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# OIA connect

## HOME EDITION



## Hokies join in virtually for Run in Remembrance

Hokies around the world came together virtually to take part in the Run in Remembrance 2020.

Among them were over 30 people representing the [Southwest Center](#) in Abingdon. Director **Penny McCallum** writes: "We had participants from Pompano Beach, Florida, Atlanta, Christiansburg, Salem, Chesapeake, Doswell, Grundy, Castlewood, Marion, and Abingdon."

**Les Hanlin** (top right), executive director of Roanoke Regional Initiatives, also donned a runner's bib and participated. As did **Nancy Gruber** (bottom right), director of finance and administration for Engagement,



who was joined by son Sean and his girlfriend, Lexi.

In total, participants ran and walked far more than the 32,000-mile goal to honor the 32 lives lost on April 16, 2007. According to the Stridekick app, used to track the virtual run, participants logged more than 80,000 virtual miles.

[Watch the video...](#)



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## AROUND OIA



### Center gives beginning farmers room to grow

Livestock haven't grazed at the [Catawba Sustainability Center](#) in more than 20 years. Now, though, a herd of Angus cattle is pastured on the 377-acre center as part of a program to help beginning farmers.

The center's small-farm incubator program gives beginning farmers a "place to get their feet wet," said Manager **Adam Taylor** (above). "Access to land is by far the No. 1 thing that deters young farmers or beginning farmers. You don't have to go buy something before you know if agriculture is right for you. You can do it with training wheels on because it's a Virginia Tech farm, so there is always someone here from whom you can ask advice."

[Read more...](#)

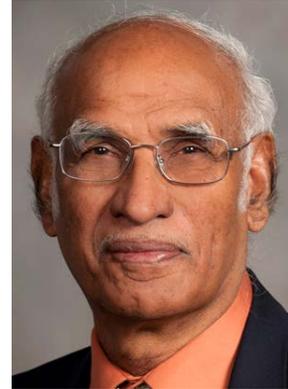
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## Muni corrects history of biological control

For years, researchers claimed the first biological control of a weed occurred in 1902, in Hawaii.

But **Muni Muniappan**, director of the [Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Integrated Pest Management](#), has proved that the ecological approach to combating invasive species happened more than a century earlier.

By tracking biocontrol's history, Muniappan found that conflict belies many biocontrol activities in the developing world.



[Read more...](#)

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## Grad student helps keep drone academy on track

Twenty-five students from nine African countries were prepared to make history on March 18. They would be the first graduating class from the African Drone and Data Academy in Malawi, a project managed by CIRED.

Then, news came that a novel coronavirus was spreading.

Brianna Friedman, a master's student in the College of Engineering and an instructor at the academy, was in Malawi when she heard the news. But she was determined to help ensure that the graduation moved forward.



[Read more...](#)

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## Hope springs eternal

**Beth Almond Ford** writes: "For almost 20 years, early each spring, I



pray for leaves to appear on this Ancient One. The Reynolds Homestead Catalpa Tree, believed to have been around several centuries — she's seen the Civil War, the smallpox epidemic, emancipation, Reconstruction, World War I, World War II, ... and now *Our Time*."

Follow the [Reynolds Homestead on Facebook](#) for more photos and remembrances.

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## Newsletter spotlights U.S., Jordanian cooperation

The Language and Culture Institute's **Patricia Parera** invites everyone in OIA to subscribe to the [U.S.-Jordanian Cooperation Network Newsletter](#).

The UCN aims to strengthen institutional cooperation between U.S. and Jordanian universities and develop mechanisms for bilateral cooperation that enhance the productivity and impact of university linkages.

Virginia Tech is a founding secretariat of the network.

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## SEND US YOUR STORIES

Help everyone in OIA stay connected during these uncertain times. Send us your photos, news, stories, and tips to include in this newsletter. Send all submissions, ideas, and comments, to [richm@vt.edu](mailto:richm@vt.edu)

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## NEWS TO USE

## Latest from Virginia Tech

- **EARTH WEEK:** Today is the 50th anniversary of national Earth Day celebrations. [Find a list of online activities](#) you can do from home.
- **COVID-19 TESTS:** VT researchers are [developing tests](#) to combat backlogs and shortages.
- **MARCHING VIRGINIANS:** Band connects virtually in "[Tech Triumph](#)" [video](#).
- **NEW VP:** Ken Miller named [vice president for finance](#).
  
- **STAY INFORMED:** Remember, you can find the latest information from the university on its [COVID-19 webpage](#).

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### President to host virtual town hall on Thursday

Tim Sands will take questions and be joined by several administrators during the 45-minute town hall, which is scheduled to begin at 1:15 p.m. Thursday, April 23.

A link to the live video stream of the town hall will be posted to [the Virginia Tech homepage](#) and the main page for [COVID-19 information](#).



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### *Engage in ... Listening*

Listening is one of our most important skills, yet we often aren't very good at it. Research shows that we pay attention to less than half of a conversation. By becoming better listeners, we can improve productivity, as well as our ability to influence, persuade, and negotiate. Plus, better listening can help us avoid conflict and misunderstandings.

Join the Office of Engagement's next installment of its "Engage in ..." series for an interactive session led by **Elaine Densley**, **Lynda King**, and **Lisa Roland**, who represent the teams at the Richmond and Newport News Centers.

The session will address:

- Listening skills as a core requirement in providing strong customer service.
- Attributes of good listeners.
- Why listening is difficult.
- Strategies for improving listening skills.

Come ready to laugh, learn, and practice your skills!

**When:** 10 a.m., Thursday, April 23

**Where:** [By Zoom, Meeting ID 98310695780](#)

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## 5 QUESTIONS FOR ... Don Pizzullo

*Donald Pizzullo is a senior program manager at the [Virginia Tech Roanoke Center](#), where he helps with support and management of a variety of programs, including the [Thinkabit Lab](#).*



**Q. What is your favorite thing about your current job?**

I love working with our students and professors and being part of our absurdly awesome team.

**Q. What's your favorite way to start the day?**

I like to start my day with a nice hot cup of coffee.

**Q. Are you binge-watching any TV shows?**

Who isn't these days? Right now, I am watching an episode or two of "The Prisoner" each night.

**Q. What was your first job?**

Not my first job but my first out of college, I worked overnights as a DJ at a country station. It was a lot of fun despite the pay and the hours and all the Hank Williams Sr. at 2 in the morning.

**Q. What hobby would you dive into if time and money weren't an issue?**

I'd love to learn to fly a plane.

— Diane Deffenbaugh

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**NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS**

## CPE's Erich Sawyer helps feed EastMont students

From March 30 to April 7, **Erich Sawyer**, program manager with Continuing and Professional Education, helped Eastern Montgomery High School package and deliver more than 7,500 breakfasts and lunches for students in the eastern portion of Montgomery County.

His volunteer work included packing meal bags with heating instructions, a well-balanced meal, juice, milk, and a snack. These meals were loaded on 12 different buses using the normal bus route to any student who wanted a meal. Upon return, the buses were unloaded and the meals were counted to determine how many to send on the next day.



On Tuesday, April 7, students were given five meals each so they would have something to eat during spring break. Eastern Montgomery High School provided over 3,750 meals in one day.

The school adhered to strict guidelines requiring volunteers to check in and go through health screening questions as well as following safe food-handling practices such as wearing masks and gloves and changing the gloves each time moving from one task to another. Students have been asked to adhere to social distancing practices and stay six feet from other families.

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### CHEF'S TABLE

#### Short on yeast? Try beer bread

Looking to get your baking on but don't have any yeast on hand? Try quick breads, which get their rise from leavening agents such as baking soda or powder — or, in

this case, a bottle of beer.

Chef **Scott Watson**, at The Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center, offers [a simple recipe for beer bread](#).

Pro tip: This bread goes great with chili. And, says Watson, it makes for an awesome grilled cheese sandwich.



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## Bake cookies like HRCC used to make

For the first time, DoubleTree by Hilton has shared the official recipe for its beloved chocolate chip cookies, so at-home bakers can create the warm and comforting treat in their own kitchens.

Many will remember these cookies from OIA's employee recognition events, courtesy of The Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center.



**Jane Swan**, who spotted the recipe and baked up a batch last week, warns mischievously: "They are NOOOO good — do not try this at home. ... OK, maybe just this once."

[Find the recipe here...](#)

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## LIFE AT HOME



**Shelly Jobst**, director of Continuing and Professional Education, sent this "family portrait" of the CPE team's weekly Zoom meeting, including staff from the Hotel Roanoke, the CCCs, and the Executive Briefing Center.



**Kathy Volpi**, of Outreach Information Services, got some unexpected support last week from her daughters, Toni and Micki, who surprised her by changing her screensaver to this picture, which they staged and took.



"The view out the deck from my new home office is much more breathtaking than on Prices Fork and Toms Creek," says **Maria Elisa Christie**, director of [Women and Gender in International Development](#) at CIRED. "Spring is blooming!" She also shared the pictures below of her workstation fully set up and functional — "after lots of troubleshooting with **Lena Jones**' patience and skill at OIS!" — and of Cosmo, her ex-service dog who's always supporting CIRED productivity.



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*Do you have furry "office" assistants keeping you company while you work? Send their photos or photos of your new "office view" to [richm@vt.edu](mailto:richm@vt.edu).*

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