

Local delegates to speak at April 21st AARP meeting

Delegates Dave Nutter and Jim Schuler will report on the recently completed 2009 session of the Virginia General Assembly. After their remarks, each one will answer questions from the audience. Each delegate's district covers parts of Montgomery County. All Virginia delegate's term expires in January 2010, so each delegate is up for re-election this Fall, if they choose to run again.



Delegate Dave Nutter (R) on the left was first elected in 2002 to represent the 7th District. Delegate Jim Shuler (D) on the right was first elected in 1994 to represent the 12th District.

The brief April "Table Top Talk" will be provided before the program by representatives of the Literacy Volunteers of the New River Valley (LV-NRV). They request that members bring books for literacy instructional use. Dictionaries would be especially useful in teaching reading to adults. They are also requesting a ream of copy paper for office use. (See related story about LV-NRV following this story)

This program has been arranged by Legislative Committee Chair Dan Fleming.

All chapter members and the general public are invited to attend each meeting.

There is a gathering starting at 11:30 a.m. for a bring-your-own brown bag lunch, with beverages provided. All Chapter meetings are held at the Blacksburg Community Center on Patrick Henry Drive. Programs start about noon and end at 1 p.m. Before the meeting, nurses from will be available to check blood pressure for anyone who is interested.

Literacy Volunteers of NRV (from their website)

We are committed to increasing literacy for adults who function below the fifth grade reading level, for their families, and for those seeking to learn English as a second language.

LV-NRV was established in 1979 to offer free tutoring in basic literacy and conversational English for speakers of other languages. We became accredited with Literacy Volunteers of America and we are now an affiliate of ProLiteracy America, an organization formed from the merger of Literacy Volunteers of America and Laubach Literacy in 2003. Our funding is through grants, local governments, direct contributions from community members, and the United Way and United Fund that serve the New River Valley. On the net at www.lvnrv.org/

AARP Blacksburg—Chapter #2613

Chapter meetings are the third Tuesday of each month at the Blacksburg Community Center, Patrick Henry Drive, at 11:30 a.m. There are no meetings in July or August. Board meetings are the first Tuesday of each month at Blacksburg Community Center, at 10:00 a.m.

P.O. Box 10082

Blacksburg, VA 24062

<http://civic.bev.net/aarp/>

General Assembly Veto Session

By Dan Fleming

The number one issue at the veto session held on April 8 was whether to let Virginia accept \$125 million for unemployment insurance benefits from the federal stimulus package. It would cost the state \$18 million to qualify for the funds and businesses would have a small increase in unemployment taxes. Virginia currently ranks 46th in the nation in providing unemployment benefits. House Republicans killed the bill and the state will not receive the funds that may now go to other states.

Leaders in both parties were reluctant to put a cap on interest rates charged by payday lenders but passed a bill to ban lenders from offering payday loans and lines of credit with annual interest rates of nearly 400 percent.

Efforts to allow voters to cast absentee ballots without giving a reason passed the Senate but were rejected by House Republicans and legislation creating a bipartisan commission to oversee the design of legislative districts in 2011 was killed by House Republicans.

People with a criminal history or mental problems can still avoid background checks by purchasing firearms from a private seller at a gun show because the so-called gun show loophole bill failed in the Senate with two area Democratic Senators joining Republicans in stopping it.

Efforts to limit conflicts of interest by expanding the period for former legislators and state employees to become lobbyists passed the House but were killed in the Senate.

Text messaging while driving will become illegal.

Legislation prohibiting smoking in all indoor restaurants, bars and lounge areas was passed except for those with separate, enclosed rooms with ventilation and for private clubs.

Voters in future elections will be allowed to wear to the polls clothing that endorses a candidate.

The death penalty was expanded in several instances but the Governor vetoed these measures and his vetoes were upheld.

Holders of concealed weapons permits could carry concealed guns into bars as long as they do not drink alcohol. The Governor vetoed these bills and his veto was upheld except that retired police officers will be able to do so.

A Senate committee defeated a bill that would have barred the state police from regulating chaplain's prayers.

An effort to allow the Governor to serve consecutive terms beginning in 2013 was defeated. Virginia is the only state that has such a policy.

New River Valley Senior Law Day on May 1st in Christiansburg

The New River Valley Agency on Aging and Southwest Virginia Legal Aid are sponsoring a meeting for seniors interested in legal issues. It will be held on May 1st, 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Christiansburg Recreation Center located at 1600 Franklin St. After a keynote speaker, subgroups will cover a range of topics from elder abuse and domestic violence to Medicare and Medicaid concerns.

Dr. Paul Smeal, President of the Blacksburg AARP Chapter, was presented with the Citizen of the Year Award by the Rotary Club of Christiansburg-Blacksburg on Monday, April 13, 2009.

Fun and Fitness in a 5K

By John Hillison

What if someone came up with an idea that combined the chapter's goal of fitness, helping others, and fun? We have such an opportunity!

On June 20th the Downtown Merchants of Blacksburg will sponsor the Downtown Sundown 5K (3.1 miles) race as part of Summer Solstice. Both runners and walkers are welcome to participate. President Smeal will be leading a group from our chapter in the race. This is a great opportunity to combine fitness with a good cause such as the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. In addition, the chapter should receive some great publicity for participating.

The early fee is \$17 if the registration form is postmarked by June 15th. It is \$20 after that. Last year I received a t-shirt and a Kroger's shopping bag full of goodies for paying the entry fee and participating. Forms can be obtained from RunAbout Sports, John Hillison, and the Downtown Merchants of Blacksburg website.

Now is the time to start getting ready for fitness, helping others, and fun. See you at the starting line.

.....

AARP Chapter Membership Report

April 7, 2009 (prepared April 1)

Member Profile:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Count</u>
2009 Members Dues Paid	237
LifeTime Members	46
Life Members	7
Comp Members	15
Honorary Members	5
2008 Members Dropped For Failure to Pay Dues	58

New Members:

Carroll B. Harvey
Dick & Ann Saacke

Membership Committee: Jim Wightman (Chair),
Connie Anderson, Jim Gaines, Sue Farrar, Don
Creamer

Mark Your Calendar! AARP Town Hall Meeting on Health Care Reform at the May 19th AARP Meeting

A major goal of the President and leaders of Congress is to enact some form of major health care reform. This could rank among the most significant changes in social policy in our nation's history affecting Americans of all ages. The legislative process to pass this reform is well underway. This meeting is designed to inform attendees about what is happening in health care reform and allow them to ask questions and express their views on such reform.

The meeting is Tuesday, May 19, noon to 1:30 p.m. at Blacksburg Community Center, Patrick Henry Drive. Attendees are invited to bring a brown bag lunch starting at 11:30 a.m. Beverages will be provided.

Keynote Address: Bill Kallio, State Director, Virginia AARP on pending health care reform legislation, key issues involved and AARP priorities. **Response** from the aides of Congressman Boucher (pending), Senators Warner and Webb.

The meeting is open to the general public as well as AARP members. Spread the word and invite your friends to attend.

Blacksburg Downtown Merchants offer discounts

Some members of the Blacksburg Downtown Merchants will offer AARP members discounts on Tuesdays. Those taking part in the effort to better serve AARP Chapter members are: Fringe Benefits, Xanadu Home, Capone's, Mish Mish, Matrix Gallery, Mad Dog, Bollo's, and Gillie's. Others are expected to follow suit in the future

Correction: *There was an error in the listing of Don Creamer's phone number in the Directory in the March Newsletter. His phone number is 953-2505.*

Celebrating and Appreciating Volunteers

By Tina King, Executive Director
New River Valley Agency on Aging

The week of April 19th through the 25th is designated as National Volunteer Week. "Celebrating People in Action" is the theme. The theme captures the spirit of this special week by recognizing the individuals who give of themselves in so many different capacities within their communities by taking action to meet needs and solve problems.

Putting the "spotlight" on the importance of volunteers for this one-week period is terrific. However, volunteers deserve commendation every day of the year. The New River Valley Agency on Aging is a benefactor of the innumerable ways and hours that volunteers give to improve the lives of older adults and caregivers and we greatly appreciate it.

Without the help of individuals and groups of all ages, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to plan and implement the many projects, programs, and conferences, the Agency has to assist older adults and caregivers in our communities throughout the New River Valley. A few of the projects that volunteers have helped and continue to help with include; the daily operations at a group nutrition programs named "The Friendship Café", annual conferences such as the "Caring Connections Conference" for caregivers, and the upcoming Wilderness Road Ride bicycling event to benefit those receiving services from the Agency. Volunteers have gathered, packaged and delivered supplies and blankets for seniors and pet food to go to those struggling to feed their beloved pets. They have made it possible for those who don't drive to get to their medical appointments and assisted those struggling with health insurance issues find the help they need. The list could go on and on

"Leading Lights/Neighbors Helping Neighbors" was a wonderful event for volunteers, sponsored by the German Club

Alumni Foundation on April 2, to recognize those who are making an impact in their communities and who are serving as a model to inspire others. Other organizations are also having events during the month to honor volunteers. Although volunteers don't volunteer to get recognition, the recognition not only honors them, it helps to highlight the needs that have been filled and ways that others can also contribute to their community.

Let's make it a point as frequently as possible, but especially during National Volunteer Week, to let all who give freely of their time to help individuals and communities know how much we appreciate them. And let us be inspired to give more of our own time and talents to help others.

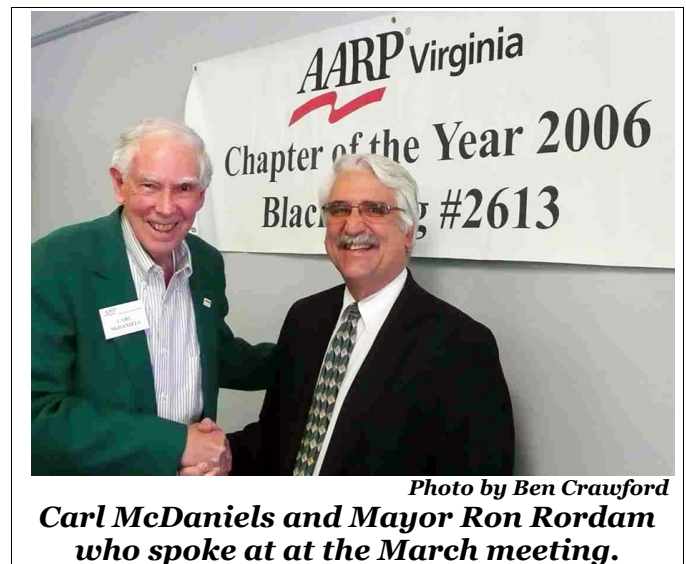


Photo by Ben Crawford
Carl McDaniels and Mayor Ron Rordam who spoke at at the March meeting.

Some advantages of aging:

- Kidnappers are not very interested in you.
- People no longer view you as a hypochondriac.
- Your secrets are safe with your friends, because they can't remember them either.
- Your joints are more accurate than the National Weather Service.
- In a hostage situation you are the one most likely to be released first.

From LAUGH YOURSELF HEALTHY
by Charles & Frances Hunter

AARP Member Profile: Virgil and Elaine Cook

Virgil Cook, our chapter secretary, is totally blind. To take notes during meetings, he uses a laptop computer with software that speaks the text that is on the screen. He taught English at Virginia Tech for 39 years, retiring in 2002. In 1963 when he learned that Tech's English department had a vacant position, he felt that he would get a fair hearing because Paul Derring, for whom Derring Hall is named, and who was also totally blind, had worked on campus for some four decades. After the one job interview that he has ever had, Virgil took the position that department head Markham Peacock offered him.

Virgil met his wife Elaine while he was in graduate school at Vanderbilt University. He came to a Christmas party with a friend of Elaine. His date saw someone she knew across the room and ran to speak to her, leaving Virgil standing alone in the middle of the room. Seeing that he was in distress, Elaine helped him to a seat. As Virgil is fond of saying, "What if that girl hadn't dashed across that room?"

On their first date, they went to a silent movie. Elaine says that she described what was happening on the screen without really thinking. Virgil says that if she were willing to take on the task of describing that movie, she must be OK. That was on January 12, 1962. They were married the following December.

During the couple's long residence in the Blacksburg area, Virgil has worked for causes to help the blind community in Virginia. In the 90s, he served on the advisory board of the Virginia Department for the Visually Handicapped, now the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired. He has spoken before the House of Delegates' education subcommittee to try to prevent the state from charging school districts the full cost of sending blind children to the residential schools for the deaf and blind. The fear was that districts

would choose not to send students who needed that intensive experience to master Braille and mobility skills to the schools. Virgil is disappointed that that we lost that battle. He is also an advocate for state laws that require the teaching of Braille to any blind or vision-impaired student who requests it. Fortunately, Virginia has such a law.



Retirement has agreed with both Virgil and Elaine. They are members of Blacksburg Baptist church, where both serve on the Board of Deacons. Elaine directs and teaches in the church's English as a Second Language program. To listen to Elaine talk about how well a class went or how much progress a particular student has made is invigorating. The curio cabinet in the Cooks' living room with the array of gifts that Elaine's language students have given her is a testimony to what she has meant to so many.

After living in Fredericksburg for a year in 2005, Virgil and Elaine returned to the New River Valley and bought a new townhome in Christiansburg.

Before the move to Fredericksburg, Virgil had been a member of the Blacksburg Host Lions Club. He had planned to transfer his membership from the Fredericksburg Host Lions Club to Christiansburg, but a regular commitment on the club's meeting night precluded his joining.

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

Consequently, he again joined the Blacksburg Club. because members met at a Blacksburg restaurant, Elaine concluded that if she were going to be driving her husband to the meetings, she should join the club. Almost immediately, she became Sight Conservation Chair. Now she screens applicants for help buying glasses and works with several optometrists and opticians in the area who provide glasses through the club at reduced prices. Virgil is nearing the end of a one-year term as club president.

Both Cooks sang in the Blacksburg Master Chorale for many years, but their aging voices have reached the point where they can no longer endure the demanding rehearsals. For both, those years with the Chorale were precious. During some 17 years, they performed such works as the Gabriel Faure *Requiem*, the Mozart *Requiem*, Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, and numerous masses, oratorios, and shorter pieces. They count the 1998 performance of the Honegger *King David* under the legendary Robert Shaw as the most memorable musical experience of their entire lives. To listen to the great conductor discuss choral technique was both enlightening and inspiring. Shaw would stop rehearsing, lean on the lectern and ruminate on interpreting music:

“For the performer, the audience is irrelevant. The issue is that the performer should remain true to what the composer set down. Bernstein's Beethoven, Toscanini's Beethoven, Ormandy's Beethoven--all nonsense. It's Beethoven's Beethoven.”

Virgil and Elaine have two children, both of whom grew up in Blacksburg. Sharon who graduated from Blacksburg High School in 1986, earned a degree in elementary education at Radford University. She lives in Fredericksburg with her husband Ray and their three boys: Matthew Christopher, and Nicholas. She likes being a mom--shuttling the boys to soccer, football, basketball, and swimming class and working as an aide in their Montessori school.

Bill graduated from Blacksburg High School in 1989 and has degrees from South Carolina, LSU, and Virginia Tech. After earning an MBA at Virginia Tech, Bill went to work for the Government Accountability Office (GAO) in Washington. He currently lives in Washington, but he has recently bought a condominium in Arlington. He plans to move in late May.

Looking back on his long life, what does Virgil feel are his most valuable accomplishments? Answering this question took a while. “So often, people with major disabilities are not allowed to live normal lives. I am fortunate to have had a long, rewarding life. Elaine and I raised two children who turned out to be loving, responsible adults. I spent 39 years in a career that I loved. I hope that I have left a legacy that has made former students hire a blind person because they thought that blind man at Tech was a competent teacher.”

Arias and Airs

Benefit Performance for
Montgomery Museum
& Lewis Miller Regional Art Center
*April 18 at 7:00 p.m. at
Christiansburg High School
Auditorium*

Now that I am older I've discovered:

- **I started out with nothing, and I still have most of it.**
- **I finally have my head together; now my body is falling apart.**
- **Funny, I don't remember being absent-minded.**

*Adapted from LAUGH YOURSELF
HEALTHY by Charles & Frances
Hunter*

AARP Chapter 2613
Board of Directors
 Minutes
 April 7, 2009

Announcement—President Paul Smeal told the group that Lula Roberts has moved to Texas.

Call to Order—President Paul Smeal called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Officers Present—Paul Smeal, Secretary Virgil Cook, Treasurer Brian Allen

Board Members—Ken Dawson, Sue Farrar, Dan Fleming, Joe Fontenot, John Hillison

Non-board-member committee chairs and appointees: —Larry Alexander, Harriett Cooper, Dan Fleming, Margaret Kates, Carl McDaniels, Curtis Roane, Edd Sewell

Guests—R. B. “Ben” Crawford, Frank Lau

Approval of Minutes—The minutes of the March 3 meeting were approved.

Treasurer’s Report—Brian Allen. The balance at the end of February, 2009 was \$3,869.50. The balance at the end of March was \$3,914.56. We are running about \$200 in expenses per month including newsletter-mailing expenses.

Someone pointed out that charities can take advantage of a special Kroger Card that makes it possible for Kroger to donate up to 5% of card purchases to non-profit organizations. Carl McDaniels volunteered to investigate this possible revenue source.

Ken Dawson moved that the report be received. The Motion passed.

Membership—Carl McDaniels for the committee. We have added several new members, but we have dropped 58 members for failure to pay dues.

Board members voiced their concern about a decline in membership. Harriett Cooper asked whether we call members who have not renewed their membership. She volunteered to help with calling these members.

Announcements—President Smeal reported that the annual AARP work day, usually on May 14, has been delayed until the fall. Last Thursday, Paul Smeal attended an awards dinner, which is sponsored by the German Club and AARP. Of the 48 award recipients, some 30 were seniors. Award recipients received \$1,000 for their favorite charity. Carl McDaniels is our

representative on the awards committee for this group.

Frank Lau reported that BT is trying to increase ridership, especially for seniors. He will write up something about the issue for the newsletter. The group voiced concern about the lack of transportation to chapter meetings for residents of Warm Hearth.

Committee Reports

Legislation—Dan Fleming. We will hold a meeting on healthcare issues on May 19. The meeting will last from 11:30 until 1:00. Virginia Retirees Association will put a notice about the meeting in their newsletter, as will The League of Women Voters. Bill Callio, who is quite knowledgeable on the issue, will speak. Whatever plan Congress passes probably will be mandated. AARP has not mentioned a single-payer plan. Funding is the central issue.

Programs—Carl McDaniels. Ron Rordam appreciated our feedback from his presentation at the March chapter meeting.

Tentative programs for the next three meetings follow: April 21, Report from area representatives to the Virginia General Assembly-2009. The Chapter Legislative Committee planned the program. The Table Top Talk is by Literacy Volunteers of the NRV. They ask that people bring books to donate to their program. They would also like for each member to bring a ream of paper as a donation. May 19, Town Hall Meeting on Health Care Reform, featuring Virginia AARP & Others. June 15 Annual Pot Luck Picnic & White Elephant Sale, Music & Vintage Car Show, at the Nellie’s Cave Park Shelter from noon to 2 p.m.

Healthcare Meeting in Wytheville—Ben Crawford. Ben and Dan Fleming, along with Nola Elliott, attended this meeting with the staff from Virginia AARP. Bill Callio spoke. Ben observed that Bill Callio, who will speak at our chapter meeting in May, is an expert on healthcare. He suggested that we have a discussion group of those who are interested to meet and talk about healthcare issues that come up over the summer and make recommendations to our representatives in Congress. President Smeal suggested that we provide a sign-up sheet at the May meeting for members who would like to participate in such a group.

Awards—Joe Fontenot. Joe reported that we will present the chapter awards at the

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

Christmas Lunch. He would like nominations by the end of October.

Caring—Harriett Cooper. Harriett thanked members for letting her know who needed cards.

Hospitality—Curt Roane. Curt has signed a contract with the Holiday Inn for the Christmas Lunch. He asked what specific responsibility the committee has for the arrangements at the Christmas lunch. Harriett Cooper usually contacts the band. Harriett asked if we should invite a group from the band to the picnic. The group agreed that she should.

Newsletter—Edd Sewell. Edd is making minor changes to the format of the newsletter. He invited suggestions for profiles in the newsletter. He raised the possibility of putting out at least one newsletter during the summer. Since Congress will be working on healthcare during the summer, Dan Fleming could report on relevant legislation. The group agreed that publishing an issue during the summer would be valuable. Edd told the committee that he is open

to suggestions about either the Website or the newsletter. He thanked those people who have sent him material.

Health—Larry Alexander. Larry reported that anyone can log onto seniornavigator.org for valuable information. Carl suggested that we publicize the availability of the Home Sweet Home newsletter. He also suggested that we accept Walgreen's invitation to participate in their summer fair. Carl also suggested that we revive a transportation committee that could find a way to provide transportation to the regular, membership meetings from Warm Hearth.

New Business.

Virginia Triad—Brian Allen attended a Triad meeting in Christiansburg last month. The Triad will have a senior Law Day on May 1.

Adjournment—The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Virgil A. Cook, Secretary

Paul Smeal, President
AARP Chapter #2613
P.O. Box 10082
Blacksburg, VA 24062

<p>Nonprofit Organization U.S. Postage Paid Blacksburg, VA Permit No. 32</p>
--