

**Fall 2002 Newsletter**  
**Research - Instruction - Outreach**



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## **From the Director...**

The Center for Gerontology is aging!! This academic year, the Center is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary making it one of the oldest university research centers at Virginia Tech. I invite everyone to join us as we celebrate our many accomplishments and prepare for an even more exciting and productive future.

To help us continue on the road of success, I am very pleased to introduce three new members of the Center's team. Dr. Michelle "Mickey" Stevenson is our new Gerontology Extension Specialist. In addition to contributing to the Center's research agenda on relationships in later life, Mickey will be working with all areas of Extension to include a focus on aging in existing and new community initiatives. Dr. Anne Glass is serving as the Project Coordinator for our 3-year collaborative project with Virginia's Department of Medical Assistance Services. Dr. Debra No-

vak, a nurse-researcher, is assisting with our health-related research programs.

The projects and events highlighted in this newsletter provide a snapshot of our research, instruction, and outreach activities. Although painful economic decisions will place constraints on the Center, I am committed to maximizing our resources in support of research and other activities that ultimately advances scholarship and practice in gerontology. With the leadership, support, and commitment of our faculty affiliates, staff, students, and community partners, the Center will continue to thrive and contribute to the quality of lives of older adults.

- Karen

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## **Virginia Tech's Center for Gerontology Celebrates its 25th Anniversary!**

The Center for Gerontology was founded in 1977-78, making this our 25th year on campus. We are planning to expand our usual spring celebration for the recipients of the Graduate Certificate in Gerontology to a truly gala affair in acknowledgement of this milestone. Our 25th Anniversary keynote speaker will be Dr. Toni C. Antonucci, who is Professor of Psychology at The University of Michigan and currently, President of the Gerontological Society of

America. We will honor the founding faculty and previous Center directors, and invite all Certificate alumni, Futures Board members, and friends of the Center to the celebration. Please watch for future details about the celebration taking place April 3-4, 2003.



(l. to r.) Dr. Michelle Stevenson helps the Center's students, Kelley Rollins, Ambassador (sitting), Christine Fruhauf and Soyoung Lee, Graduate Research Assistants, understand the importance of integrating service and outreach at Virginia Tech.

## New Gerontology Extension Specialist

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The Center for Gerontology welcomes Michelle "Mickey" Stevenson, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in Human Development and State Extension Specialist in Gerontology. Mickey's responsibilities include planning programs for state agents, conducting research on current family gerontological issues, and teaching graduate and undergraduate courses in adult development and aging. Mickey earned her doctorate in Human Development and Family Studies with a specialization in Family Gerontology from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Her dissertation explored the impact of feelings of filial obligation on support to older parents and this relationship as affected by affect for a child and opportunity for interaction. Her research was based on a sample of older adults who relocated to North Carolina after age 60. She presented findings from her dissertation at the September 2002 Gerontology Forum. Her primary research interests include family relationships in

later life, the roles families play in services for older adults, and how technology influences family relationships. Mickey is currently secretary of the Southern Gerontological Society and technology chair of the Student Organization of the Gerontology Society of America. Please assist us in welcoming Mickey to the Center for Gerontology.



Dr. Michelle L. Stevenson  
mstevens@vt.edu & 540-231-2348

## 2002 Graduate Certificate Ceremony

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The 6<sup>th</sup> annual recognition ceremony for the recipients of the Graduate Certificate in Gerontology was held in May, 2002. Dr. Shirley Travis, Dean W. Colvard Distinguished Professor of Nursing at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and Ph.D. alumna of Virginia Tech, presented her research on late-life long-term care. Dr. Travis urged faculty and students to consider the importance of working with older individuals who are in a LTC setting and experiencing end-stage disease. Primary to her address was an explicit appreciation of what living and dying with a chronic illness entails. The Center was pleased to have Provost, Mark McNamee and the College of Human Resources and Education Dean, Janet Johnson help celebrate the accomplishments of eight certificate awardees, and several award winning faculty and students. Graduations to all!



(l. to r.) Janet Johnson, Dean, Jeremy Yorgason, Denise Love-Norris, Emily Maples, Tsofit Gozali, Amid Gilkes, Sara Kretzer, students, and Mark McNamee, Provost

## Virginia Association on Aging 2002 Award Winners

Congratulations to the following faculty and students affiliated with the Center:

Outstanding Educator: Jay Mancini, Ph.D.  
Outstanding Doctoral Student: Jeremy Yorgason, M.S.  
Outstanding Master's Student: Christina Gigliotti, B.S.



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## Blieszner & Ramsey Travel to Göttingen, Germany

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Dr. Rosemary Blieszner, Associate Director, Center for Gerontology, and Alumni Distinguished Professor, Human Development, and Center alumna, Dr. Janet Ramsey, traveled to Göttingen, Germany this summer to conduct a research follow-up. The original study was completed in 1995 by Dr. Janet Ramsey, an ordained Lutheran minister, as part of her dissertation; A Cross-cultural Examination of Spiritual Resiliency in Older American and German Women. The dissertation culminated in the completion of a co-authored book, *Spiritual Resiliency in Older Women: Models of Strength for Challenges Through the Life Span*, and several presentations to professional and community groups. The two researchers were often asked, "What about men?" That question led to a parallel study on spiritual resiliency in older men, also in the United States and Germany. Drs. Blieszner and Ramsey have completed data collection in Germany with the help of Pastor Dieter Nehls, and will

interview American men this fall. You may expect to see articles and another book presenting results about older men's spirituality and comparisons to older women. Dr. Blieszner believes their work will enhance the understanding of those individuals who are viewed by their peers and pastors as deeply spiritual and present examples of optimal development.



Dr. Janet Ramsey & Pastor Dieter Nehls

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## Research Updates

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### Quality of Community-Based Waiver Programs

Dr. Anne Glass, Project Coordinator, and Nancy Brossoie, Graduate Assistant, are working with the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) on the "Real Choice Systems Change" Grant project. The project is funded by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The VT research team is examining the quality of service provision and care by community-based services for older adults and those with disabilities. They will develop new quality and satisfaction measures. Dr. Karen A. Roberto and Dr. Pamela Teaster are principal investigators for the project.

### Guardianship Evaluation

This fall, Dr. Karen A. Roberto, and Dr. Pamela Teaster, Assistant Professor, University of Kentucky, will complete data collection as part of a two-year evaluation of Virginia's Public Guardian and Conservator Programs. These programs are publicly funded entities who serve as a legal guardian in the absence of willing and responsible family members or friends, or without resources to employ a private guardian. During FY 2001, the guardianship programs served a total of 208 incapacitated persons, resulting in a substantial savings to the Commonwealth and enhanced quality of life of the people served.

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## Outreach Update

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### Rural Conference Co-Sponsor

In September, the Center for Gerontology co-sponsored the *Aging in Rural Virginia* conference held at the Hotel Roanoke. Dr. Anne Glass provided attendees with "A Demographic Profile of Virginia's Elders." Marilyn Maxwell, a member of the Center's Futures Board, discussed programs and services available to support older individuals and their caregivers. Other topics included emerging trends in Medicaid and long-term care, assessments of senior patients, polypharmacy, and detection of psychiatric illness in late life.



(l. to. r., Peter Fitzgerald, Diana Thorpe, Anne Glass, Marilyn Maxwell)

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## Upcoming Aging Conferences

## Aging Related Websites

"AGHE Means Business: Educational Opportunities and the World of Work"

Association in Gerontology for Higher Education  
Hilton St. Petersburg, FL  
March 6-9, 2003

"New Elders, New Care"

Southern Gerontological Society  
Sheraton Richmond West Hotel, Richmond, VA  
April 9-13, 2003

"Making our World a Good Place to Grow Old"

National Council on the Aging &  
American Society on Aging  
Sheraton Hotel & Towers, Chicago, IL  
March 13-16, 2003

20th Annual Research Meeting

Academy Health  
Gaylord Opryland, Nashville, TN  
June 27-29, 2003

National Rural Health Administration

<http://www.nrharural.org/>

National Guardianship Association

<http://www.guardianship.org/>

Health and Aging

<http://www.healthinaging.org>

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services

<http://cms.hhs.gov/>

Mental Health & Aging

<http://www.mhaging.org/>

National Hispanic Council on Aging

<http://www.nhcoa.org/>

The National Council on Aging, Benefits Checkup

<http://www.benefitscheckup.org/>