

From: AARP Blacksburg Chapter aarpblacksburg@52400221.mailchimpapp.com
Subject: 2024 May AARP Blacksburg Newsletter
Date: May 1, 2024 at 10:40 AM
To: dgc2@vt.edu

AC

AARP Blacksburg Newsletter



May 2024



Pam Knox and Fred Piercy, Editors



**Don Creamer and Jerry Niles
AARP Blacksburg Co-Presidents**

Co-Presidents' Message -- May, 2024

Did you know that over 40 percent of older adults 65+ who are on social security use it as their primary source of support? Several years ago, an AARP Virginia staff member raised that fact in one of the Chapter's board meetings. That fact has stuck with us. In a previous column we have shared statistics regarding how rapidly the 65+ demographic is growing. It follows then that the number of seniors who live below or close to the poverty line is rising rapidly as well. (The federal poverty level set by the US Department of Health and Human Services for 2023 is an income at or below \$15,060 for an individual and income at or below \$20,440 for a family of two.) The Blacksburg Chapter of AARP is aware of this financial concern and has stepped up its efforts to respond to food insecurity while continuing to emphasize health and wellness for all seniors through its major projects and donation strategies.

On a far more comprehensive level, AARP at the national level has created a separate foundation that “creates and advances effective solutions to reduce poverty with and for older adults.” As most of you know, the National Organization for AARP has an amazing array of programs and outlets to support the successful aging of older adults. There is so much information, in fact, that at times the singular purpose and good work of the AARP Foundation to eliminate senior poverty is overlooked. In this column, we want to shine a light on some of that good work.

Senior poverty is a complex and multifaceted problem that challenges our society. The AARP Foundation over the past 50 years, has created a comprehensive vision for addressing this growing problem of senior poverty.

Here are some important facts about the AARP Foundation from its 2022 annual report:

- 947,572 vulnerable adults were helped in 2022 by the AARP Foundation, a 54% increase from 2021.
- \$726.1 million was secured for older adults with low income through AARP Foundation programs, a 47% increase.
- 27,086 volunteers supported the AARP Foundation’s related activities.
- 5,500 community-based organizations partnered with the AARP Foundation’s programs.

Their programs are action-oriented, responsive to the direct needs of the participants, systemically focused, scalable, and leverage resources from numerous collaborators. Most importantly, the programs are designed to help seniors help themselves in four primary areas: economic opportunity, food security, legal advocacy, and social connection. A complete description of the footprint of the AARP Foundation exceeds the limits of this column. However, if you have not done so before, we invite you to visit the website at <https://www.aarp.org/aarp-foundation/>. This user-friendly website will give you a sense of the scope of the problem of senior poverty and the systematic and influential way that the AARP Foundation is addressing this problem. We would also like to share a thumbnail sketch though several of their life-changing

programs.

Economic Opportunity

One of the Foundation's most well-known programs is Tax-aide. It is designed to help older adults keep more of what they have earned. In 2022, for example, this program helped 693,160 older adults with low income to obtain \$374,000,000 in tax refunds and credits. In addition, the program saved each person an average of \$271 in tax preparation and e-filing. (Over 1,100 individuals took advantage of the program in the NRV last year.) In addition, a new program is being developed to help at-risk seniors with property Tax-aide as well.

An array of workforce training programs served over 45,000 older adults in 2022. The Digital Skills Ready@50 plus initiative, for example, is a creative program designed to upgrade the digital skills of people over 50 supported through a collaboration with Google and a \$10 million dollar grant. Back-to-work 50+ is another innovative online program with a decade long record of supporting older adults with low income in finding a way back to the workforce. For more than 50 years, AARP Foundation has administered the senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) funded primarily by the US Department of Labor. SCSEP matches 55+ jobseekers with local NFP and public agencies to help improve job skills and self-confidence while earning a modest training wage.

Food Security

The AARP Foundation has addressed the problem of food insecurity for older adults by creating better access to the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Having enough money to afford nourishing food gives older adults a better chance to avoid serious health issues. Motivated by the finding that only 47% of eligible older adults are enrolled in the program as compared to 78% of all people who are eligible, in 2022 the AARP Foundation funded local organizations to connect with people over 50 to assist in the enrollment process and to receive up to \$153 a month to support their food budget. The AARP Foundation's efforts helped 48,908 adults secure benefits.

double the number helped in 2021.

Social Connection

Recently the effects of social isolation have received more attention as our understanding of their significance and prevalence has been broadened. The AARP Foundation recognizes how vulnerable low-income older adults are to social isolation. The Foundation has partnered with the American Gerontological Association and National Agencies on Aging to develop the program, Connect2Effect, to draw attention to the issue and begin to develop resources necessary to address the problem directly and comprehensively.

We hope that we have aroused your curiosity enough for you to visit the website and learn more about senior poverty and the strategic, long-term, proactive approach that the AARP Foundation has taken to make a difference in the lives of seniors who deserve to “not only survive but to thrive.” Who knows, after reading about the extent of the problem and the Foundation's aggressive, long-term response to eliminating poverty among seniors, you may decide either to be one of its millions of donors to support their efforts or you might find resources that are helpful to you or to someone you know.

In This Issue:

- **Presidents' Message**
- **Chapter Officers and Committees**
- **Dolly Parton's Imagination Library**
- **Summertime at Warm Hearth Village**
- **Upcoming Chapter Speaker: Dan Casey**
- **Chapter Picnic**
- **Health and Wellness Fair: Save the Date**
- **Community Events**
- **A Few Ways to Strengthen Our Relationships**
- **Membership Application and Dues**

Blackburn Chapter #2612

Blacksburg Chapter #2013

Blacksburg Chapter #2613

Chapter Officers 2024

Co- President – Jerry Niles, niles@vt.edu and Don Creamer, dgc2@vt.edu

Past President – Leslie Pendleton, lkpendleton@gmail.com

Secretary – John Burton, jburton@vt.edu

Treasurer – Pat Ballard, pballard@vt.edu

Additional Board Members:

Wilma Dotson, wdotson7@juno.com

Nola Elliott (ne_elliott@peoplepc.com)

Joy Herbert, jherbert@blacksburg.gov

Pat Hipkins, phipkins@vt.edu

Jackie Jones, jhjones1226@gmail.com

Judith Jones, judith@vt.edu

Pam Knox, knoxphd@comcast.net

Deborah Martin, nonibare@gmail.com

Jamie McReynolds, revmcr@gmail.com

Fred Piercy, piercy@vt.edu

Board of Directors (term ending date)

2024: John Burton, Judith Jones, Fred Piercy, Nola Elliott

2025: Pam Knox, Wilma Dotson, Pat Hipkins

2026: Jackie Jones, Deborah Martin, Jamie McReynolds

Committee Chairs

Awards: John Burton, jburton@vt.edu

Care: Vacant

Chaplain: Sandy Birch, birch@vt.edu

Community Service: Judith Jones, judith@vt.edu

Financial Review: Jerry Niles, niles@vt.edu

Health and Wellness: Vacant

Hospitality: Terry Wildman, wiley@vt.edu

Leadership Development Co-Chairs: Jerry Niles, niles@vt.edu

Legislative: Vacant

LLI Partnership: Jerry Niles, niles@vt.edu

Membership Communication: Don Creamer, dgc2@vt.edu

Membership: Wilma Dotson, wdotson7@juno.com

Newsletter Co-Chairs: Pam Knox, knoxphd@comcast.net and Fred Piercy, Piercy@vt.edu

Program Co-Chairs: Wendy Baldwin, wendybburg@gmail.com and Pat Hipkins, phipkins@vt.edu

Liaisons:

AARP Virginia Liaison: Ben Crawford, ben.crawford@vt.edu

Community Foundation Liaison: Vacant

Seeking to Bring Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to the New River Valley

Wendy Baldwin



Growing up, country music legend Dolly Parton was troubled by the way her father's illiteracy held him back. As an adult, she was determined to help children be ready to learn when they got to kindergarten. Dolly put her own resources into starting the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL), a monumental book gifting program which works with local affiliates mailing age-appropriate high-quality books to children under the age of five at no cost to the families regardless of income. Instilling a love of reading is a pillar of literacy and school success. Once children are enrolled, they stay eligible for books until they turn five. Reading scores in Montgomery County Public schools could use a boost. For example, third-grade pass rate in 2023 was 70%, and our goal is to raise it to 90%. When parents and grandparents read to young children the children are exposed to up to a million more words when they enter kindergarten (Logan, Justice, Yumuş, & Chaparro-Moreno. 2019). The DPIL has distributed about 240 million books around the globe. The Imagination Library of Montgomery County, Virginia (ILMCVA), our recently formed local DPIL affiliate, is working hard to raise money to provide books and enroll children within the New River Valley. We have raised over \$24,000 for books

and enrolled 675 children in the first few weeks! The Montgomery-Floyd Regional Library (MFRL) is a great partner for enrollment during toddler time and with the book mobile. Here's how it works: Dollywood Foundation covers overhead costs, and local funds all go to buying books. The books cost \$2.20 per book, and \$26.40 per year for each child.

We are gathering funding commitments from a wide range of sources. The Commonwealth of Virginia has committed to pay half of the cost of the books. Many individuals have contributed and groups like Kiwanis and retired teachers have donated. We anticipate that the local program will likely need at least \$34,000 a year to support the ongoing Imagination Library of Montgomery County. Can we raise that? I believe we can.

We are a qualified charity which is great for tax purposes. Money that is collected by ILMCV pays for books, not overhead, as an all-volunteer activity and a project of the Mt. Tabor Ruritan Club. Even if you don't have a child/grandchild to enroll, you might want to donate to the program. To enroll or donate, go to <https://imaginationlibrarymcva.org/> or use the Q code below.



References

Logan, J. A. R., Justice, L. M., Yumuş, M. , & Chaparro-Moreno, L. J. (2019). When children are not read to at home: The million word gap. *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics, 40(5), 383-386. Doi: 10.1097/DBP.0000000000000657.*

Summertime at Warm Hearth Village (WHV)

Kenny Harrah
WHV Director of Fitness





Hello New River Valley! It's "summertime and the livin' is easy. Fish are jumpin' & the cotton is high". Whether you like Louis Armstrong's version of this song or Doc & Merle Watson's version, one thing is certain: this beautiful place we call home is in full bloom.

It's the golden anniversary for Warm Hearth Village (WHV) and our village is bustling with a sense of excitement and celebration. We're working with the local community to provide a variety of events on campus and throughout the NRV to showcase our history and our impact and influence on senior advocacy and wellbeing. One specific area we're proud to promote is our Fitness Center. The programs are innovative and created specifically for seniors across a broad range of abilities. Come play pickleball, pool volleyball, take an aquatic class, a chair yoga class or simply come use our gym. I want to personally invite you to come check out WHV Fitness and one of our many programs. We are open to community members ages 50+. Contact me at kharrah@warmhearth.org for more information about memberships.

In addition to the full calendar of fitness opportunities, you can find our 50th Anniversary events calendar at retire.org. Dates are being added regularly and there's something for everyone from our bigger than ever Cheeseburger In Parrot-Dise fundraiser event to the outdoor Heritage Festival and Montgomery Museum Showcase Information about registering for all 50th events is available online.

Incoming Chapter Sneaker

Opening Chapter Speaker



Dan Casey

Tuesday, May 21, 2024 -- “Dan on Your Side.” Speaker: Dan Casey, Roanoke Times Metro Columnist. 11:30– noon, coffee and conversation; noon – 1:00 pm presentation. Place: Community Room, Blacksburg Community Center.

Dan Casey started working for newspapers as a kid, delivering the Newark Evening News in northern New Jersey. As a teenager in Annapolis, Maryland, he bundled newspapers as they came off the press and one summer during college he sold ads. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in English at the University of Maryland in 1984. Since then, he's worked in Maryland as a reporter and in Virginia as a reporter, copy editor, metro editor, senior editor and columnist. Once, he swam across the Chesapeake Bay in 60-degree water for a front-page story. His investigative reporting in Maryland freed two men wrongfully convicted of separate murders. Dan joined The Roanoke Times as City Hall reporter in 1994 and began writing his thrice-weekly column in 2009. He's won more than 40 state, regional and national journalism awards. Recently, the Virginia Press Association honored him with a 1st Place Award for columns published in 2023. Those contest entries were all consumer-help columns.

AARP Blacksburg Picnic to be held at Smithfield Pavilion on June 18



Event: AARP Blacksburg Picnic

Date: June 18

Time: 5:00-7:00pm

Cost: \$10 person

Where: Smithfield Plantation Pavilion (See directions below)

Registration: Required (to plan for catering)

Food and soft drinks are provided. You may bring alcoholic drinks if you prefer. You may register and pay by check by clicking [here](#).

Directions to Smithfield Plantation: Go to Duck Pond Drive on Virginia Tech campus and turn right at the Smithfield Plantation sign. Follow signs to the pavilion at 1000 Smithfield Plantation Road. (See you there!)





AARP BLACKSBURG



SAVE THE DATE!

Health and Wellness Fair
Wednesday, September 18, 2024
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Christiansburg Recreation Center
1600 North Franklin Street

For more information, please contact: Sue Magliaro, sumags@vt.edu
For sponsor/exhibitor application/payment:

<https://www.blacksburgaarp.org/2024-health-and-wellness-fair>

AARP Blacksburg Community Events

Chapter Events, Announcements

Board Meeting

1st Tuesdays (January, February, March, April, May, June, September, October, November, December)

Blacksburg Recreation Center

10:00 AM- 12PM

Chapter Program

3rd Tuesdays (January, February, March, April, May, September, October, November) Blacksburg Recreation Center

11:30 AM-1:00 PM

AARP Blacksburg Picnic

June 18 Historical Smithfield Plantation Pavilion, 1000 Smithfield Plantation Road, 5-7pm (See announcement above.)

Calendar of Area Events

Don't forget to check out the full list of offerings at the Blacksburg Recreation Center. Contact Joy Herbert at 540-443-1142 or check the website at www.blacksburg.gov/recreation

Interested in the full offerings at the Christiansburg Rec Center.? Contact Tammy Caldwell at tcaldwell@christiansburg.org or 540-382-2349 ext. 2003.

Recurring Events Now through July

The Artful Lawyer, A Fine Gallery INC.
Inside The Creekmore Law Firm, Blacksburg
318 N. Main St
8:30AM-6PM ***Daily***

Blacksburg Farmers Market
108 Roanoke Street SW
Wednesday 2 PM – 6 PM
Saturdays 8 AM-2 PM

Every Wednesday

The Blacksburg Collective Outdoor Yoga
Blacksburg Municipal Park (Caboose Park)
Donation based \$5-10. All levels welcome. Weather permitting, Bring your own mats and props.

Wednesday Night Blues Jam
Rising Silo Farm Brewery, Blacksburg
6-9 PM

Every Thursday

Honky Tonk Thursday with Live Music and Dancing
Floyd Country Store
7-9 PM

Every Friday

Friday Night Jamhouse

Friday Night Jamboree
Floyd County Store
6:30- 10 PM

May

Thursday, May 2
Virginia Tech String Project
Moss Arts Center at Virginia Tech
7-8 PM FREE

Last Winter Old Time Jam
Alexander Black House and Cultural Center
204 Draper Road, Blacksburg
7 – 9 PM FREE

Saturday, May 4

An Evening with Leslie Odom, Jr
Moss Arts Center at Virginia Tech
7:30—9:30 PM

Saturday, May 18

Americana Afternoon
Floyd County Store
Noon- 3 PM

June

Friday, June 7
Free Beer Tasting
Vintage Cellar
4-7 PM

AARP Blacksburg Picnic

June Date and Location to be Announced

July

Celebrating 20 Years of the Crooked Road

Moss Arts Center at Virginia Tech

7:30—9:30 PM

August

Friday & Saturday, August 2-3

Steppin' Out, Town of Blacksburg

10 AM -10 PM

A Few Ways to Strengthen Our Relationships

by

Fred Piercy and Pamela Knox



In the November issue of this newsletter, we wrote about how loneliness has become a problem for more and more seniors (Piercy & Knox, 2023). We also shared ways that seniors can reach out to others, like volunteering, taking classes, learning how to use social media, and contacting old friends.

While reaching out and staying active are important, it is also critical to nurture the relationships we are in, whether friends or partners. Most of us were good at making new friends as early as kindergarten. With time, in the process of “growing up” we may have lost those early friendship skills. Most of us don’t

have the blind confidence of a kindergartener that others will accept us. When we don't take the risk to grow new relationships the world becomes a smaller place as our focus is not on growth but in the loss of old friends and loves.

An 80-plus-year-old friend of Pam's recently told her that she hasn't made a new friend in over 30 years. This is a reminder: We all need to keep growing, connecting with others, making friends who become our here-and-now family. In this article, we will share a few ways to both make new friends and to keep our existing relationships fresh and vital. A few of these skills come from our own former professions. (Fred is a retired family therapist; Pam is a retired counseling psychologist. We also were both professors and administrators.)

A Few Relationship Skills

Good Relationships Involve Give and Take

One of our guilty pleasures is to watch *Millionaire Matchmaking*, an old TV show in which a third-generation matchmaker matches millionaires with attractive potential partners, and they go out on dates to see if they are compatible. The matchmaker's challenge is usually to help the millionaire learn to actually interact in a human, caring manner that would make him (most millionaires on this show are men) attractive to his arranged date. We are continuously amazed to see these wealthy people talk on and on about themselves and not ask their partners anything about themselves. Closer to home, we've been to dinner parties and family reunions where there may be eight people around the table, and one person speaks 80-90% of the time. Every good relationship involves give and take – sharing a little, then involving the other person through questions, or just pulling back a bit. If you care about someone one of the best ways to show it is to focus on that person when you talk to them and not just yourself.

Give Your Full Attention

Celeste Headlee, a professional interviewer, tells us in her popular Ted Talk, "10 Ways to Have a Better Conversation," how powerful your full attention is to others. She says, "Enter every conversation assuming you have something to

others. She says, Enter every conversation assuming you have something to learn." She also states, "If you are not paying attention to the person you are talking to, you are not in a conversation. You are just two people shouting out unrelated sentences in the same place.

Steven Covey said, "Most people don't listen with the intent to understand. They listen with the intent to reply." When we are focused on our reply, we've stopped listening or trying to understand. In contrast, in relationship to her own interviews, Headlee says, "I'm always prepared to be amazed, and I am never disappointed."

Former President Jimmy Carter once said that you should give your full attention to those you love, your God, and to whomever is in front of you at any given moment. Some say that they can pay attention just fine while they are also reading their email. We believe that they are saying through their actions, "You don't deserve my full attention." In this tech-savvy world, multi-tasking is no substitute for the human connection that develops with real, live, undistracted, person-to-person contact and a commitment to be truly "with" the person in front of you.

David Brooks states, "more than almost any other need, human beings long for another person to look into their eyes with love and acceptance. Brooks calls those who can see and bring out the best in others "illuminators." Think of a time you were really seen and appreciated. It felt good, didn't it? We have opportunities to do this in our relationships. This is what Brooks calls "greatness in small acts." Like welcoming a newcomer into your community, or making a guest feel welcome. And giving this kind of loving attention makes you a more loveable person yourself.

Learn From a Younger You

Think about a meaningful relationship you had when you were younger. Why was it meaningful? What did you do to nurture that relationship? What did the other person do that you remember liking? What about this old, important relationship can you bring into the present with those you know or meet? When you met new people earlier in life, you didn't just talk about your job but you

also talked about things you enjoyed. So don't just talk about what you used to do earlier in life. Talk about what you enjoy now. Engage people with who you are today.

Your Ace in the Hole

In relationship therapy, usually one person wants someone else to change. In my (Fred) private practice, I told couples to give up on changing their partner. While you can request changes, you don't have control over your partner. The one "ace in the hole" you do have, though, is your own behavior.

For example, one thing therapists can do is to ask people to increase the positive things that they say or do in order to get a more positive cycle going. The concept at work here is "reciprocity." We get what we give most of the time. (Researchers actually study this.) And the more you give, the more you get. Generally, it is basically deciding to act in a positive way toward someone, to compliment them, stay in touch, suggest get-togethers. And, believe it or not, showing you care also changes you. And it often starts a virtuous cycle where that person also reaches out to you.

When I (Fred) taught this concept, I asked my students to do an assignment that I will also suggest to you: I asked them to pick a person – a spouse, family member, friend -- and for a week, to double or triple the number of positive things they would say to or do for the person. Usually, one of three things happened, and I also suspect it might also happen for you. First, you may feel warmer toward the person you are doing nice things for. Second, the person feels warmer toward you, and third, the person starts saying or doing more positive things toward you. Most of my students found that reciprocity changed their relationships for the better. Try it out and see if it happens for you, too.

Examine Your Present Solutions

Sometimes what we think we are doing to improve a relationship is doing just the opposite. For example, some people try to impress others, but in the process of trying too hard, turn them off. The next time you find yourself lonely or misunderstood look at your solutions and see if they may be part of the

of interconnected, look at your behaviors and see if they may be part of the problem. Another way of saying this is: The more you do what you've been doing, the more you will get what you've been getting. There is a school of family therapy that advocates a simple homework assignment that is only 3 words: Do something different. Another way to think of this is: If you want a friend, be a friend.

Acceptance

As you probably know, being a perfectionist has its downsides. It is important to remember that we love others for who they are. When we see a beautiful sunset, we don't say, gee, I'd put a little more red over there and a little less orange or yellow over here. No. We enjoy the sunset for what it is. The same goes for people in our lives. We like THEM, not some perfect version of them. As you connect with those in your life it is good to remember this: People are like sunsets that come in all their own colors – enjoy them, learn more about them, see their beauty.

Trying Too Hard

There is a Buddhist saying that searching for happiness can be like trying to catch a bird, which flies away when you reach out to grab it. However, when you don't try so hard the bird flies back to you and lands on your shoulder. We believe that, as you enrich your alone time – perhaps with reading, gardening, cooking, art work, whatever – you will also be less driven to seek relationships, and paradoxically be more relaxed and happy AND more likely to form healthy relationships.

Facilitating Connection Through Activities

Both of our parents loved playing bridge and pinochle, depending on the group of friends or family members they were with. They also interacted with their fellow players, but it wasn't forced. For them, card playing represented a natural way to build relationships. Similarly, we found a deck of cards with personal questions on them to be a fun way for us to interact with friends and, in the process, to learn more about them. Also, we've found that answering

such questions increased our sense of closeness with each other and our friends. These cards included questions like:

- Would you rather visit a big city or the countryside? Why?
- What historic time period would you most like to visit? Why?
- Which book dramatically influenced your life? How?
- Would you stop eating junk food to live five years longer?
- What's on your bucket list?
- What was the best sitcom ever?
- What posters did you have in your room when you were young?

These cards are from *Table Topics: Questions to Start Great Conversations*. They were developed in 2013 and can be ordered by calling 888-690-6001 or through Amazon.com. Another similar set of cards is called *Vertell?s* and is advertised with the title, "Less small talk – More genuine conversations."

Conclusion

We really did learn a lot of great skills in kindergarten: Say hello, enjoy the rainbow, ask people about themselves, listen fully, play well with others, share. We need connections now more than ever. We hope that we have reminded you both about the importance of relationships and ways to make and nurture the quality of those relationships in your life.

Fred Piercy and Pamela Knox are husband and wife and co-editors of the *AARP Blacksburg Newsletter*.

**Blacksburg Chapter
Membership Application for 2024 (or join online:
blacksburgaarp.org)**

Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Spouse/Partner: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Annual (Calendar Year) Dues: \$15.00 (includes spouse or partner)

New _____ Renewal _____ Life Member (90+) (free) _____ Lifetime member _____

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 check and this form to AARP Blacksburg, P.O. Box 10082, Blacksburg, VA 24062.

Dues deadline: January 31 of each year



Forward

AARP BLACKSBURG CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Fred Piercy and Pam Knox, Editors

piercy@vt.edu

knoxphd@comcast.net

Our mailing address is:

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

<http://www.blacksburgaarp.org>