

# Center for Gerontology



VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE  
AND STATE UNIVERSITY

## Research - Instruction - Outreach

From the Director . . .

The Center for Gerontology has a long track record of superior accomplishments in research, education and outreach. The Center's basic, social, and applied research contributes to disease prevention and management, better health care service delivery, improved family relationships and more satisfactory approaches to family caregiving, suitable housing and consumer products to meet elderly persons' needs, a reduction of fraud and elder abuse, and a host of other outcomes that benefit older adults and their families. In this issue of the newsletter, I am very proud to share information about recent awards and recognitions that our faculty and students have received. It is because of the hard work and dedication of everyone affiliated with the Center for Gerontology that we have such an excellent reputation within the Virginia Tech community and beyond. Congratulations to all!

~ Karen

### ***Center for Gerontology Students Win AARP Scholarships***

Three Center for Gerontology certificate students are 2005-2006 AARP Scholars. Libbey Bowen, Nancy Brossoie, and Erica Husser were chosen by a panel of educators and AARP staff to receive a \$10,000 scholarship each. A total of 30 graduate students nation-wide were selected based on academic excellence, faculty recommendations, and a commitment to the field of aging; Virginia Tech received more awards than any other university.



**Libbey Bowen** is a Ph.D. candidate in sociology and assists at Adult Day Services at Virginia Tech. Libbey's research interests include inequality in health care with an emphasis on race and ethnicity.

**Nancy Brossoie** is a Ph.D. candidate in human development, and has worked with nonprofit and formal service agencies. Nancy is interested in community supports of aging parents caring for adult children with developmental disabilities or mental illness. Nancy credits the certificate program for being flexible and interdisciplinary.



**Erica Husser** completes her Master's degree this fall and has begun PhD course work. Her research interests include optimal aging, intergenerational relationships and the natural environment. She hopes to bridge these interests by developing opportunities for older adults to connect with the planet and with younger generations.

"Virginia Tech has a long and distinguished history of producing high-quality graduates from its gerontology program," said Betsy M. Sprouse, AARP's senior academic adviser. "The three AARP Scholars selected from Virginia Tech reflect that tradition, and we are confident that they will make significant contributions to the field of aging."

## *Petersen Visiting Scholar in Family Gerontology*

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**Dr. Katherine R. Allen**, Center affiliate and Professor of Family Studies, Department of Human Development, was selected as the 2005-06 Petersen Visiting Scholar in Family Gerontology Award from Oregon State University. The goal of the award is to enhance understanding of the intersection between families and development in later life.

Dr. Allen will spend an academic quarter at Oregon State University's Department of Human Development and Family Sciences. She will focus on two research interests with colleagues there: sibling relationships in mid-life and mother-daughter caregiving relationships. In addition to research, Dr. Allen will meet and work with faculty and graduate students and give lectures and presentations on issues including theory, qualitative research methods, and human sexuality as they all intersect with family gerontology. At Oregon's state gerontology conference in the spring, Dr. Allen will make a presentation on older women and sexuality.



L to R: Center Director Dr. Karen Roberto congratulates Dr. Allen

## *Generations United*

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L to R: Ila Schepisi, ADS, Dr. Shannon Jarrott, & Christine McCartney, CDCLR

The coordinators of intergenerational (IG) programming at Virginia Tech received the Generations United Leadership Award for Outstanding Support of Intergenerational Programs, 2005. Center for Gerontology faculty affiliate **Dr. Shannon E. Jarrott** has been the driving force behind the effort to grow an IG community between Virginia Tech's Adult Day Services (ADS) and the Child Development Center for Learning and Research (CDCLR). The goal of the program is to bring older adults together with young children in order to foster positive relationships. For information about IG programs at Virginia Tech, contact Dr. Jarrott at sjarrott@vt.edu.

## *National Institute of Aging Fellowship*

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**Dr. Megan Dolbin-MacNab** received a National Institute on Aging (NIA) Summer Institute Fellowship that has better prepared her to establish and develop her career. Assistant professor of human development and Center for Gerontology faculty affiliate, this is her second year at Virginia Tech. From the week-long summer institute, Dr. Dolbin-MacNab said the grant reviewing process was demystified; she gained a clearer sense of funding mechanisms, and met Program Officers responsible for managing NIA grants. In addition to learning about the grant writing process, Dr. Dolbin-MacNab was exposed to the most recent aging research that cuts across broad domains, and was able to network with other new academics with similar research interests. Dr. Dolbin-MacNab's research focuses on the well-being of grandparents raising grandchildren and issues of mental health and aging.



## *American Society on Aging*

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Congratulations to Housing and Design PhD student **Glenda Gilmore Andes** and her advisor, **Dr. Julia O. Beamish**, Center for Gerontology faculty affiliate and professor of Apparel, Housing & Resource Management in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. Andes won the American Society on Aging 2005 Graduate Student Research Award for her doctoral dissertation evaluating kitchens and bathrooms in homes marketed for retirees.

In the first study of its kind, Andes found that builders are improving home designs for retirees in many ways, but she also discovered that they are failing older consumers in crucial areas of safety and ease of use. Were she to give letter grades, she reported, the best bathrooms of homes in her study would earn but a D. The better kitchens would get only a grade of C.

## *State & University Awards*

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**Brianne Winston**, human development doctoral student who is also pursuing the Graduate Certificate in Gerontology, received two prestigious awards in 2005. She was named the Virginia Association on Aging's Outstanding Master's Student for her scholarly accomplishments and service; she also won the William Preston Society's Gold Watch Award. Preston Society members, who are past presidents and board of visitors of Virginia Tech, chose Brianne's thesis as the best social sciences research that represented an original idea with the most potential to benefit all people. Her work investigated the influence of mild cognitive impairment on marital relationships.

## *New Student Research Award*

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Center Faculty Affiliate and Professor of Human Development, **Dr. Jay A. Mancini** and his wife **Deborah Mancini**, support a newly established research award for doctoral students in Human Development. The award is in honor of his parents, Mrs. Vetra R. Mancini (1919-2004) and Mr. Jay A. Mancini (1916-1962).

Dr. Mancini's mother and father were both high school graduates. His mother worked in administration at Widener University for 45 years, and his father was a World War II veteran (Bronze Star Medal recipient for heroism), who then owned and operated a barber shop after the war.



Vetra R. Mancini and Jay A. Mancini Research Award  
Recipient (L to R): Christina Gigliotti with  
Dr. Jay A. Mancini and Ms. Deborah Mancini

## **Dr. de Vries Gives Keynote Address at Center for Gerontology Certificate & Awards Celebration**

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**Dr. Brian de Vries**, Ph.D., Professor of Gerontology, San Francisco State University, was the keynote speaker at the 9th annual Gerontology Graduate Certificate & Awards Recognition Ceremony in the spring.

Dr. deVries spoke about the limited friendship language available to us in North American culture. He advocates an expanded language that can help describe the nature of friendship in order to enhance the respect and quality of inclusion for friends in the bereavement process.

L to R: Center Director Dr. Roberto, Keynote Speaker Dr. deVries, and Center Associate Director Dr. Blieszner

## **Center for Gerontology Student Awards 2005**

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### **Peggy Lavery Gerontology Awards**

*Nancy E. Brossoie*  
PhD Candidate, Human Development

*Dana B. Stauffer*  
MS/PhD Student, Human Development

### **S. J. Ritchey Scholarships**

*Mary Elizabeth (Libbey) Bowen*  
PhD Candidate, Sociology

*Erica K. Husser*  
PhD Student, Human Development

*Brianne L. Winston*  
PhD Student, Human Development

## **Center for Gerontology Hosts Visiting Scholar from Brazil**

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L to R: Dr. Lisa J. Barham speaks with graduate student Peggy Wimmer after the Center's Fall Research Forum

**Dr. Lisa J. Barham**, professor of psychology at the Federal University of São Carlos, Brazil, is spending her year-long sabbatical at the Center for Gerontology. Dr. Barham specializes in research and outreach involving elder care providers.

Born in New Zealand and raised in Canada, Dr. Barham received her Ph.D. in Applied Social and Developmental Psychology from the University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada. She learned to speak Portuguese while completing her doctoral work and secured a position at the Federal University of São Carlos.

*(Story continued, next page)*

*Cont. from Pg. 4*

As part of the Center for Gerontology fall research forum, Dr. Barham presented *Investigating Invisible Work: Putting Family Eldercare Providers on the Map*. Dr. Barham is part of a research team composed of two faculties from psychology, and one each from social work, occupational therapy, and nursing. Their research goals include the development and evaluation of educational modules for family elder care providers; the investigation of family relationship issues between caregivers and care recipients; and the development of research instruments.

Dr. Barham has joined the Center for Gerontology's research team investigating mild cognitive impairment and the needs of their care partners. She said she is learning more about qualitative research methods and how to work as part of a larger team of investigators. Dr. Barham is with us at the center until early spring, so please stop by and introduce yourself.

## ***Center for Gerontology Staff***

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**Karen A. Roberto**, Ph.D., Professor & Director

**Rosemary Blieszner**, Ph.D., Alumni Distinguished Professor & Associate Director

**Carlene Arthur**, Administrative Assistant

Research Associate: **Karen Wilcox**, Ph.D.

Graduate Assistants: **Erica Husser** and **Brianne Winston**

Undergraduate Assistants: **Kelly Roller**, **Ashley Renfrow**, and **Jayme Bowling**

## ***Contact Us***

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## ***Contributing to the Center for Gerontology does make a difference!***

Please make a contribution now to help support ongoing gerontology programs such as student travel, special publications, scholarships, and professional development activities. Visit [www.givingto.vt.edu](http://www.givingto.vt.edu) or the Center for Gerontology's website at [www.gerontology.vt.edu](http://www.gerontology.vt.edu).

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