

2011

HNFE Happenings

A Message from the Department Head

Greetings from the Department of Human Nutrition, Foods and Exercise! As we approach our 50th anniversary as an academic department at Virginia Tech, I reflect on all the dynamic changes and accomplishments HNFE has experienced in the last 50 years. Beginning in the Department of Home Economics in 1921-22, HNFE continues as a highly successful and prominent department at Virginia Tech.

In 1961, the Department of Foods and Nutrition was established within the School of Home Economics. The name was changed in 1964 to Department of Human Nutrition and Foods, with strengths in teaching, research, and extension. The department expanded when we merged with exercise science in 1994 to become the Department of Human Nutrition, Foods and Exercise.

Wallace Hall opened in 1968, and faculty members continue to use laboratory and teaching space there, as well as additional facilities in War Memorial Hall, the Corporate Research Center, and Virginia Tech Riverside in Roanoke.

HNFE excels in its established programs and is offering new academic opportunities that extend innovative learning experiences to students. Faculty members are conducting exciting research on a wide spectrum of topics, engaging students and the community while making a difference across the commonwealth through Extension efforts. HNFE students and alumni are winning prestigious awards and securing cutting-edge positions in the workforce. Our department is highly visible in the college, throughout Virginia, and in the world.

Come join us as we celebrate our past 50 years. We have fun and exciting events planned for April, so stay in touch. We hope to see you there.

Susan Hutson, Department Head



Susan Hutson

HNFE Through the Decades

1920s Department of Home Economics organized in the School of Agriculture and included the study of foods and nutrition.

1930s Mildred Tate began serving as department head. Courses offered to meet standards for registered dietitians.

1950s & '60s Laura Jane Harper was appointed dean of the newly formed School of Home Economics. One of the four departments was foods and nutrition. S.J. Ritchey was appointed head of the Department of Human Nutrition and Foods.

1970s & '80s The doctoral program began. The College of Home Economics was renamed College of Human Resources.

1990s The department was renamed Human Nutrition, Foods and Exercise with the addition of the Department of Exercise Science. HNFE became part of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.



Wallace Annex

HNFE Celebrates 50 Years: April 8-9, 2011



Human Nutrition, Foods and Exercise
50th ANNIVERSARY

Friday, April 8

Welcome Reception in Hahn Pavilion

Saturday, April 9

5K run/walk followed by HNFE open house

See what students and researchers are doing; visit labs, new classrooms, and the advising center.

Saturday afternoon:

Campus tours and student mentoring luncheon

Saturday evening:

Banquet at The Inn at Virginia Tech & Skelton Conference Center

Review the last 50 years in the department, and catch up with current and retired faculty.

Please submit comments, photos, anecdotes, or short videos about your time in the department as we prepare a special presentation for our spring celebration.

For more information, visit our website, www.hnfe.vt.edu/.



In October, Department Head Susan Hutson hosted a fall kickoff party for our 50th anniversary that was attended by more than 50 current and former faculty, staff, and alumni.

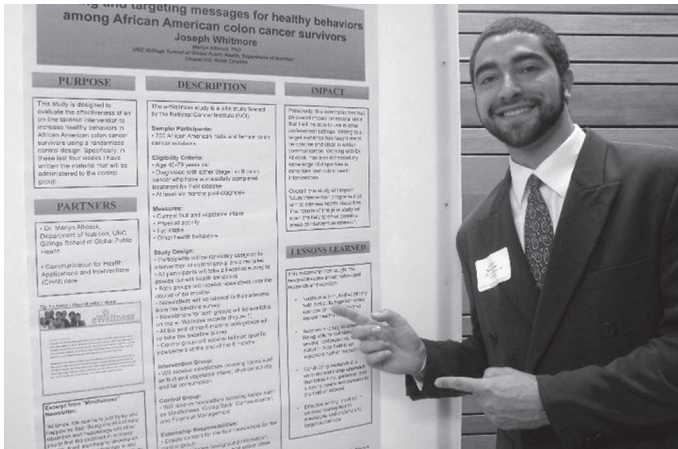


Fran Johnson (B.S. '73, M.S. '75; left) presented at the departmental seminar attended by retired faculty members (from left) Forrest Thye, S. J. Ritchey, and Janet Johnson.

HNFE Undergraduates: Beyond the Classroom

HNFE students get excited when they talk about the experience they gain outside the classroom. Whether through an internship, field study, undergraduate research, or volunteer work, many HNFE students can be seen outside the Virginia Tech campus doing work that complements their classroom learning.

During the summer of 2010, Joe Whitmore was a Public Health Fellow at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. He studied dietary interventions for African-American colon cancer survivors. According to Joe, "I was able to use my nutrition knowledge while working on the dietary intervention and to contribute to a motivational interviewing literature review because of Health Counseling, a class offered here in the department. Because of the challenging courses offered by HNFE, I was able to handle the expectations of the fellowship comfortably."



Senior Kelsey Kennedy spent her summer interning as a recreation coordinator for employees in Yellowstone National Park. Kelsey developed a handbook to help hikers understand the importance of food as fuel. She included examples of healthy foods for hiking, outdoor food safety strategies, and the importance of hydration. "I was able to use the knowledge gained from my classes in HNFE to design a handbook full of nutritional information that I shared with other employees working in the park."



In fall 2010, instructor Michele Lewis inspired students in her introductory Foods and Nutrition class to contribute to the community. They assisted nurses conducting health screenings in three local schools. Students also participated in the American Heart Association Heart and Stroke Walk and the American Diabetes Association Walk-a-Thon. Investing in service opportunities early in their academic career helps students make contacts while making a difference within their communities.

**Do you have an opportunity that might benefit an HNFE student?
Contact Renee Selberg-Eaton at rselberg@vt.edu or (540) 231-5987.**

Hepler Fellowships Fund Summer Research

Four graduate students in HNFE received **Hepler Summer Research Fellowships** in 2010. Hepler Fellows are supported by the Margaret Ellen Carter Hepler Memorial Fund, which supports graduate students during the summer so they can focus on their research. The recipients presented their research at the HNFE seminar series on November 1, 2010.

Kim Haynie (Ph.D. candidate from Heathsville, Va.) worked with advisor Matt Hulver on her project "Saturated Fatty Acids, Skeletal Muscle Inflammation, and Metabolism."

Erin Krzeski (M.S. candidate from Arlington Heights, Ill.), whose graduate advisor is Jamie Zoellner, presented "Using the Theory of Planned Behavior to Understand Beverage Choices in Southwest Virginians."

Mary Pat Meaney (Ph.D. candidate from Winston-Salem, N.C.) studied "Murine Breast Tumor Growth in Mice With Muscular Dystrophy." Her advisor is Young Ju.

Erin M. Smith (Ph.D. candidate from Oxford, Miss.) studied "Analysis of Implementation of School Wellness Policies Among a Sample of Rural and Urban School Districts" with her advisor, Paul Estabrooks.

Faculty Targets Underserved Communities

What is nutrition literacy, and how does it affect our health? Information about food products, dieting, and research can be confusing, and citizens who struggle with literacy are especially challenged when seeking sound health-related advice. Assistant Professor **Jamie Zoellner** is studying nutrition literacy in underserved Virginia communities to understand how it influences health and how to help citizens make healthier choices.

Nutrition literacy includes the ability to locate accurate nutrition information, as well as skills like mathematics, listening, problem-solving, and decision-making. Zoellner targets populations where obesity and diabetes are common and where citizens do not have access to accurate information or possess the skills to interpret complex concepts.

Zoellner came to Virginia Tech from the University of Southern Mississippi in 2009. She and her colleagues there surveyed adults in the Arkansas and Louisiana regions of the Lower Mississippi Delta regarding their health habits and dietary choices. The study, funded by the National Institutes of Health, found a relationship between low nutrition literacy and poor diet quality, especially with consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages.



Jamie Zoellner works with citizens in the Dan River region to discuss health habits in their community.

Zoellner is continuing that research here at Virginia Tech. Her team includes **Kevin Davy, Paul Estabrooks, Yvonne Chen, and Wen You**, who provide expertise on weight management, beverage habits, health communications, behavioral medicine, and health economics.

Zoellner is also collaborating with Assistant Professor **Jennie Hill** to establish an obesity task force in the Dan River region of Southern Virginia — a medically underserved and economically challenged area. The Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth is funding their efforts to help the community address obesity and create interventions. Community leaders and Virginia Tech students will work together to evaluate restaurants, consumer habits, common perceptions of health, and other influences in the area. This collaboration is the essence of community-based participatory research and

will ensure a long-term impact for the citizens of the Dan River region.

Zoellner leads the Community-Based Health Disparities Program within HNFE. In addition to her research efforts, she teaches a community-based participatory research graduate-level course and an undergraduate course in health counseling.

Staff and Faculty Updates

Kevin Davy is serving as part-time assistant vice president for research and will be the liaison for health sciences and related research areas for the university.

Deborah Good was awarded the 2010 College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Research Award for Excellence in Basic Research.

Carol Papillon, senior instructor and dietetic internship director, received the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Faculty Service Award for 2010-11 for her outstanding service to the university and the college.

Paul Estabrooks has been promoted to full professor.

Dongmin Liu has been promoted to associate professor with tenure.

Renee Selberg-Eaton was appointed undergraduate coordinator.

Laurie Bianchi resigned her position to complete her Ph.D. in food science.

Whitney Edmister, an alumnus of HNFE, has joined the department's advising center as an academic advisor.

Making Nutrition Waves in Local Communities

“Lindsay, Lindsay, Lindsay!” shouted the kids as **Lindsay Colcombe** (Lynchburg, Va.) entered the Lynchburg classroom. Lindsay was one of eight HNFE undergraduate students who taught nutrition to children last summer. The summer interns worked in 11 localities in Virginia and reached about 3,080 kids. Many of these children live at or below the poverty level and dwell in single-parent homes.

Virginia’s Family Nutrition Program (FNP) has full-time paraprofessionals working to deliver nutrition programs to high-risk populations; however, they are often challenged to reach every family. “My intention was to give students an opportunity to really experience community nutrition on the front line. I also knew the summer interns could help us reach the children that our paraprofessionals could not because of time constraints and sheer volume. I am very pleased with the outcomes of the internship because both the students and our program benefited from the experience,” said **Mary McFerren**, FNP project director.

For some interns, these experiences confirmed a desire to one day work in a community outreach field and help others. “This internship made me realize that I have a strong desire to work with kids,” said **Edith Nault** (Poquoson, Va.), summer intern in Norfolk and Hampton. Colcombe said, “I discovered that the best way to teach children was to actually let them be the experimenters and detectives through fun and interactive activities. More important than the teaching material was being patient and being a positive role model.”

Summer interns have large impact across Virginia

According to **Rachel Saunders**, internship coordinator, “Based on last summer’s success, there are plans to host more interns this coming summer. We look forward to impacting more undergraduate students and reaching more children.”



Lindsay Colcombe (top left) and a group of children in Lynchburg stopped to take a group picture while learning about MyPyramid.

HNFE and CALS Honor Outstanding Alumni

Tom Chittenden (Ph.D. '02), 2010 Outstanding Recent Alumni Award recipient for both HNFE and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, is a senior research Fellow in molecular and computational cancer genetics at the Harvard School of Public Health, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. His research is currently funded by the National Institutes of Health and the American Heart Association. His recent article in *Circulation* pointed to novel genetic markers of collateral vessel development in coronary artery disease (CAD). He is also co-inventor of two methods used to determine collateral artery development in CAD. He has presented an HNFE seminar and is co-investigator for a Virginia Tech Carilion study to identify biomarkers of sleep apnea in bariatric surgery patients.

Espen Spangenburg (B.S. '95, M.S. '97, Ph.D. '00), 2010 Outstanding Alumni Award recipient, is an assistant professor in the Department of Kinesiology at the University of Maryland. Since leaving Virginia Tech, he has generated

more than \$2 million in research funding and has more than 45 peer-reviewed publications. He also serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Applied Physiology* and has played a key role in promoting youth exercise and fitness. Spangenburg has returned to Virginia Tech to present his research at the HNFE seminar series.



Espen Spangenburg (left) and Tom Chittenden with Department Head Susan Hutson accepting their awards at the college’s annual awards ceremony.

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Name: _____

Classification (check one):

Alumni _____ year/degree (B.S., M.S., Ph.D.)/Option _____

Retired faculty/staff _____ Other _____

Address (indicate work or home): _____

Current Position/Employer: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail Address: _____

Update about yourself: _____

Indicate ways you would like to be involved (support scholarships, internship opportunities in your workplace, etc.): _____

HNFE Happenings

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