



BLACKSBURG NEWS

Volume 21, Issue 5

Chapter # 2613

May 2004

Membership Meeting -- May 18, 2004

Virginia General Assembly Summary
Delegates Jim Shuler and David Nutter

11:30 a.m. - Bag lunch and fellowship

11:45 a.m. - Medicare Film

Program from 12 noon to 1:00 p.m.

2004 Membership Roster

The roster contains the names of those who paid their 2004 dues as of May 8.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Brian R. Allen

A good time was had by all! I am talking about the Senior Olympics. We had over 200 participants this year, and I was able to try out for some things too. I did the discus throw and shot put. My shoulder still lets me know I should not have done both the same afternoon. I haven't tried this since high school. But, it was fun. Lots of folks won medals, and quite a few won door prizes. The door prizes were donated by local businesses ranging from gift certificates to a wine gift basket. It was worth participating for the prizes alone! Check with your friends to see if they won a medal or two. A great big **Thank You** to Paul Smeal, John Robinson and Joy Herbert, their committees and volunteers for making the games so successful!

Last month at the regular meeting Dale Oliver asked for a show of hands from those interested in a 50/50 cash drawing to be held at each meeting as a fund raiser, and for fun. A large majority voted for this, and the board approved it at the May 4 meeting so we will start selling tickets before each meeting. They

will be \$1 each or five tickets for \$3. The winning ticket takes home half of the cash received that day and the other half goes into our charity fund. **Participation is purely voluntary!**

We will be asking for another show of hands at the regular May meeting. This time the question will be, "Should we raise our yearly membership dues for 2005 to \$10.00 for a single member and \$15.00 for a couple?" **Be sure to come and give us your opinion!**

Our May meeting will be very informative. Ben Crawford has lined up Jim Shuler and Dave Nutter, our state legislators to both come and give us an inside look at what has been going on in Richmond this year. There will be plenty of time for questions, so get them ready. Don't miss it, and be sure to bring a friend.

On to our June meeting which will be our annual picnic. **No rain is anticipated** at noon on June 15, at Nellie's Cave Park! Antique cars will be on display again, and this year the



program and membership committees have got together to arrange a very fun time for all of us. The first thing we will do *of course* is to eat all the delicious potluck dishes brought by our members. Then we will have a White Elephant auction with a real auctioneer, Wayne Garst, from Garst Auction Service VAL# 1482. Wayne is great fun and has offered to volunteer his services to us for this event. **We are asking you to bring items to auction off.** These could be something from the attic or garage that you really want to get rid of, a Christmas gift you don't want, or perhaps you would like to buy something to auction off. We did this a few years ago and it was a lot of fun. The money we raise will go into our charity fund to help less fortunate folks in our community. ***If you will not be able to come to the picnic but have one or more items to donate please either bring them to the May meeting or give me a call (552-4422) and I will arrange for them to be picked up.*** Finally, to top off the picnic, you will have the opportunity to play horseshoes, bocce ball, and croquet. For the less active there will be Bingo.

See you Tuesday. *Brian*

VIRGINIA TAX CHANGES

Dan Fleming

Now that the smoke has cleared from the legislative battlefield in Richmond, what has been accomplished after months of budgetary bickering? Has Virginia's tax code been made more equitable and will it produce sufficient revenue to adequately fund essential services as recommended by our local AARP chapter tax study group?

Key changes included raising the general sales tax, the cigarette and tobacco products tax, the deed recording tax, closing some corporation loopholes, means testing age exemptions and lowering the sales tax on food. Some minor income tax cuts also go into effect over the next two years. The standard deductions will increase in 2005 from \$5,000 to \$6,000 for couples but remain the same for singles. Personal exemptions

will be raised from \$800 to \$900, effective in 2006. The filing threshold for singles goes from \$5,000 to \$7,000 and from \$8,000 to \$14,000 for joint filers in 2006. This exempts below poverty level income families from paying any state income tax. Seniors now 65 receiving age exemptions will not be effected but means testing will be applied to future beneficiaries and the \$6,000 benefit will end for those who turn 62 after January 1, 2004.

One group faring well was the 8% of Virginians with incomes over \$100,000. Both Gov. Warner and the State Senate proposed a slight raise in the income tax for this group, but the proposal was dropped and the regressive sales tax was increased on all Virginians. Corporations also did well as their taxes were not raised although some of their tax loopholes were closed.

A sensible tax proposal that was rejected would apply the sales tax to selected services such as tattoo parlors and beauty salons. Small business lobbyists early in the process frightened legislators into dropping this idea so Virginians will be spared from paying a sales tax on tattoos and manicures.

The controversial capping of state car tax relief for the future removes what Senator Chichester called a "malignancy" affecting state revenues and while still very expensive, will not continue to grow in the future.

The tax changes did little to improve the tax equity problem as working families above the poverty level fared very poorly. This is due to the meager \$100 increase in the personal exemption, last raised in 1987, while the federal exemption has raised to \$3,050. Much of this great discrepancy results from the lack of a cost of living index being applied to exemptions and the standard deduction in Virginia, unlike federal policy. A family earning \$30,000 will be taxed at the highest rate as one making \$300,000 or \$3 million a year. The first two income brackets still have not been adjusted since 1926. As a result, how and moderate income Virginians received

inconsequential tax relief and as inflation takes its toll, their share of taxes will worsen.

The new revenue produced was as much as could have been achieved in the current economic and political setting and provides some badly needed new funds although transportation needs were not addressed. One feature to help localities was dedicating 0.25% of the increase in the sales tax to local education. While some good changes were made, it is unlikely that another attempt will be made at tax reform for many years.

The General Assembly at times more resembled the Keystone Kops than the oldest legislative body of the New World. Particular blame for this legislative gridlock should be laid at the feet of the Republican leadership. The 17 Republican House members that broke away from their leadership including Dave Nutter should be recognized for their responsible actions as well as the Senate leadership. Senator John Edwards also played an active role in not worsening the tax equity issue by repealing the estate tax since no increase was made in the income tax rate for the wealthy.

In summary, little was done to bring greater tax equity, but a modest amount of new revenue was provided to fund essential services through increased taxed, closing tax loopholes and eliminating or modifying exemption. The final outcome was a far cry from the proposals of our study group and ignored most of the recommendations from three separate tax study commissions.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

If you have friends who should be members, please bring them to the monthly meeting and encourage them to join. ***Dues for 2004 are now PAST DUE. Please fill out the membership form in this newsletter and attach a check payable to Blacksburg AARP. You can pay your dues at the meeting or send them to Jim Moore.***

**Jim Moore
200 Fincastle Dr
Blacksburg, VA 24062-0652**

You must be a member of National AARP before joining the local chapter. National dues should be paid directly to National – not through the Blacksburg Chapter.

If you have changed your address, be sure to notify Joyce Martin or Don Elson; also, if you have an e-mail address please give it to one of them.

Have I paid my dues? The Chapter's membership year is based on the calendar year. Check the mail label on your Newsletter. **If "2003" appears on the label, you have NOT paid for the current year.** After you pay your 2004 dues, the label will read "2004." There has been a question as to the meaning of the "N" at the end of the year on some of your mail labels. "N" denotes that you are a new member.

Those of you who are 90 years old and older do not pay dues. Your label should read "Life Member." The current membership list has the following members that are 90 years of age or older:

Fay Hoy	Helen Judkins
Esther McKenna	Libby McCann
Eva Patterso	Beverly Printz

If you know of corrections to this list, please tell Jim, Joyce, or Don so that our membership records are correct.

AARP MEMBERSHIP ROSTER UPDATES

If there are corrections to the 2004 Membership Roster included with this Newsletter, please notify Joyce Martin or Don Elson.

FUTURE MEETINGS

May 18: we will have a report from our elected representatives to the Virginia General Assembly. **Delegates Jim Shuler and David Nutter** or their personal representatives will share with us their views on the recent General Assembly session.

At the May 18th meeting, a 12-minute film, "**Navigating the New Medicare Rx Law**" will be shown while we eat our bag lunches. Narrated by former television anchorman, Walter Cronkite, the film is designed to help seniors to understand some of the most important aspects of the new law including what drug coverage does the new law offer and what kind of additional help is available for low-income seniors. It also features seniors who talk candidly about their difficulties affording the medicines they need. The film is provided by Families USA, a national organization for health care consumers.

June 15: Annual Blacksburg AARP picnic at 12 Noon in Nellie's Cave Park, rain or shine. All members are invited to bring a dish to share. The Membership committee is sponsoring a White Elephant auction with the proceeds going to the chapter treasury. Bring that good but duplicate piece of "stuff" or an

unwanted item to be included in the auction. Antique cars will be on display from the Blue Ridge Model A Club if weather permits.

July and August: No meetings

September 21: A special AARP Virginia program on TEAMWORK.

The membership meetings are held at the Blacksburg Community Center on the third Tuesday of each month except December, July and August. Be sure to make a special effort to attend and remember to bring a friend and your lunch. **We begin eating our bag lunches at 11:30 a.m. (coffee and tea available) with the program following at noon.**

CARING COMMITTEE

If you know of someone that is ill and/or in the hospital or if there is a death in our AARP family, please notify the Caring Committee chairperson, **Lula Roberts, 552-7655.**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MONTHLY MEETING

May 4, 2004

Darrel Clowes, acting secretary

Members in attendance: Doris Abraham, Brian Allen, Clara Jane Billig, Darrel Clowes, Harriett Cooper, Ben Crawford, Don Elson, Dan Fleming, Frank Lau, Joyce Martin, Carl McDaniels, Jim Moore, Ray Murley, Dale Oliver, and Lula Roberts.

President Brian Allen called the meeting to order at 9:35 A.M. The Agenda was approved; the minutes of the previous meeting were corrected to show the date of the Spring Picnic as June 15 (not 5th) from 12-3 at Nellie's Cave Park and then approved. The Treasurer's Report was submitted and accepted. The report showed a beginning balance of \$1,670.91, income of \$66.49, expenses of \$171.86 and a resulting ending balance of \$1,565.54.

Discussions

Committee reports and related discussions covered Medicare legislation, chapter dues structure related to our budget, chapter meeting programs, the Senior Olympics program and chapter involvement, the newsletter and the work of the committee on caring.

Information

Membership in the Chapter now stands at 230 regular members and five lifetime members. Brian reported that we had received two form letters from national AARP. One commended the chapter for its work in the Tax Aide Program. The other was in response to our request that President Novelli of the national AARP be asked to resign because of conflicts of interest and questionable leadership. The response thanked us for our interest.

Motions

- There were five motions introduced and voted on during the meeting.
1. That Jim Moore assumes the lead role as Treasurer for the balance of the year. Motion was made by Ray Morley, seconded by Joyce Martin and approved.
 2. That the Chapter invites the State AARP office to sponsor a forum on the then current status of Medicare legislation. September 21, 2004 and Custom Catering were the recommended dates and venue. Additionally a follow-up letter is sent in October by AARP notifying area AARP residents of that program and future programs as a recruiting tool for the Chapter. Motion was made by Carl McDaniels, seconded by Joyce Martin and approved.
 3. That the Chapter holds 50/50 drawings beginning at the May 2004 meeting. . Motion was made by Carl McDaniels, seconded Clara Jane Billings and approved.
 4. That dues for 2005 be increased to \$10 per member and \$15 per couple subject to approval at the May meeting of the membership. . Motion was made by Carl McDaniels, seconded by Jim Moore and approved.
 5. That Frank Lau is commended for his work with Tax Aide and in computer support for the Chapter. . Motion was made by Ben Crawford, seconded by Carl McDaniels and approved.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 11 A.M.

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BLACKSBURG AARP CHAPTER #2613

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL OR NEW MEMBER APPLICATION

Membership in the Blacksburg AARP Chapter requires membership in National AARP. If you are already a member of the Blacksburg Chapter, please pass this form on to a friend that should be a member.

Name: _____ Spouse: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ - _____ - _____ E-Mail: _____

Membership: _____ Renewal _____ Single membership dues **\$6.00**
 _____ New Member(s) _____ Joint Husband and Wife dues **\$10.00**

Complete, attach check made out to Blacksburg AARP, and bring to the next Membership Meeting or mail to:

Jim Moore
200 Fincastle Dr
Blacksburg, VA 24060

Brian R. Allen, President
AARP Chapter #2613
P. O. Box 10652
Blacksburg, VA 24060

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Officers

President	Brian Allen
1 st Vice-Pres.	Joyce Martin
2 nd Vice-Pres.	Jim Owen
Secretary	Virgil Cook
Treasurer	Jim Moore
Assoc. Treasurer	Ray Murley
Past President	Ben Crawford

Board of Directors

Class of 2004

Dan Fleming
Paul Smeal
Shirley Strother

Class of 2005

Carl McDaniels
June Schmidt
Joyce Martin

Class of 2006

Doris Abraham
Frank Lau
(open)

Nominating Committee

Class of 2004

Ben Crawford
Harriet Cooper

Class of 2005

Dan Fleming
June Schmidt
Cerrie Coil

Newsletter Editor

Donald Elson

Committee Chairs

Caring
Chaplain
Chapter Awards
Community Service
Financial Planning
Health Care
Hospitality

Legislative
Membership
Newsletter
Nominating
Program
Public Relations
Telephone
Ways & Means

Lula Roberts
Ken Dawson
Bob Blanton
Louis Barnett
Dale Oliver
Darrel Clowes
Clara Jane Billig and
Cerrie Coil
Dan Fleming
Joyce Martin
Donald Elson
(open)
Ben Crawford
June Schmidt
Charlotte Beamer
Jim Moore

Virginia Tech Retires Association

Dan Fleming