



Serving the greater New River Valley, Virginia

April 18 Chapter Meeting

Growing up White and Learning about Compound Interest



Lisa Garcia is the chair of the Limited Presence Issue Group for Dialogue On Race—a grassroots effort to end racial injustice against African Americans in Montgomery County, VA. Her presentation will explore racial injustice from the perspective of a white woman born in the South and now living in a college town. This is a story that begins with express education about the advantages of being a “WASP” through years of “white fragility” and efforts to “be a good person” to a place of hyper-local service.

Through her story, Lisa will engage audience members and expand the learning around how to share the African American story so that it can really be heard and accessible.



Todd Solberg displays his winning raffle tickets at the March meeting. He donated his winnings to Sojourn House.



President’s Column by Terry Wildman

The Pledge

Each month, the AARP Blacksburg Chapter public meeting begins with members and guests standing, hand over heart, reciting the *Pledge of Allegiance*.

Now, except for my recent few years with the Blacksburg Chapter, I don’t remember engaging in this practice, especially on any regular basis, since grade school. But I do remember reciting the pledge, with my classmates, at the beginning of each school day, in the town of Chase City Virginia from 1950 to 1957. Those elementary classrooms were to me quite comforting, with predictable routines, classic “Norman Rockwell-like” physical environment, and strong teachers with names like Allen, Norwood, Lipscomb, Williams, Kibler, and Hall. In these classrooms the pledge was kind of like an anchor—a good solid way to begin each day. And, it was also required.

I suppose reciting the Pledge at that age was part of our collective identity formation, although I don’t remember at what point, if any, where the concepts contained in the pledge were explained so that we could more fully process what we were reciting. Perhaps the main effect was to reinforce a general patriotic feeling among us young folks. Certainly any deep discussion of the complicated meanings of “*liberty and justice for all*” during that time in our history would probably have taxed our teachers even had us youngsters the developmental capacity to participate.

The Pledge, composed in its present form of just 31 words, has evolved over time but in whatever form the first two words—I *pledge*—does involve a fairly specific promise or oath that can reasonably be interpreted as a morally binding statement of intent. As part of an actual pledge then, the remaining words (e.g., *indivisible*, or *liberty and justice for all*) take on a level of importance that arguably goes beyond the simple affirmation

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Upcoming Events

- Tuesday, April 18: Tax returns due
- Saturday, April 22: Rotary Club Blood Screening (p. 3)
- Thursday, June 15: AARP picnic, 5–8 pm
- Tuesday, December 5, AARP Holiday luncheon

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.



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.

Weather Policy

The Blacksburg chapter follows the weather policy of Montgomery County schools. If schools are closed, the chapter will not meet. If the school opening is delayed, the chapter will meet.

of patriotism and a show of pride and respect for country. What does the pledge mean when currently recited in the United States Congress, at the beginning of Senate and House sessions? Or in schools? Or by adults in various other organizations, such as local AARP chapters?

But first, the history of the Pledge is kind of interesting. Colonel George Balch, a civil war veteran, first wrote the following version in 1887, aimed at educating school children, especially those of immigrants, about loyalty to the United States:

We give our heads and our hearts to God and our country; one country, one language, one flag!

Five years later in 1892, Francis Bellamy, Baptist minister and Christian socialist, revised Balch's pledge to this version:

I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Bellamy's idea, in part, was that our nation following the Civil War needed an additional push toward unity. This statement of the pledge was first published in the September 8 edition of the children's magazine, *The Youth's Companion*, as part of the 1892 Columbian Exposition (Chicago World Fair) celebrating the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Americas. Two major changes followed. In 1923 during the National Flag Conference the phrase "Flag of the United States" was added, and a year later "of America" was added. On June 22, 1942 Congress formally recognized the pledge for the first time, and finally during the Eisenhower Administration the phrase "under God" was added, which some writers attribute in part to strong anti-communist sentiment at that time. This last revision, forming our current Pledge, was signed into law on Flag Day, June 14, 1954. This was during my elementary school years, but I

have no memory of this change or any discussion of it.

Certainly this latest change would have been well received in my community at that time as prayers and religious activities in all kinds of public situations were as common as cigarette smoke. However, over the years, court cases arose over the this latest change, even going to the Supreme Court, which avoided a direct ruling because of a legal technicality. Today, public school students are not *compelled* to recite the pledge based on whatever objection they may have, but the wording remains the same.

I conclude with some thoughts about why I started thinking about the actual words in the Pledge. Part of it is because I was saying the words without thinking about the words. Let's take the "indivisible" concept for example. In today's America, the notion of indivisibility almost seems like a quaint idea we once enjoyed. This is relatively easy to think about in surface terms because we are inundated daily with news reports about how divided we are as a nation. Nowhere is this more evident than in politics where even those who would stand up in the Senate or House and Pledge to support a nation *undivided* will admit that we are hopelessly divided even as many of them seem to be working hard to keep it so. Ordinary citizens can play this game, too!

While looking into this I discovered some writing by Danielle Allen, Harvard University political theorist, Director of the Edmund J. Safra Center for Ethics, and contributing columnist for the *Washington Post*. Her December 23, 2016 *Post* article "How to Defend America the Indivisible" begins with the case that in our recent presidential campaign America had to face the disturbing reality that institutions we usually rely on for vetting arguments and evidence, such as newspapers, political parties, and universities, seemed to have reached the limits of their influence in the face of the 24/7 avalanche of televised and social media sources. We not only consume this stuff, but also personalize it, and in Allen's words "we are dangerously close to treating one another as aliens."

Reaching back to the Roman intellectual Cicero and his book *On Duties*, Allen draws on Cicero's advice that all of us must recognize the roles we play and the particular responsibilities attuned to each. University educators, for example, have a foundational commitment to truth, as do news organizations, which must accurately record events, including where there is deception and duplicity. For citizens the duty is to defend "liberty and justice for all" where the basic commitment is to human moral equality, as stated in the Declaration of Independence (*We hold these truths to be self evident...*). Allen goes on to work through a number of issues that currently divide us but have and will remain elusive in terms of solutions unless there is a commitment to—and insistence that, among our institutions and our leaders—we tell the truth: the truth about the good of public education, basic human rights, due process, access to housing, biases toward potential immigrants, the environment, and the like.

So, we recite the Pledge so easily. Who knew it needed defending.



Dr. Tina Smusz talks about Hospice Care at the March meeting

Legislative Report *by Val Coluni*

1. General Assembly 2017. Will resume on April 5 to discuss Bills/Resolutions vetoed or amended by the Governor. Approximately 28 bills plus a number of regulations are to be reviewed. Potential outcomes: accept Governor's decisions or set aside his actions with the necessary votes of the Assembly membership.

2. Our Representatives' Actions. Senator John Edwards sponsored or co-sponsored 25 bills plus a number of regulations. Nine were approved. Two of special significance: a. An energy bill to reduce the cost of electricity; b. The establishment of a joint Health Commission to evaluate/improve the delivery of health services to our citizens.

Delegate Joseph Yost sponsored or co-sponsored 13 bills plus a number of regulations. Seven were approved. Two of special significance: a. Required mental health training for college student counselors/advisors who are directly involved with students in order to improve their skills in identifying mental/emotional student problems; b. Regulations providing a more acceptable environment for a special group of voters who were utilizing absentee ballots.

3. Legislation: Legalizing Medical Marijuana. Good medical practice plus a job creator for SW Virginia plus another source of state tax revenue. Medical marijuana is now accepted as treatment of certain medical conditions (cancer, glaucoma and 10 others) and is legal now in 28 states. In some of these states, "Cultivation Centers" (Green Houses) have been established as private businesses. In one state/town, the center became the largest private employer in the area. Already some of our legislators appear to support legalization. Others oppose. Is the opposition mostly philosophical one? A good idea?

4. State Budget. Good news. A \$1.2 billion shortfall was closed without raising taxes! This will provide pay increases for large groups of our dedicated public employees along with funding other pressing needs within the Commonwealth.

Rotary Club Blood Screening April 22 \$40

The Rotary Club offers a blood screening at LewisGale Hospital-Montgomery Lobby on April 22 from 6:30 to 10 am.

To register, go online at www.rotary7570.org/blood or call 540-951-8988.

Fast for 12 hours before your test.

AARP in Cairo: A Traveler's Tale

In early February, Don and I returned from two amazing weeks in Egypt, where we visited pyramids, temples, and tombs, and sailed up the Nile. We felt safe. We were too engaged in the experience to think about danger. In addition, the people were welcoming and friendly—and security is so tight.

In the airport, one is screened twice (scans, body pats, luggage x-rays): once upon entering the airport and again before entering the gate area. I have never had my backpack emptied for scrutiny in an airport, but in Cairo the gate agent took everything out, arranged it in a single layer in a basket, and put it through the x-ray machine three times. Then three men came to handle the object that worried them: *my red plastic AARP whistle/keychain!* I was tempted to blow it to demonstrate its function, but I'm glad I didn't. They let me keep it and sent me to my gate.

Carolyn Rude



At the March meeting, Alison Wilson shows the 2017 version of "Facts" produced by the League of Women Voters of Montgomery County. The booklet includes a directory with contact information of elected and appointed officials at the national, state, county, and town levels. It also includes information on voter registration and voting. Free copies are available at public libraries and government offices, or request one:



LWVMC, PO Box 10133, Blacksburg, VA 24062-0133

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, Ray Van Dyke

• 2019—Tamara Hodsdon, Peter Magolda, Jim Montgomery, Wanda Smith


Website: www.blacksburgaarp.org

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



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**Nonprofit
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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