

Blacksburg Chapter AARP #2613

Serving the Greater New River Valley, Virginia



www.blacksburgaarp.org

AARP Newsletter

January – March 2022



Upcoming Chapter Meetings:

Jan 18: Phil Hysell, National Weather Service, Blacksburg

Feb 15: Fred Piercy and Katherine Allen, VT Emeritus Faculty

Mar 15: Stephen Kaplan, Kaplan’s Welcome Home Farms

The January chapter program will be held virtually by Zoom in consideration of National Weather Service protocol. We had planned to be back in-person at the Blacksburg Recreation Center for the February and March chapter programs but it is unclear at this time what protocols will be in place. Any changes to our plans will be communicated via Mailchimp in advance of the respective program.

See program descriptions on pg 5.

Dues are Due

AARP Blacksburg membership is annual, based on the calendar year. Dues for 2022 are now due. You may complete and mail the membership form on the back page or renew online at blacksburgaarp.org/online-payments. These dues are for the local chapter. Join AARP national at www.aarp.org.

President’s Message



Leslie Pendleton, President

Happy New Year! I hope your holidays were peaceful and enjoyable. As we begin the new year (and establish our personal goals), I am reminded of two articles I read recently about “awe,” an “undervalued emotion.” In an 11/30/21 article in the *Washington Post*, Deborah Farmer Kris describes awe as “what we feel when we encounter something vast, wondrous, or beyond our ordinary frame of reference. It evokes a sense of mystery and wonder.” Jenny Friedman, executive director of the Doing Good Together organization, believes we “should cultivate awe in our children” (and, of course, our grandchildren) and provides many suggestions on the www.doinggoodtogether.org website.

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Community Events

Spring Events at the Moss Arts Center

January 20	Angélique Kidjo
January 28	Danish String Quartet
February 3-4	Cirque Mechanics
February 23	Ballet Hispanico
March 1	Rent
March 17	Memphis Jookin’: The Show
March 22	The Moth Mainstage
March 24	Chontadelia
March 31	Edgar Meyer and the Scottish Ensemble

Big Event is Back!

Project request registration begins on January 1, 2022, at the website below: <http://vtbigevent.org/>

Donations to community partners in 2021

- Community Foundation of the NRV – Town of Blacksburg Senior Center Endowment Fund
- Blacksburg Community Center, Senior Center
- Christiansburg Community Center, Senior Programs
- Micah's Soup for Seniors
- NRV Agency on Aging
- Montgomery County Christmas Store – Senior Undergarments
- RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Programs) – Supplies for Seniors
- Community Foundation of the NRV – Aging in Place
- Warm Hearth Dementia Program
- SW Virginia Veterans Cemetery – Wreath Laying Program
- Community Action – Homeless Winter Shelter



Pat Ballard announcing donations at the annual luncheon and holiday celebration on December 14

Chapter Events, Announcements

1st Tuesdays (Jan 4, Feb 1, Mar 1):

Board meetings, 10:00 a.m.

3rd Tuesdays (Jan 18, Feb 15, Mar 15):

Chapter meetings, 11:30 a.m.

4th Tuesdays (Jan 25, Feb 22, Mar 22):

Coffee chats, 8:30 a.m.

If you would like to receive Zoom invitations for the coffee chats, please email Leslie Pendleton, lkpendleton@gmail.com.

Chapter Advocacy Report *by Ben Crawford*

Chapter Advocacy in 2021 continued virtual meetings arranged by AARP VA staff with state volunteers, our congressmen, and both senators. We offered help to increase the number and speed of vaccinations. We urged continuing protection of Social Security to protect all seniors, the addition of laws and regulations to improve nursing home and long-term care facilities, increased support of food insecurity programs, lowering drug prices, and more. Congress listened although it took a hard push by hundreds of thousands of AARP members. For example, many of our chapter members made contacts advocating lower prescription drug prices. Congress seems to have finally heard us.

Here in Virginia, three years of work on changing the redistricting process (required every 10 years) finally paid off. Our Blacksburg Chapter was singled out and recognized by AARP last fall for working successfully to pass a constitutional amendment eliminating gerrymandering in the Old Dominion. When the redistricting commission failed to act a few weeks ago because of partisan politics, some were disappointed and, by design, the Virginia Supreme Court will determine district voting boundary lines. Their decision is final and will occur soon. I am certain they will do so fairly but the fact is no matter how voting lines are drawn, a few will complain loudly. The outcome, however, will be far superior to the old system of gerrymandering boundaries to help the party (or certain persons) in power or to hurt the other party. Our votes will have greater impact and our democracy will be stronger.

Recognitions and Awards

Awards:

Carolyn Rude was nominated for the Andrus Award, AARP Virginia's top award for volunteer public service.



Debbie Sherman-Lee receiving the Community Spirit Award and Sandy Birch receiving the Chapter Service Award

Recognition of outgoing Board Members:

AARP Blacksburg thanks our outgoing Board members (Doug Feuerbach, Tom Hohenshil, and Lisa Moose) for their dedicated and valuable service to our Chapter. Wherever the road takes you, we wish you all the best in your next endeavors!

Thank you to all 2021 Volunteers:

AARP Virginia Liaison: Ben Crawford
Awards Committee: Chuck Burress, Judith Jones, Wendy Baldwin, Terry Wildman, Don Creamer
By-Laws Committee: Linda Correll, Judith Jones, Ben Crawford, Don Creamer, Kai Duncan
Care Committee: Leslie Pendleton, Lisa Moose
Chaplain: Sandra Birch
Community Service (Books for Vets): Tom Hohenshil
Financial Planning and Audit: Jerry Niles, Kai Duncan
Health & Wellness Fair: Leslie Pendleton, Chuck Burress, Linda Correll
Hospitality: Terry Wildman, Thais Beams
Leadership Development: Don Creamer, Jerry Niles, Leslie Pendleton
Legislative Review: Doug Feuerbach
LLI Partnership: Jerry Niles
Membership: Coreen Mett, Cyndy Graham
Newsletter Editor: Carolyn Rude
Newsletter Mailing: Allen and Jeananne Dixon-Bame, Jerry and Ruth Anne Niles
Programs: Judith Jones, Wendy Baldwin, Linda Correll
Town of Blacksburg/Rec Center Liaison: Joy Herbert
Website/Mailchimp Administration: Don Creamer, Lisa Moose

2021 AARP Blacksburg Chapter Highlights

- Conducted nine public meetings via Zoom featuring a variety of programs
- Maintained a chapter website with up-to-date information about the chapter and chapter activities and a credit card payment system
- Corresponded with members via MailChimp with meeting announcements and notices of community opportunities
- Published six chapter newsletters
- Conducted monthly Coffee Talks via Zoom with members to help members stay connected and develop relationships
- Led First Friday Hikes and Food Collection June–September
- Informed members of legislative initiatives related to seniors, including prescription drug price transparency, Covid, and voting options for the November General Election
- Revised chapter bylaws
- Maintained 18 active committees, reporting at monthly board meetings
- Maintained and developed robust partnerships: AARP Virginia, NRV Agency on Aging, Lifelong Learning Institute at VT, Center for Gerontology at VT, VT Retirees Association, Community Foundation of the NRV, Blacksburg Community Center, Christiansburg Recreation Center, Montgomery County Christmas Store, Micah's Soup for Seniors, Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), Virginia Tech Retirees Association (VTRA), and Warm Hearth Village
- Prepared 625 tax returns through the Tax-Aide program
- Collected 2,150 books for the Book Project for Vets for delivery to V.A. Medical Centers, engaging the partnership of 11 community organizations
- Launched deliberative efforts to serve veterans in the NRV
- Contributed to charitable organizations that serve seniors in the NRV, including the Warm Hearth Foundation fundraiser—Cheeseburger in Parrot-dise

Highlights Continued

- Met virtually with AARP staff and state volunteers, our congressmen, and both senators. Offered to help increase the number and speed of vaccinations. Urged continuing protection of Social Security, new laws and regulations to improve nursing homes and long-term care facilities, increased support of food insecurity programs, lowering drug prices and more. Chapter members contacted their representatives advocating lower drug prices.
- Worked to pass a constitutional amendment eliminating gerrymandering in Virginia. Our chapter was singled out for its efforts.
- Submitted and received a community challenge grant for initiatives to support veterans residing in the NRV

President's Message, continued

Dacher Keltner, a psychologist at the Greater Good Science Center at Cal Berkeley, studies the beneficial effects of awe on our physical, mental, and emotional well-being. "It makes us curious rather than judgmental. It makes us collaborative. It makes us humble, sharing and altruistic. It quiets the ego so that you're not thinking about yourself as much. It also calms the brain's default mode network and has been shown to reduce inflammation. It can make us kinder, more generous people." A 2020 study published in the journal *Emotions* reported that older adults who took weekly 15-minute "awe walks" for eight weeks reported increased positive emotions and less distress in their daily lives. To create awe in our lives, Deborah Farmer Kris suggests that we spend time in nature, listen to or make music, view or create art, contemplate big ideas, engage in meaningful rituals, and enjoy community experiences.

Are you interested in awe-inspiring, wondrous, and goose-bumpy experiences in 2022? I suggest that we can all cultivate and benefit from awe as a goal in the coming year. Here's my starting point. I've never been much of a TV watcher. (In fact, when I taught at Virginia Tech, I wondered why so many students allowed themselves to be distracted from their academics by Netflix.) Fast forward to retirement (and my own access to Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu, etc.). I have discovered so many "awe"-some opportunities. According to Keltner, "screens can serve as a gateway to awe" by helping us "find places we might not otherwise discover." Check out Louis Schwartzberg's "Moving Art" three-seasons program on Netflix. Just watching the first episode, "Oceans," of the first season, I experienced immense AWE. Now I'm off to the Huckleberry Trail for an awe walk with my golden retriever!

Spring LLI Classes by Zoom or In-Person

The Lifelong Learning Institute at Virginia Tech (LLI) invites those over 50 to join a community of curious adults exploring topics like Appalachian music, local history, genealogy, U.S. foreign policy, graphic novels, futurism, and so much more. There are plenty of opportunities for small classes to engage your creative spirit too. Both Zoom and in-person classes and lectures are available. We celebrate the opportunity for fully vaccinated people to gather for learning and socializing. If you choose an online learning experience there are several advantages: it is easier to hear and see presentations, you can join classes even if you travel, and people more distant or less mobile can easily participate from home. Join us to select from 26 courses, four field trips, and eight free special events – a great member benefit!

Visit the LLI website at

www.cpe.vt.edu/lifelonglearning for more information. You can sign up there to receive the Spring flyer, email announcements, and the LLI newsletter. Don't miss the Spring Preview in early February!

Spring 2022 Calendar

Mid-January	Spring program flyer sent to LLI contacts
February 2	Spring Program Preview via Zoom 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon
February 7	Online registration opens 10:00 a.m.
February 21	Classes begin

Contact Information

LLI Registrar: 540-231-4364, heidi1@vt.edu

General Registration Phone: 540-231-5182

LLI email address: lifelonglearning@vt.edu

LLI website: www.cpe.vt.edu/lifelonglearning

Topics and Speakers for Chapter Meetings

January 18, 2022 - A Look at the Frequency of Weather Hazards in the New River Valley and How to Improve Resilience and Responsiveness to These Hazards

Description: The New River Valley is susceptible to a wide range of weather hazards, including, but not limited to, tornadoes, damaging thunderstorm winds, hail damage, flooding, and crippling winter storms. The presentation will discuss the frequency and trends of these hazards, and what residents in the New River Valley can do to be better prepared at work, home, or when traveling.

Speaker: Phil Hysell has been with NOAA's National Weather Service for over 32 years. Phil has a bachelor's degree in Atmospheric Sciences from UNC-Asheville and has held a variety of forecast and management positions with the National Weather Service in several states. As the Warning Coordination Meteorologist, Phil serves as the principal interface



between the NWS Blacksburg office and the users of our products and services. Phil also is responsible for planning, coordinating, and carrying out the NWS Blacksburg area-wide public awareness program.

February 15, 2022 - A Few Family Relationship Issues of Older Adults

Description: Drs. Piercy and Allen will discuss several relationship issues that are common in later life and possible ways to address them. Topics include sibling relationships in later life, relationship issues when one person has a hearing loss, grief and loss, family therapy interventions, friends as chosen family, and passing on family history through stories and recordings. The presenters will share several personal examples to illustrate issues that are well documented in academic literature and research.

Speakers: Dr. Fred Piercy is professor emeritus of human development at Virginia Tech, where he served both as an administrator and professor. Prior to coming to Virginia Tech in 2000, Dr. Piercy spent 18

years at Purdue University and seven years at Texas A&M Commerce. Dr. Piercy's scholarship has involved marriage and family therapy education, family therapy of substance abuse, HIV research and prevention, and couples' enrichment.



Dr. Katherine Allen is Professor Emerita of Human Development and Family Science at Virginia Tech. She also served on the faculty at Texas Woman's University. She is a graduate of Syracuse University and University of Connecticut. She has published over 200 scholarly articles, books, and chapters on marginalization, vulnerability, and family life course change using feminist, intersectional, and qualitative approaches.



March 15, 2022 - Mushroom Identification Basics and the Virginia Big 20

Description: Our area is home to an amazing variety of gourmet mushrooms and wild ingredients. Stephen and his family delight in the wonder of nature and share their love of the outdoors with all they meet. The presentation will discuss the basics of identifying 20 common gourmet mushrooms and a few wild plants and fruits you can find here.

Speaker: Stephen Kaplan is a husband and father who has followed his passions of music, the great outdoors, and teaching. He and his wife, Alex, founded Kaplan's Welcome Home Farms in late 2015 to work on the family farm in Glade Hill, Virginia, and share in the natural bounty right outside their door. In 2019 he developed a "one-page field guide" to help beginners start their journey into the fungi kingdom. With a



sharp focus on anatomy and a short list of targets, "Mushroom Identification Basics and the Virginia Big 20" has become a fully developed class that can guide audiences of all ages toward identifying some common edible mushrooms.

Veteran Connect

by Leslie Pendleton

As in previous years, AARP Blacksburg donated funds in 2021 to the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery (SWVAVC) in Dublin for their Wreath Laying Program on December 18, 2021. Wreath laying ceremonies are held annually across Virginia and the United States and at Arlington National Cemetery. As a new SWVAVC Ambassador, I attended the ceremony in December for the first time since the center was opened and dedicated on May 6, 2011.

As noted by several speakers, Mary Lou Summers, Chair of SWVAVC Volunteers, her volunteers, and other event organizers spend the entire year planning each annual event. It was evident! Local United Auto Workers (UAW) Ride for Freedom Truck and UAW Local 2069 Motorcycles arrived in a procession just before the event. The Virginia State Police Color Guard presented and posted the colors. The 29th Division Virginia Army National Guard Band played a musical interlude, the *National Anthem*, and *Taps*. A local bagpiper played *Amazing Grace* during the program and a selection of holiday tunes as family members and volunteers laid the wreaths.

Dignitaries who were part of the program included Colonel John Phillips USAR (Ret); the Reverend Terry Mullins, pastor of Roanoke Valley Presbyterian Church; the Honorable Benny Skeens, mayor of Dublin; John Maxwell, commissioner of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services; and other retired military officers. Other groups that assisted in the event included the Montgomery County Sheriff's Department Rifle Team, Christiansburg High School Corps of Cadets, and Cub Scout Pack #244, Radford.

Wreaths were laid in four different sections of burial sites within the cemetery. As I was laying wreaths in one section, I was humbled by two experiences. First, one family I met had both a father and son buried in the same section. Second, I discovered and laid a wreath on the gravesite of a former counseling client, a WWII veteran, who, unbeknownst to me, had passed away earlier in the fall. Many times, over the past two years, I had wondered about him and how he was doing. Sadly, I got my answer that day.

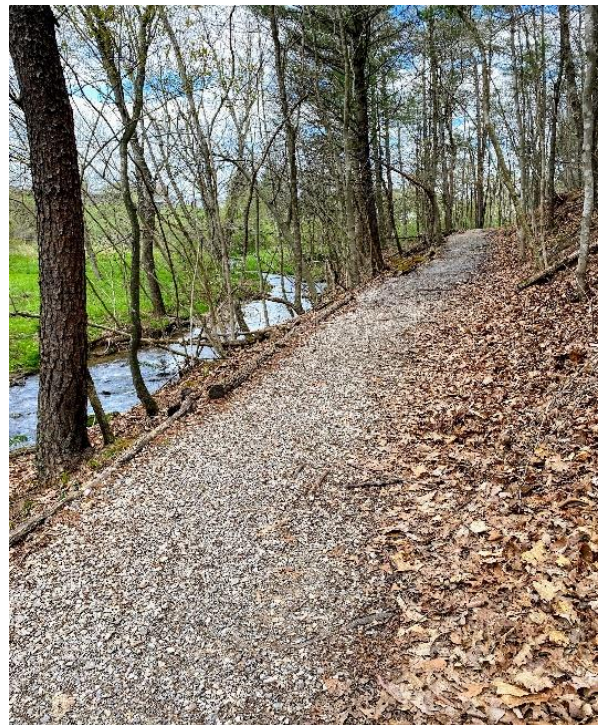
Through the experience of attending the wreath laying ceremony, the honor and sacrifices of our military veterans and their families and the importance of the funding we provide for the wreath laying ceremony were underscored. Looking out over each section of burial sites and seeing all the evergreen wreaths with red bows was a very humbling and beautiful experience.

Harvey Lee Price Park – Price's Fork

by Beth Grabau, Susan Terwilliger and Pat Hipkins

Nearby Harvey Lee Price Park is a 44-acre woodland park maintained by volunteers of the Friends of Rivers of Virginia (FORVA). The park is located at Sandy Circle in Montgomery Farms in Price's Fork, where the trail begins at a small parking lot with a kiosk that displays a trail map and park history. The mostly flat trail extends along Walls Branch to Stroubles Creek, near the site of a former grist mill. There are several footbridges, benches, and picnic tables along the approximately one-half mile trail (one way). The short, easy trail provides access to a scenic natural resource and local creek. It's a cool, shady getaway on a warm summer day and a beautiful, uncrowded walk in any season. Dogs are permitted on leash.

More photos and recent details of park history can be found at: <https://www.forva.org/PricePark.htm>



Trail at Harvey Lee Price Park

Paying it Forward

by Paul French

With changes to the standard deduction, many families which previously received a tax benefit for their charitable giving are no longer able to deduct these gifts. Fortunately, there are a number of options that can still allow philanthropists to receive a tax benefit, even if they can no longer deduct the gift. The three most common options available are qualified charitable distributions (QCD), gifting of appreciated stock, and taking advantage of donor-advised funds or private foundations.

A QCD is a distribution from your retirement account, such as an IRA, directly to a charitable organization, without you ever receiving the funds yourself. If you are over 70 ½, unlike most distributions from IRAs, these distributions are not taxable, as they go straight to a charity. However, they do qualify for satisfying your required minimum distributions, which the IRS requires you to start taking at age 72. If you are giving \$5,000 to charity each year, and your required distribution by the IRS is \$5,000, satisfying that requirement with a qualified charitable distribution could save you as much as \$2,000 in taxes.

For those who are ineligible to do qualified charitable distributions, another popular option is gifting investments that have appreciated in value. If you were to sell a stock that had gained in value in order to fund a charitable gift, you will owe taxes on that gain. If, instead, you gift that appreciated stock directly to the charity, you avoid all those taxes, while the charity, as a non-profit entity, is also able to avoid them.

Lastly, donor advised funds and private foundations can be an excellent way to maximize the tax benefits of your giving. If you routinely give \$5,000 each year to charity but take the standard deduction on your taxes, you are losing all of the potential tax benefit of your giving!

Instead, in one year, make a single, say, \$50,000 gift to a donor-advised fund or your own private foundation, and use that account to fund all your charitable giving over the next 10 years. By making that large donation in a single year, you'll be able to itemize and deduct it from your taxes to get a benefit, while still achieving your annual giving goals.

One comment we increasingly hear from retirees is that they are not only making decisions how best to pass on their financial assets and family heirlooms, but also their family values. Philanthropy can be an excellent way to help pass on your values by involving your children in your giving throughout the year. Succession possibilities are unlimited in a private foundation, and the costs to create and manage one are lower than most people realize. This enables the family to exercise control across the generations, helping them to pass philanthropic values and specific goals to children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and beyond. In contrast, many donor-advised funds have limitations on successions. When that limit is reached, the money no longer belongs to the donor or his or her family. Instead, it's transferred into a general pool of the organization sponsoring the donor-advised fund.

Paul French is a co-founder of Plott & French Financial Advisors and is approaching his 25th year as a financial advisor. He specializes in retirement and estate planning issues.

Blacksburg Chapter #2613

Chapter Officers 2022

President – Leslie Pendleton, lkpendleton@gmail.com

Vice President -Chuck Burress,
cgburress@comcast.net

Secretary – Terry Wildman, wiley@vt.edu

Treasurer – Pat Ballard, pballard@vt.edu

Assistant Treasurer – Ruth Ann Niles,
rniles2@icloud.com

Board of Directors

2022: Chuck Burress, Linda Correll, Kai Duncan

2023: Val Coluni, Todd Solberg

2024: John Burton, Beth Grabau, Sue Hossack, Judith Jones

Newsletter Editors: Beth Grabau and Susan Terwilliger

AARP Chapter Website: blacksburgaarp.org



Blacksburg Chapter #2613
Leslie Pendleton, President
PO Box 10082
Blacksburg VA 24062

**Nonprofit
Organization
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Blacksburg Chapter Member Application for 2022

mail this form or join/renew online at blacksburgaarp.org/online-payments

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: AARP Blacksburg Chapter • PO Box 10082 • Blacksburg, VA 24062