



Serving the Greater New River Valley, Virginia

September 19 Chapter Meeting
Perspectives on Cuba

In January 2017, 21 members of the Lifelong Learning Institute at Virginia Tech traveled to Cuba on a Road Scholar charter tour, visiting sites including Havana, the resort town of Cienfuegos, Trinidad, and the Bay of Pigs. Several travelers will share what they learned about Cuban history, geography, modern life, music and dance, healthcare, Cuba–U.S. relations, and more.

The travelers’ experience was timely—between the loosening of travel restrictions by Barack Obama’s administration and the re-tightening by Donald Trump’s.

Enjoy vicariously the wonderful people, food, and places of this vibrant and changing culture. Hear how the people regard the United States and what they would like the relationship of our countries to be. Hear what Cuba might contribute to diabetes treatment and about their achievements in literacy.

Presenters include Pat Hyer, Linda Plaut, and June Mullins.



President’s Column by Terry Wildman

The Learning Season

True to the title a new *learning season* has just begun in our region and across the country. Towns like Blacksburg and Radford are once again transformed with the return of thousands of college students, and of course hundreds of familiar yellow buses are back to roaming their assigned routes from homes to schools. All this and the hint of fall weather does contribute to a certain level of excitement.

The other exciting thing to happen recently is the arrival of the Fall Catalog of our very own Lifelong Learning Institute. Personally, I’m going to be on my computer the morning of September 6 to make sure that my own late-in-life quest to become a watercolor artist can benefit from the expert instruction made available through LLI. Like many of you who are plotting your own engagement with LLI, it’s nice to be embarking on a *learning season* of our own.

Now, maybe it’s just part of my affliction as an academic who focused on the science of learning for most of my career that leads me to think that learning something new—especially something that is more in the personal rather than occupational domain—might be fun to look at in a bit more detail. The idea is that the story of our own learning has got to be more than “well, I took this course and really enjoyed it.”

So, I’ll get the ball rolling with some personal examples and maybe some of you could add your own experience with a learning episode that was, or currently is, important to you. What I have in mind is sharing a bit of the *experience* of learning—not an academic analysis. And, we still have on our Chapter website the “Senior Chronicles” section where our webmaster, Don Creamer, would be happy to publish *your* story.

I will suggest a couple of dimensions of learning that have impressed me across some very different *learning seasons*—that is, extended episodes that involve learning something complex. Three such learning seasons for me include *flying, golf, and watercolor painting*. In fact,

Upcoming Events

- September 6: Registration for fall LLI courses opens
- September 27: LLI-LWV panel: “Who Gets to Vote?” (p. 5)
- October 1, Fall AARP Food Drive
- October 26, Wine Tasting and Social at Whitebarrel Winery (AARP-LLI event)

Fall Food Drive October 1: Volunteers Needed

From 11 am to 3 pm on Sunday, October 1, AARP will hold its fall food drive at Kroger on South Main.

Sally Anna Stapleton, the coordinator, needs 2 volunteers for each hour. Please contact her at sanna418@gmail.com to volunteer your time.

Donations will be distributed to the Interfaith Food Pantry and MCEAP Food Program.

Other Volunteer Opportunities

- Tax Aide (p. 3)
- Health and Wellness Fair (p. 4)



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.

This issue of the newsletter was compiled and edited by Carolyn Rude and Sandra Griffith.

Meet Board Member Wanda Smith

Wanda Smith considers herself lucky to have lived a professional life that filled her with a great sense of fulfillment and meaning. In 2016, she retired from Virginia Tech as an emeritus professor of management and director of the Business Leadership Center in the Pamplin College of Business. For 32 years, she tried to walk into her classroom with a heart of gratitude for the privilege of being a part of her students' transformation. She feels proud to have been recognized for her non-academic, professional work in industry, consulting, entrepreneurship, and the military. It was an awesome ride. Now Wanda continues the ride into modified retirement as a consultant and volunteer.



Wanda Smith; photo by John McCormick

Wanda has lived a life of service, especially to children and elders. Her passion is laying the foundation for not-for-profits who depend entirely on volunteer support. No job is too small or too boring if it helps make a community a great place to live.

While the rewards of a career are great, the greatest rewards of her life are her husband, children, and grandchildren. Few things are better than giggling, skipping, and dancing with children or those who still think they are children. Remembering precious moments like these fill her with awe and peace.

Wanda brings professional knowledge about managing a volunteer organization to her role as a board member of AARP, but she also brings her heart. Thanks for serving, Wanda.

Health & Wellness Fair

Volunteer Committees Forming

It's almost here! It's time to get organized! OK, so the Health Fair is not until September 2018, but it is time to put together a team of talented, energetic, creative people, and that is why we want *you*.

Wendy Baldwin and Jennie Reilly are excited about working with you to plan another successful event that has tremendous benefits for New River Valley residents. We invite you to join one of the following committees, or let us know your ideas of how you would like to be involved. Call or e-mail us by September 30. We will plan our first meeting for October 2017.

- Refreshments (coordinate healthy snacks for participants and volunteers)
- Exhibitor Recruitment (small team to invite Gold, Silver, Bronze and Non-profit vendors)

AARP at Steppin' Out 2017

Fourteen chapter members set up and staffed an AARP booth at Steppin' Out: Don Creamer, Terry Wildman and Sue Magliaro, Sue, Carol and Ben Crawford, Susan and Bill Baker, Jennie and Mike Reilly, Isabel Burney, Tamara Hodson, Sally Anna Stapleton, Wendy Baldwin, and Bill Drammond.

Thousands came by taking free AARP literature and give-away items all supplied by AARP, plus candy. In support of the redistricting issue spearheaded by OneVirginia2021, we collected 80 names on sign-up sheets.

Friday afternoon there was a terrific unannounced, unseen thunderstorm with strong wind and hard rain. Thankfully it was brief. Mike and Jennie Reilly saved the day for us. As Jennie said, *"Too bad we didn't have video of us trying to hold onto the tent while throwing stuff in boxes, scooping lollipops from the street, and trying to put on raincoats. Hilarious..."*

AARP VA has paid the not insignificant registration cost in previous years and provides us free excellent helpful resource material to give booth visitors.

Sally Anna Stapleton and her granddaughter at the AARP Steppin' Out booth 2017



- Marketing (publicize the Fair: AARP newsletter, Sr. News, local papers etc)
- Volunteers (greeters, VCOM students, set-up)
- Parking (coordinate exhibitor and participant parking; assist with signage)
- Programs & Fliers (work with VCOM to create and print programs for visitors)
- Activities (coordinate food demos, speakers, exercises)

We look forward to working with you. It's fun, it's educational, and it keeps us young!

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Jennie Reilly

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(President's Column *continued*)

I'm currently engaged in direct instruction in two of these, golf and watercolor. With all three, two questions could start a much longer discussion and possibly analysis.

First question: What is the importance of instruction versus just "learning it on your own?"

Second question: Time? How much time does it take to develop at least a beginning level of competency across different pursuits?

So, with regard to the first question, it is obviously possible to play golf and paint with no formal instruction at all. It may be a stretch to call yourself a painter or a golfer with no guidance, but participating can be fun and no one gets hurt. However, most folks reach a plateau is quickly and beyond that need some formal help. In my case I have played golf for about 50 years, reached a fairly unimpressive plateau in the first five years, and have been in slight to moderate regression since. Hence, my current desire to figure out what I should have learned from the beginning! As to flying, instruction is a necessity and a legal one at that, but once licensed the learning curve has only just begun. More on this and watercolor in a moment.

The second question dealing with time can be surprising. Here are some numbers. My flight log book shows that in 1968 I learned to fly, that is, solo an airplane, with a total of five hours and thirty minutes of instruction. This is what one might call the absolute bottom level of competency. Skip ahead to 1974. At this point with about 200 total hours flying time I was in graduate school in Tallahassee and beginning to experiment with aerobatics, which fortunately I decided to pursue with a qualified instructor, Mr. Warren White. Mr. White, owner of the local general aviation facility, had just acquired a fully aerobatic airplane, a Decathlon, and he agreed to rent this exciting plane to me if I took a 10-hour aerobatics course from him, which I did. These 10 hours of instruction enabled me to then safely perform loops, barrel rolls, snap rolls, Cuban eights, inverted flight, hammer heads and various combinations of these and other maneuvers that involve significant g-forces and disorientation for the uninitiated. Just ask some of my passengers, including my own doctoral advisor! He got his revenge teaching me statistics.

Ok, to put this in some perspective, I am this week into my 13th hour of golf instructions and thus far we've put most of this time into swinging a 7-iron. I currently have about 14 other clubs in my bag! However, I am making progress, but who would think that it's likely to take me two or three times as much instruction to barely master one golf club as it did to make an airplane do some very interesting and seemingly dangerous things. Not to mention that I've been attempting, on my own, to play this game for 5 decades!

Finally, don't even get me started about the intricacies of watercolor painting. When I sign up next week I'll be into my fourth LLI course, will have spent dozens of hours working on this, and still have little clue as to when I'll feel confident with the medium. Happy accidents do happen on the golf course and on watercolor paper, but with good instruction perhaps they will occur a more predictably. With flying, there are no happy accidents.

Bottom line for me at this point. Good instruction in pursuits of interest is a real gift. Figuring out things for yourself is often overrated. Gaining new skills, even or perhaps especially later in life, is very rewarding. Let's go do some learning!

Tax-Aide Program Serves Hundreds

The AARP Tax-Aide Program and its 28 volunteers provide tax counseling to many local clients. In 2017, the program served:

- 1175—total clients
- 981—federal and state returns prepared
(all efiled except for 3 paper returns)
- 14—amended returns
- 210—question-and-answer clients

The clients were diverse:

- 63.2 was the average age (range was 17 to 104 years of age)
- 53% were single
- 39% filed joint returns
- 2% were married filing separately
- 5% were Head of Household

Thanks to Pat Ballard, the program coordinator, and Dianne Rencok, coordinator of volunteer training, and all the volunteers for this service.

Volunteers Invited to Join the Tax-Aide Program

Volunteers are always needed for the Tax-Aide program. They may serve in one of two roles, and training is provided. If you (or someone you know) would like to learn more about this program, please contact Pat Ballard, pb Ballard@vt.edu, or 382-1189.

Tax Counselor: Prepares tax returns using internet-based TaxSlayer software provided by the IRS and AARP. A team of approximately 20 counselors study together for certification, an open-book test prepared by the IRS and AARP. Study materials become available in early November, and classes are held on Saturdays in early December and January. In addition, individual mentorships are available with experienced counselors who can assist with both software and tax law.

The Tax-Aide program limits the scope of the program so that complex tax returns are referred to qualified tax professionals. Every tax return is prepared by at least two counselors, one completing the initial return and another performing a "quality review." Additional counselors may consult on special issues.

Counselors work at least one shift (4 hours) per week; at least 8 counselors are available at every shift. The tax season opens February 1 and ends April 15, for a total of 10 weeks. All sessions are held in the Senior Room of the Christiansburg Rec Center.

Greeter (Client Facilitator): These volunteers welcome clients to check in. Greeters inspect photo IDs and match information with an appointment list provided by the Christiansburg Rec Center. The clients are given an interview sheet to complete while they wait their turn for a tax counselor. Greeters assist with the work flow, keeping track of that waiting queue and helping to match the complexity of that tax return and the experience of tax counselors. Greeters are asked to work at least one shift (4 hours) per week, starting February 1 and ending April 15. Greeters must pass an open-book ethics test prepared by the IRS and AARP.

More information: http://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/Info-2006/volunteer_aarp_tax_aide.html

Faces at the June 2017 picnic

Photos by Peter Magolda. To see more, visit adlogam.smugmug.com/Organizations/AARP/n-49pk5B



Sandy Birch and Alison Galway



Isabel Berney



Pat Hyer, Joan Hirt, and Elizabeth Creamer



Carol and Ben Crawford



Susan Baker



Mike Reilly



Jennie Reilly

Legislative Report *by Val Coluni*

1. The 2017 Virginia State Elections. We will vote for many state officials in November (Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, and members of the State General Assembly). Political experts believe the process is weakened when many voters stay at home. They also believe that Virginia is the only state with a competitive race for Governor this year. (Gillespie vs. Northam). The issues are many, complicated, and emotional. We must have a large voter turnout to insure our personal/group positions are adequately considered by the winners. Please **participate!**

“All failures of a democracy flow from citizens staying at home and turning their backs on their community” (remarks recently made by a consumer rights advocate; see <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/lifestyle/activists/>)

2. Gerrymandering and Filibustering. Two processes are dual and historical dangers to our democracy: Gerrymandering (drawing political voting districts to favor a political party); and filibustering (in the U.S. Senate, using a 19th century rule that allows a political party to use a 60-vote threshold to suspend debate on the floor, thereby preventing further debate on a pass/fail vote dealing with submitted legislation). Filibustering has been used by both political parties as a weapon of obstruction to thwart the political/legislative objectives of the opponent. Neither political party is motivated to change this as they may be giving up an advantage now and/or in the future. But the filibuster can only be changed if the U.S. Senate votes to discontinue it. Your pressure on your U.S. Senator is the best way to make it happen.

The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to hear several state cases on gerrymandering to determine whether it is acceptable under the U.S. Constitution. The Court will hear these cases in September or October 2017. Whereas previous gerrymandering cases have focused on racial gerrymandering, in *Gill v. Whitford* the Court will consider whether partisan gerrymandering disenfranchises voters by political party.

3. Good News for 2018 Social Security Recipients. You will be getting a raise in 2018 and it will be better than the raises in the past few years. Remember there was no raise in 2015 and only a 0.3 percent raise in 2016. You will be personally notified in December 2017/January 2018.

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, pb Ballard@vt.edu

Board of Directors

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

LLI Fall Courses Begin October 2

Registration opens September 6

What will you study through the Lifelong Learning Institute this fall? Perhaps you are attracted by social issues, such as US Immigration and Refugee Policy, the Supreme Court, War and Foreign Affairs in the Constitution, Montgomery County Government, Saudi Arabia, or 100 Photographs that Changed the World. All of these are course titles for fall.

Perhaps you would like to learn better how to express yourself artistically, through Japanese flower arrangement, memoir writing, drawing, watercolor, relief printmaking, or making a self-portrait Picasso style. LLI has a course for you.

Or maybe you are seeking better ways of living through mindfulness, developing a life plan, or documenting your end-of-life choices. Genealogy? Sustainable and organic gardening? Learning how to use your iPad? The novels of Marilynne Robinson or a look at great writers and their lovers?

The offerings are so rich that it may be hard to choose. More information about about the courses and class schedule is in the catalog and at the website at www.cpe.vt.edu/lifelonglearning.

Catalogs were mailed in late August. If you were a member of LLI last year, you have received one, but if you need one, please visit www.cpe.vt.edu/lifelonglearning or phone 540-231-5182.

Who Gets to Vote? Panel Discussion Sept. 27

Blacksburg Municipal Building, 7 pm

Changes to the Voting Rights Act in 2013 resulted in new state laws that claim to eliminate fraud but ultimately restrict voter access. Voter suppression through gerrymandering and voter ID laws target some groups of voters and affect who represents voters in legislative bodies.

Join three panelists from Virginia Tech (Caitlin Jewitt, Nick Goedert, and Wornie Reed), who will address these critical issues about one of our most fundamental rights as citizens. Panelists will respond to audience questions.

Co-sponsored by LLI and the League of Women Voters and open to the public.

LLI Group To Travel to New Orleans Jan. 21–26

Following the successful trip to Cuba in 2017, the LLI travel committee has planned another trip, in conjunction with Road Scholar, to New Orleans in January 2018. Travelers will attend a performance at a jazz club, visit the World War II museum, take a walking tour in the Garden District, enjoy a cooking demonstration, and hear from three experts as well as from the group leader. For more information, see the LLI website: <http://www.cpe.vt.edu/lifelonglearning/NOLASave-the-Date-1.21.2018.pdf>


Website: www.blacksburgaarp.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AARPBlacksburg/>



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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