

Discovery - Learning - Engagement

*Spring 2014 Newsletter*

*From the Director . . .*

Each May, the nation celebrates Older Americans Month to recognize older adults for their contributions and provide them with information to help them stay healthy and active. Highlighted in this issue of our newsletter are examples of the many ways in which the work of the faculty and advisory board affiliated with the Center for Gerontology contribute to the aging network, both locally and globally, and address a vast array of issues that influence the health and quality of life of all older adults in Virginia and beyond.

~ Karen

*Dr. Brossoie Appointed Chair of Virginia's southwest region AAAG*

In January, Dr. Nancy Brossoie, Senior Research Associate and Project Director at the Center for Gerontology, began serving as chair of the Alcohol and Aging Awareness Group (AAAG) for Virginia's southwest region (New River Valley, Roanoke Valley, Lynchburg, Martinsville). Dr. Brossoie's involvement with this educational group includes raising awareness about alcohol misuse in late life, especially the dangers of mixing medications with alcohol. She joins with other members of AAAG to host activities that provide educational programs to lawmakers, researchers, community providers, and citizens as well as attending health fairs around the region. In 2013, Dr. Brossoie developed a training program specifically for police officers through AAAG, which is being utilized across the Commonwealth.

The increased interest in generating conversations about alcohol misuse is related to the growing number of adults age 65+ in the Commonwealth. Dr. Brossoie noted that "In the last few years, the rate of alcohol



misuse has risen from 3% to 7% in adults aged 65 and older. She pointed out that "Baby boomers are bringing their drinking habits into late life, including binge drinking at rates higher than younger adults. AAAG is attempting to normalize the conversation around drinking to ensure older adults know the risks of alcohol use and adapt safe and healthy drinking habits as they age." Dr. Brossoie shared that among older adults aged 60+ who misuse alcohol, 70% become dependent on alcohol prior to age 60, and 30% develop a dependency on alcohol when they use it as a way to cope with a late life event (e.g., death of a loved one, retirement, physical limitations). Identifying and supporting individuals in the latter group are the targets of AAAG's efforts.

AAAG offers regular SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral, and Treatment) training, an evidence-based approach for working with persons misusing alcohol and other drugs, to healthcare professionals, social workers, and therapists. The training

utilizes motivational interviewing techniques to engage the individual and include him or her in the treatment process. Participating professionals learn to screen for alcohol problems and provide brief interventions and referral to community support services, when needed. Dr. Brossoie is a SBIRT trainer and has helped facilitate trainings; most recently at Lynchburg General Hospital in March.

The AAGE was created in 2007 in response to a Governor's Mandate, HB110, and Code of Virginia §2.2-5510. It is sponsored by Virginia's Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) as an outreach of their Education Department and is a collaboration of state agencies, private businesses, and not-for-profit organizations that service the aging population of Virginia.

For more information visit [www.abc.virginia.gov](http://www.abc.virginia.gov) and [www.alcoholandaging.org](http://www.alcoholandaging.org).

### ***Dr. Roberto Joins Institute for Innovations in Caregiving Advisory Board***

In 2013, nearly 500,000 Virginian caregivers provided approximately 509 million hours of unpaid care to individuals with Alzheimer's disease. Their care is valued at over 6 billion dollars. However, the personal costs to individual caregivers is high, with 44% of caregivers reporting depressive symptoms. Such caregiving statistics have reinforced the need for a new caregiver-centered initiative in Virginia, the Institute of Innovations in Caregiving. The Institute combines best caregiving practices with technology in an effort to preserve and improve the wellness of family caregivers, especially those caring for persons with Alzheimer's disease. Center Director Dr. Karen A. Roberto serves as an inaugural member of the Institute's advisory board.



Dr. Roberto joins other university faculty members and health and aging services professionals from across the Commonwealth with the shared vision of improving the physical and emotional health of family caregivers. She noted that "It is exciting to have the opportunity to join an initiative that has the foresight to consider the needs of caregivers in Virginia and beyond. It's also an honor to work with such an esteemed cadre of gerontology experts and colleagues to develop solutions to caregiver challenges and stressors."



Futures Board member Dr. Richard Lindsay along with Gordon Walker, former CEO of the Jefferson Area Board for Aging, spearheaded this initiative, which is being managed by SeniorNavigator, a non-profit health and aging organization. The Institute's ultimate goal is to improve caregivers' self-care and ability to manage emotional stressors and tough decisions. The first step toward achieving its goal was the formation of the advisory council to foster unique collaborations and partnerships across Virginia. Currently, board members are advising on the creation of a state-of-the-art mobile application to assist caregivers that will involve a competition for student teams from Virginia colleges and universities and the collection of educational tools and resources to support caregivers.

For more information on the Institute for Innovations in Caregiving or to stay up to date with its progress, visit [www.caregivinginnovations.org](http://www.caregivinginnovations.org).

### *Futures Board Spotlight: Susan Williams*



A long-term member of the Center for Gerontology Futures Board, Susan Williams began her first term as chair of the Board in fall 2013. Serving on the Futures Board provides Susan an opportunity to keep her ear to the ground and broaden her horizons. “Being able to connect with those who work in APS, the medical school, Medicaid, elder abuse, caregiving, and other community initiatives keeps me up-to-date with what’s going on in the community and around the state as it relates to older adults.” In addition to keeping in contact with leaders around the state, Susan also emphasizes her admiration for the new research initiatives by students, faculty, and community members. “I’ve always been interested in research and find it very eye-opening and mind-expanding.” Susan explained that research is not in her line of work, but she enjoys being able to learn about new ideas and link research with professional and personal applications.

Throughout her esteemed career, Susan volunteered for a variety of organizations and worked as a teacher, as a member of the historical society, and at the Council of Community Services. During her 13-year stay at the Council of Community Services, Susan worked to create the Information and Resource Center (now known as 2-1-1 Virginia), a call center that connects Virginians with resources and services for help from the Virginia database of health and human services. She helped implement their volunteer program, which she credits as her most creative job. While serving as the assistant executive director, she also became an expert at program evaluations for agencies and organizations in the region.

Susan began working at the Local Office on Aging (LOA) Area Agency on Aging in Roanoke, Virginia in 1988 and currently serves as the organization’s Executive Director. Susan explained, “inequality and unfairness drive me. When I see unfair access to services, unfair practices, and those in need struggling, I become their advocate.” Her advocacy and passion have resulted in Susan fighting tirelessly for Meals-On-Wheels (which has experienced cuts), quality assessment, and improved mental health services in the Roanoke area. In addition, Susan was instrumental in establishing the Women’s Center at Hollins University and has worked tirelessly with the Salvation Army’s Domestic Violence program and services since its beginning.

Susan graduated from Randolph Macon Women’s College in 1966 with a bachelor’s degree in Philosophy, and from Virginia Tech in 1978 with a Master of Science in Education. She lives with her husband of 48 years in the Roanoke area. Her two grown sons and her five grandchildren live in the Virginia-Washington DC area. In her spare time, Susan is a busy grandmother who is heavily involved in her church, takes part in exercise and weight lifting classes, and loves to broaden more horizons by travelling to destinations around the world with her husband.

### *Spring Research Forum: Developing International Research Partners*

The Center’s Spring Research Forum highlighted the international collaboration between Center faculty affiliates Toni Calasanti and Neal King (Sociology), and the Finnish University of Tampere’s Hannah Ojala

(Gender Studies) and Ilka Pietilä (Public Health). The forum entitled, *Developing International Research Partners: The Aging Men and Health Collaboration*, featured a discussion of their collaborative research process, findings from their qualitative studies, cultural distinctions in aging and masculinity, and the challenges to international collaboration.

Using stories and analysis of middle aged men’s language, their research revealed the men’s anti-aging attitudes, conceptions of aging, and management of aging. The team discovered that men held both positive and negative attitudes towards aging and discussed specific ways they thought getting older affected them. They tended to stress the importance of keeping up their functional abilities as they aged, and tended to see women as wanting to keep up appearances and stay beautiful. Men managed their aging by taking part in exercise, adopting healthy eating habits, and using vitamins to keep up the image of vitality. These middle-aged men justified their activities to extend their functional abilities as they aged because it secured their place in the workforce. Men also stressed the importance of prevention and control over aging from a functional abilities outlook, dismissing women’s cosmetic attempts to keep looking beautiful into later life. As they look to the future, the research team discussed seeking grant funding to help support the development of future publications and the collection of additional interviews to expand on their collaborative research agenda.

Working in different continents presents a variety of logistical challenges, so the Finnish scholars took advantage of their time in Blacksburg to work on two additional papers with Drs. Calasanti and King. In addition, Dr. Ojala provided a guest lecture for undergraduate women’s and gender studies classes discussing gender and aging issues, and both she and Dr. Pietilä presented guidelines to the Sociology Department’s graduate qualitative methods course on the process of doing critical discourse analysis. Dr. Pietilä expressed his gratitude for the partnership with Virginia Tech, “It was a pleasure to be here again. We enjoyed meeting with different faculty, the opportunity to teach American students, and interacting with students on different levels.”



Hanna Ojala, PhD



Ilkka Pietilä, PhD



Toni Calasanti, PhD



Neal King, PhD

### ***Dr. Blieszner Commemorates International Year of the Family at Symposium in Germany***

In February, Associate Director of the Center Dr. Rosemary Blieszner provided a keynote address at the International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) International Symposium. Hosted in Fulda, Germany, the symposium was entitled *Solidarity between Young and Elderly Citizens – Creating and Living a Joint Future: Contributions of Older Persons* and highlighted innovative community approaches to supporting older adults and their families around the world. Over 100 experts from 23 countries working in the different fields of home economics in higher education, in middle schools and high schools, in public services, and as freelancers in business or industry attended the conference.

Dr. Blieszner's keynote speech addressed socio-economic and demographic changes and how they have an impact on families in society. Her address entitled, *Demographic Change: Effects on Families and Society*, used international demographic data to illustrate the trends in and impact of individual longevity, decreased fertility, and population aging. She discussed the increasing heterogeneity of family forms and how changing family structures have the potential of benefiting and challenging all family members. While a diversity of family forms demonstrates the potential for intergenerational solidarity and collaboration among multiple generations, Dr. Blieszner also discussed the challenges for individuals as they struggle to meet the requirements of all family members. Dr. Blieszner concluded her keynote by discussing the need for researchers and policy-makers to recognize and appreciate diverse family forms, develop evidence-based services and interventions, and construct policies that provide resources so families can succeed in meeting all the intergenerational needs. Dr. Blieszner reported that these home economics leaders were keenly interested in family and aging issues. One of the questions they raised after her presentation was how to incorporate a stronger focus on gerontology into their curricula. Dr. Blieszner is now preparing a summary of her keynote address that will be published by IFHE.



Dr. Julia Hahmann, University of Vechta, Germany, and Dr. Blieszner

Dr. Blieszner reflected on her experience in Germany. “It was very interesting to meet home economics educators and community leaders from around the world. In many countries, high school students are required to take part in home economics education that discusses family relationships, financial literacy, housing, and career development.” Dr. Blieszner also discussed differences in work and school environments. “It seems that the vision of home economics education and career opportunities is much broader than in the U.S. For example, in other countries, home economists run a variety of programs and services from community and residential facilities for older adults, provide career training for developmentally challenged youth, and prepare high school teachers at colleges and universities.

### *Center for Gerontology 18th Annual Awards and Recognition Celebration*

On April, 9, 2014 the Center for Gerontology held its 18th Annual Awards and Recognition Celebration to acknowledge student and faculty accomplishments. The event included opening remarks from Interim Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, Joan B. Hirt, who lauded the Center's research achievements, community engagement, and the involvement of the Center's advisory group, The Futures Board. Vice President for Outreach and International Affairs, Guru Ghosh, brought greetings from the University administration and commended the Center for its high-quality research and dedication to older adult issues.



Karen A. Roberto, Norah Keating, & Rosemary Blieszner (L-R)

Dr. Norah Keating, Professor of Human Ecology at the University of Alberta, presented the keynote address. Dr. Keating's research focuses on rural aging, the phenomena of age-friendly communities, and the intersections of rural people and places across the adult life course. Her talk entitled, *Families of Older Persons: Who Cares?*, provided a tour of her global work and discussed the social and political discourses about families and aging in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, and North America. Today, Dr. Keating suggested, several societies have a new-found focus on families, advocating that society should care about families. The other discourse included

the common global perception that people in countries like the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States do not care about families. Dr. Keating challenged these two discourses by looking at how countries around the world conceptualize family membership, and support family duties and roles. Moreover, Dr. Keating encouraged a global research agenda to increase community capacity and improve families' well-being, community livability, and caregiver capacities.

During her visit to Virginia Tech, Dr. Keating met with faculty at the Center as well as faculty affiliates and graduate students. Dr. Keating expressed her gratitude for her time with students and faculty, and as the keynote speaker for the Spring Celebration, "I have been so happy to visit Virginia Tech because it feels like I am coming home, not because I am from this area, but because of the quality of the people and quality of research that takes place at the Center for Gerontology. It has been a great treat to talk with graduate students and faculty about their research, and I was honored to speak at this year's celebration."



Emma Potter, HD graduate student, Katherine Allen, HD faculty & Norah Keating (L-R)

Dr. Keating is a fellow of both the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences and the Gerontological Society of American. She currently serves as the Director for the Global Social Initiative on Ageing of the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG). Dr. Keating's visit was co-sponsored by the Women and Leadership in Philanthropy Endowed Lecture Fund.

### *2014 Graduate Certificate Awards*

Administered by the Center for Gerontology, the Graduate Certificate in Gerontology is awarded by the Graduate School to Commonwealth Campus students and to masters and doctoral students who complete a set of gerontology courses and research in conjunction with their degree requirements. Students who have completed the Certificate intend to follow career paths dedicated to improving the quality of life for older adults through teaching, research, or professional practice. This year, three students completed the requirements for the Certificate.



**Emma Potter**, doctoral student, Human Development (Family Studies)

**Raven Weaver**, master's candidate, Human Development (Adult Development and Aging)

**L. Nicole White**, Commonwealth Campus (L-R)

### *2014 Center for Gerontology Student Scholarships and Awards*

The Center offered several competitive scholarships and awards totaling \$7,000 to graduate students studying gerontology at Virginia Tech.

## AARP Memorial Fund Scholarship

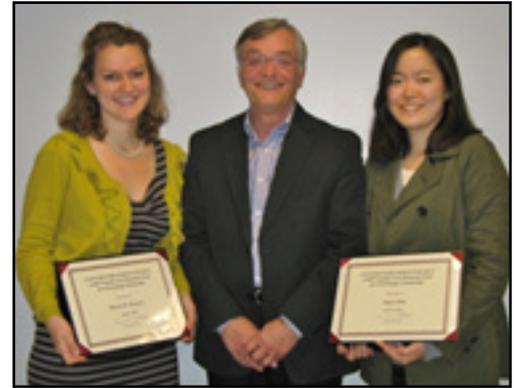
**Raven Weaver**, master's candidate, Human Development,  
(Adult Development and Aging)

**Bill Kallio**, AARP Virginia Director

**Sujee Kim**, doctoral student, Human Development

(Adult Development and Aging)

(L-R)



## Center for Gerontology Future's Board Scholarship



**Futures Board** members with **Yujun Liu**,  
doctoral student, Human Development  
(Adult Development and Aging)

## S. J. Ritchey Endowed Scholarship

**Jennifer B. Lefurgy**, doctoral candidate, Planning, Governance,  
and Globalization

**Dr. S. Jewell Ritchey**

**Dr. Elizabeth Ritchey**

**Anne Brown**, doctoral student, Biochemistry

(L-R)



The Center also awarded the Vetra R. Mancini & Jay A. Mancini Research Prize, established by Dr. Jay Mancini, Emeritus Professor of Human Development and former Center Faculty Affiliate, together with his wife Deborah, in memory of Dr. Mancini's late parents. The award recognizes outstanding research and theory contributions of a graduate student in the Department of Human Development.

## Vetra R. Mancini & Jay A. Mancini Research Prize,



**Dr. Anisa Zvonkovic**, Chair, Department of Human Development  
**Andrea Swenson**, PhD Candidate, Human Development  
(Family Studies)  
**Dr. Karen A. Roberto**, Center Director  
(L-R)

### *Faculty Affiliate Recognitions*

The Center's 67 faculty affiliates represent the Center, university administration, 7 colleges, 23 academic departments, and 4 research institutes within Virginia Tech. We are very proud of the work and research that faculty affiliates continue to do at Virginia Tech and around the world. The following list highlights some of their important awards and accomplishments.

**Ms. Carlene Arthur**, Center for Gerontology

*Operations Coordinator, Center for Gerontology and ISCE*

**Dr. Esther K. Bauer**, Foreign Languages and Literatures

*Certificate in Teaching Excellence, CLAHS*

**Drs. Julia Beamish, Kathleen Parrott, and JoAnn Emmel**, Apparel, Housing, and Resource Management

*Research, Outreach, and Teaching Achievement Awards, Housing Research and Education Association*  
(See story below)

**Dr. Rosemary Blieszner**, Human Development and Center for Gerontology

*President, Gerontological Society of America*

*Keynote Address, IFHE Leadership Conference (Germany)*

*Wonder Woman Award, Virginia Tech Women's Center*

**Dr. Douglas A. Bowman**, Computer Science Director, Center for Human Computer Interaction

*2014 Technical Achievement Award in Visual Reality, Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers*

**Dr. Nancy Brossoie**, Center for Gerontology

*Chair, Virginia Alcohol and Aging Awareness Group (Southwest Virginia Chapter)*

**Dr. Rosemary Goss**, Apparel, Housing, and Resource Management

*2013 Institute of Real Estate Management Award*

**Dr. Matthew F. Komelski**, Human Development

*Favorite Faculty Award, Virginia Tech*

**Dr. Michael Madigan**, Engineering Science and Mechanics

*Kevin P. Granata Faculty Fellow, College of Engineering*

**Dr. Fred P. Piercy**, Human Development

*Kathleen Briggs Outstanding Mentor Award, NCFR*

**Dr. Karen A. Roberto**, Center for Gerontology

*Keynote Address, IAGG World Congress of Gerontology (South Korea)*

*Wonder Woman Award, Virginia Tech Women's Center*

**Dr. Jyoti (Tina) Savla**, Human Development

*Fellow, Gerontological Society of America*

**Dr. Doris Zallen**, Science and Technology in Society

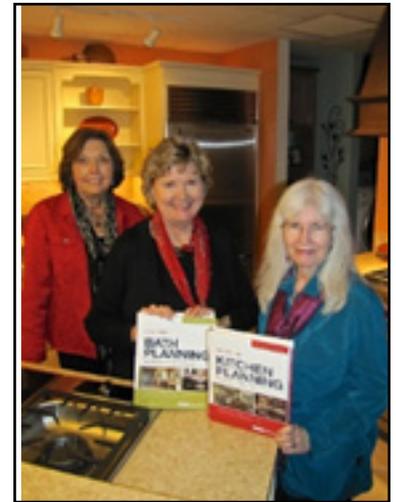
*Inaugural Editorial Board, Chronicle of Rare Diseases*

## *Faculty Affiliates Receive Housing Impact Award*

Two Center affiliate faculty, Drs. Julia Beamish and JoAnn Emmel, along with Dr. Kathleen Parrott, were honored with the Housing Impact Award at the November, 2013 Housing Education and Research Association Conference for their leadership of the Virginia Tech Center for Real Life Design and two recent books on kitchen and bath design. Their books, *Kitchen Planning: Codes, Standards, and Guidelines* and *Bath Planning: Codes, Standards, and Guidelines*, provide best practices for those working in the kitchen and bath design fields.

The books detail the histories and research of kitchens and baths, provide guidelines for planning at any step in the design or construction of these important rooms, and feature considerations related to accessibility and universal design. Published by the National Kitchen and Bath Association, the books are a leading source of information and education for professionals in kitchen and bath fields. Dr. Beamish discussed the books' applications in the housing industry but also their emphases on "designing kitchens and baths that consider [the needs of] all persons who use these spaces, from children to older adults."

The Housing Impact Award recognizes faculty who apply their teaching, research, and outreach initiatives to make significant contributions to the field of housing. Dr. Beamish reflected, "It was an honor to receive this award, which recognizes our comprehensive contributions in teaching, research, and real-world application to the field of kitchen and bath design. These books represent an achievement that is 15 years in the making, and we are so pleased to see our contributions improve the function of the critical areas of the home and in turn, improve others' quality of life."



Drs. Emmel, Beamish, and Parrott  
(L-R)

## *Thanks for Making a Difference!*

Your donation to the Center for Gerontology supports a variety of activities including student travel to professional meetings, special publications, scholarships, and professional development activities. This year, Raven Weaver, Graduate Certificate in Gerontology and doctoral student in Human Development, will receive the AARP Memorial Fund Scholarship. Funds for this program came from the generous contributions of AARP Virginia and others in honor of the 32 students and faculty lost at Virginia Tech on April 16, 2007. With over 35 million members, AARP is the leading nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization for people age 50 and over in the United States.

In expressing her gratitude for the scholarship, Raven noted the importance of the award in supporting her academic pursuits. "I am so grateful to be a recipient of the AARP Virginia Tech Memorial Scholarship. The scholarship will help support my professional development, including attending the annual meeting of the Gerontological Society of America this fall. Thank you, AARP Virginia!"

Donations can be mailed directly to the Center, or made on-line:

<http://www.givingto.vt.edu>

## *Center for Gerontology Staff*

Karen A. Roberto, Ph.D., Professor & Director  
Rosemary Blieszner, Ph.D., Alumni Distinguished Professor & Associate Director  
Tina Savla, Ph.D., Associate Professor & Research Methodologist  
Nancy Brossoie, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate  
Megan Stuart, M.P.H., Project Manager  
Carlene Arthur, B.S., Administrative Assistant  
Michelle Butner, M.S., Sujee Kim, M.S., Yujun Liu, M.S.W., Emma Potter, M.S., and  
Raven Weaver, B.A., Graduate Research Assistants

Contact Us  
237 Wallace Hall  
Center for Gerontology (0426)  
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061  
Phone: (540) 231-7657 Fax: (540) 231-7157  
[www.gerontology.vt.edu](http://www.gerontology.vt.edu)  
gero@vt.edu



The Virginia Tech Center for Gerontology is a Collaborating Centre and member of the Global Ageing Research Network in the International Association for Gerontology and Geriatrics.

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