arts/Music/Theater

- ?

Cultural Studies

- Appalachian culture, Emily Satterwhite, Appalachian Studies, Virginia Tech.
<https://liberalarts.vt.edu/departments-and-schools/departments-of-religion-and-culture/faculty/emily-satterwhite.html>
<https://liberalarts.vt.edu/news/in-the-news/2017/new-research-group-aims-to-shed-light-on-appalachian-health-disp.html>
- Native American culture, specifically in the New River Valley, Barbara Lockee, Native American History and Native at Virginia Tech.
<https://rural.vt.edu/2023/03/16/dr-barbara-lockee-honored-for-her-efforts-in-support-of-indigenous-students/> / <https://www.facebook.com/NativeatVirginiaTech/>

Economics / Finance / Financial Planning

- Long term care insurance: Overview, pros and cons; is it too late for AARP members to sign up, risks to consider and/or alternatives?
- Fraud and scams targeted at seniors
This is not a scam – A Play
Rinehart, Susanna <susannar@vt.edu>

Foods and Nutrition, Beer & Wine

- The Wine Industry in the NRV; ask one of the VT enologists (Department of Horticulture) to speak vs. one vintner OR have a panel
- The Brewing Industry in the NRV; ask someone in the VT Department of Horticulture) to speak vs. one brewer OR have a panel; ask Holly Scoggins to talk about the challenges and benefits of growing hops in VA
- Foods that tell America's story (Anna Zeide)
https://news.vt.edu/articles/2023/07/claahs-usfoodhistory.html?utm_source=cmpgn_news&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=vtUnirelNewsDailyPublicCMP_070323-public

For nearly a decade, Anna Zeide, VT associate professor of history and director of the Food Studies program at Virginia Tech, has used food as her platform for research and teaching.

Through her work, she found 15 foods —from spaghetti to green bean casserole — that tell America's story.

Gardening; Flora & Fauna; Nature

- Spring Wildflower ID (Mary Rhoades, others?)
- Beneficial Insects (Eric Day, VT Insect ID Lab)
- Invasive Insects (Eric Day, VT Insect ID Lab, others)
- Beekeeping; types of bees in VA and how to attract these pollinators (James Wilson, VT)
- Foraging for edible and medicinal plants
- NRV Master Gardeners
<https://www.nrvmastergardeners.com/>
Highlight their educational and service role; explain how and why to become one.

Health and Wellness

- The Histotripsy Device: what, how it works, what it can be used for now, future plans (FDA clearance to treat liver cancer; non-invasive ultrasound; novel therapeutic device to target and destroy diseased tissue, including cancer)
Eli Vlasisavljevich
- Robotic surgery and non-invasive diagnostics – someone from Intuitive Surgical
- Do People Become Addicted to Processed Foods? – Alexandra DiFeliceantonio, assistant professor at the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute.
https://news.vt.edu/articles/2023/10/research_fralinbiomed_upffoodforthought_1010.html?utm_source=cmpgn_news&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=vtUnirelNewsDailyPublicCMP_oct1223-public
- Addiction in NRV: Beth Macy, someone from VCOM, other?
- VCOM: How an osteopathic medical school and its graduates differ from the “traditional;” their commitment to rural health; mission, programs, and activities.
Contacts include Rob Campbell, Director for Development and Alumni Relations (Don) or Abraham Hardee, Chair for Rural Primary Care (Leslie)

- Long Term Care:
 - Home care options, support/resources for in-home caregivers; residential care (oversight, accreditation, Medicare coverage); palliative care; hospice
 - Connect with Agency on Aging for ideas; see if AARP has presenter sources?
 - Possible speakers include Tina King (Director) and Janet Brennard (Ombudsperson) with the NRV Agency on Aging; Karen Roberto and Laura Sands, VT Center for Gerontology; AARP Virginia's Speakers Bureau.
 - Note: This could be good as a panel, OR divided into subtopics (home, residential, hospice)
- In-home caregiving and support for caregivers
 - Contact Agency on Aging for ideas/speakers
- Aging in Place
 - https://fortune.com/well/2023/02/03/technology-can-help-older-adults-age-in-place-longer/?utm_source=cmpgn_news&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=vtUnirelNewsDailyPublicCMP_022723-public
- Outdoor exercise; walking/hiking (Terwilliger, Rhoades, Habitual Hikers Leonard and Laurie Adkins (Leonard = 540.314.2197 / habitualhiker@verizon.net / <https://www.habitualhiker.com/>)
- Pets for Seniors: pros and cons; options
- Benefits of therapy animals; when and how they are used
- Transmission of Airborne Particles (Lindsey Marr)

History / Local History / VT History

- VT's origin/initial mission; becoming a land-grant institution: what, when, where, why, how
- Key figures from VT's early days: ex. William Bradford Alwood, Ella Graham Agnew, etc.
- The American Revolution in the NRV / on the Frontier, Dr. Dan Thorp, Virginia Tech.
- The Civil War in the NRV
- History of the VT Corps of Cadets: recently retired General Randal Fullhart, former Commandant of Cadets, if he hasn't relocated; Rock Roszack, former Alumni Director
- Christiansburg Institute Museum & Archives (CIMA)

The Christiansburg Institute Museum & Archives (CIMA) is a grassroots museum and community-based archive that celebrates the 100-year history of the historic Christiansburg Industrial Institute (CII), while reinvestigating the experiences in rural Appalachia from Slavery to Desegregation.

<https://www.christiansburginstitute.com/>

Contacts: Jennifer Nehrt, Curator or Chris Sanchez, Executive Director

(This could be followed by a tour of people who wish to visit the museum on their own.)

International Affairs, Local Mission Work

- Mission trip to the Dominican Republic (DR) (February-March 2022), Richard (Dick) Neves (AARP Blacksburg member)

<https://www.wilderutopia.com/international/humanity/dominican-republic-modern-day-sugarcane-slavery/>

"Father Ligonde Emmanuel is a Haitian priest with a parish that includes bateyes in the sugar plantations of the DR. Roughly 30,000 Haitians work as indentured servants in these sugar plantations owned by Dominicans, under terrible living conditions and pay. They work 10-hr days, 6 days/week for \$5 per day. They live in shanty towns called bateyes, and Father Ligonde does what he can to minister to some of them and offer services at his little church in San Pedro de Macoris Province. Many years ago, I visited San Pedro de Macoris, met the bishop, and had lunch at his church outing, but did not travel to the bateyes to see and photograph first-hand what life is like for a sugar cane cutter. I sent him some money at Christmas so that he could prepare Independence Soup for his church; January 1 is Independence Day for the nation of Haiti, and they celebrate it by making a traditional soup.

- Haiti: St. Mary's Catholic Church Mission (extensive, ongoing involvement)

Local Topics

- Coordinating local resources for the elderly: Don Creamer (*et al.*)

- Makerspace: What, where, how to use, etc.

- Wonder Universe Children's Museum

<https://wonderuniverse.org>

Community Foundation of the NRV has grant-funded intergenerational field trips with residents of Showalter Center and the Head Start program at the Blacksburg Presbyterian Church. On any given day, parents and grandparents bring their children and grandchildren to the museum.

There are volunteer opportunities for seniors and special programs, for example, STEM Saturdays, during which seniors could share their expertise.

Nora Bolte, Director (nbolte@wonderuniverse.org / 540-200-8231)

- The Common Ingredient (a relatively new non-profit in our area) w/ a website to offer free recipes, uplifting food stories, profiles of local food pantries, and information about community education programs and activities aimed at reducing and eliminating food insecurity in the NRV and beyond.

<https://www.thecommoningredient.com/nrv>

Contacts include Anne (deatona@missouri.com), Suzi (suziaustin@comcast.net), and Phyllis "Grace" Youhas (phyllis.youhas@gmail.com)

Nature

- NRV Master Naturalists

<https://sites.google.com/site/nrvmasternaturalist/>

How and why to become one, services roles.

Politics

- Sensible gun legislation

Science / Engineering

- Overview of the VT CALS \$80 million grant to help farmers implement climate-smart practices to reduce greenhouse gasses; a program to help the agricultural industry be a leader in addressing climate change.

PI Tom Thompson, VT Associate Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS), Director of CALS Global, and Professor of Agronomy

- Geology of the NRV

Special Interest / Presentations that Involve Multiple Topics

- Paul Siegel: career overview

<https://news.vt.edu/articles/2023/06/cals-paul-siegel-profile.html>

Insights on chicken genetics that shaped the poultry industry's understanding of the biological effects of breeding for desirable traits; increased use of chickens as an affordable source of protein; how 4-H helped him find his career path.

- Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension, <https://ext.vt.edu/>

Overview; what VCE is, what it provides, how to use VCE resources.

Transportation

- Transportation options for seniors: "You don't have to drive your own car;" cover the usual bus, BT access, Uber, HokieRide, etc. as well as a discussion of how you can use the bus to get to Roanoke airport or rail terminal and so forth.
- Autonomous vehicles (+ current research and implications for seniors).
- Driving habits of seniors and safety. Jon Antin, jantin@vtti.vt.edu, Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI) is a possible speaker. Ron Gibbons, also with VTTI, focused on roadway lighting and visibility. Other possible speakers include driver safety instructors trained and endorsed by AARP.

Miscellaneous

- Green burials in the Blacksburg town cemetery: what is available, what is allowed here.

Recent Programs

2021

January - High Quality Fiber Internet: The Best Support for Independent Living, Andrew Cohill & Lynn Huber

February - Reactive Balance Training as a Fall Prevention Exercise, Mike Madigan

March - Emotions in Economic and Financial Decisions, Alec Smith

April - Research on Drones, Mark Blanks

May - Affordable Housing in Blacksburg, Kim Thurlow

September - COVID-19: To Vaccinate or Not -- and How Often, Gerhardt Schurig

October - Displacement and Development: The Legacy of the Interstate Highway System, LaDale Winling

November - Behind Every Stone: Stories from Local Black Cemeteries in the NRV, April Martin

2022

January - Weather Service Blacksburg: A Look at the Frequency of Weather Hazards in the New River Valley and How to Improve Resilience and Responsiveness to These Hazards, Phil Hysell

February - A Few Family Relationship Issues of Older Adults, Fred Piercy and Katherine Allen

March - Mushroom Identification Basics and the Virginia "Big 20", Stephen Kaplan

April - Caves and Karst of Virginia, ~~Will Orndorff~~ (Katrina Kasic Ficco substitute)

May - Critical Race Theory and Systemic Racism, Wornie Reed

September - Tackling the Big Contemporary Health Challenges through Scientific and Organizational Innovation, Mike Friendlander

October - Veterans Benefits, Matthew Wright, VA Veterans Affairs

November - Xenotransplantation: The solution for overcoming the organ shortage crisis, David Ayares, Revivicor (Canceled due to weather.)

2023

January - Inside the Moss Art Center, Ruth Waalkes

February - Xenotransplantation: The solution for overcoming the organ shortage crisis, David Ayares, Revivicor (Canceled AGAIN due to weather.)

March - Plants for Pollinators / Inviting the Right Kind of Wildlife to Your Garden: Attracting the Good and Discouraging the Bad, Stephanie Huckestein

April - Xenotransplantation: The solution for overcoming the organ shortage crisis, David Ayares

May - Why Newspapers are Dying but Democracy Isn't, Dwayne Yancy

September - Prisoner Book Project, Brian Britt

October - ARPA and Other Developments in Blacksburg, Kim Thurlow

November - Winter/Backyard Birding, Chris Sokol