Nancy Brossoie Secures SAMHSA Funding for Substance Abuse Education

Dr. Nancy Brossoie, Senior Research Associate at the Center, has had a longstanding interest in understanding substance misuse among older adults. Her work recently culminated in a three-year Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant for $945,000, the largest award to a Center PI in recent years. The grant addresses alcohol and drug use across the lifespan, targeting at-risk populations. Dr. Brossoie and her Tech team members, Laura Farmer, Laura Welfare, and Gerard Lawson (Counselor Education), and Fred Piercy (Human Development), will work with faculty from Radford University and Jefferson College of Health Sciences nursing programs and the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine residency program to embed the best practice - Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) – into each program’s curriculum.

“The SBIRT approach has been successfully utilized by physicians since the 1990s, but it is only in recent years that other providers such as social workers, nurses, and counselors have been recognized as capable of conducting brief interventions with success. By introducing the SBIRT approach into a client-provider relationship, the conversation about alcohol and drug use becomes normalized and more easily addressed,” Brossoie explained.

Over the next three years the team will be responsible for adapting the core SAMHSA-provided SBIRT curriculum into counselor education, nursing, and medical school classrooms and field practices. Dr. Lawson is leading the curriculum development and Dr. Piercy is the content specialist. Both receive guidance from a regional advisory board. Dr. Brossoie is serving as both the PI and the evaluator. She noted, “Holding both roles uniquely positions me to see problems that may arise and consult with and redirect team efforts as the project moves forward.”

Initial training for faculty in the counselor education program at Virginia Tech began this fall. In spring, the didactic portion of the curriculum will be implemented into that program as well as Radford’s nursing program. By summer, the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine residency program will have introduced the training into some of its specialty rotations. “Our goal is to reach as many different health professionals as possible,” Brossoie explained.

For more information, go to: [http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2015/11/111915-clahs-substancemisusetreatment.html](http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2015/11/111915-clahs-substancemisusetreatment.html) and listen as Dr. Brossoie discusses her history and vision of the grant:
Pamela Teaster Assumes New Role as the Center’s Associate Director

Starting in August, Dr. Pamela B. Teaster assumed the role of Associate Director for the Center for Gerontology. As Associate Director, Dr. Teaster is responsible for overseeing the Graduate Certificate in Gerontology program. Dr. Teaster expressed her excitement over her new position with the Center,

I am honored to serve as the Associate Director for the Center for Gerontology, a position held so ably by Rosemary Blieszner. I have a long history with the Center having had Rosemary as a professor, working with two Center Directors (William J. McAuley and Karen A. Roberto), and was myself, a recipient of the Graduate Certificate in Gerontology. My experiences at the Center resulted in lifelong friendships, opened the doors to all my career opportunities, and drew me to return after 12 years. I am humbled to join a cadre of peerless and dedicated scholars who do great things every day.

The Center expresses its gratitude to Dr. Blieszner for her 32 years of service as the Center’s Associate Director. Dr. Roberto noted, “The Center, the Graduate Certificate program, and each of us have benefited greatly from her guidance and wisdom over the years.”

Dr. Blieszner reflected on her role as Associate Director,

Serving as Associate Director of the Center from 1983 to 2015 was a great honor and privilege. In that role, my major responsibilities were establishing and managing the Graduate Certificate in Gerontology; planning the annual Recognition Ceremony for Graduate Certificate recipients, scholarship winners, and faculty affiliates; and assisting two Directors with center operations, including editing the newsletter, preparing periodic reports, coordinating outreach programs, and “other duties as assigned.”

Over all the years and all the activities, the most gratifying part was forming relationships with graduate students. I had the pleasure of responding to student inquiries about the Graduate Certificate and getting to know students who earned the Certificate from many different majors.

Both Dr. Blieszner and Dr. Teaster strive to continue to engage students from across the university to the Center’s certificate program. Dr. Blieszner reflected on the role of mentorship,

Mentoring students as they moved through the Certificate and their degree programs and watching them engage in a wide range of professional development activities, receive important recognitions, and assume leadership responsibilities was very rewarding. Now I am delighted to congratulate Dr. Teaster as she assumes the Associate Director position.

Dr. Blieszner is now serving in a new position as Assistant Vice Provost for Enrollment and Degree Management in addition to her service as Associate Dean of the Graduate School. She remains actively engaged with the Center, however, serving as the Center’s first Senior Fellow.

Fall Research Forum Highlighted Work of Virginia Tech Alumna

The Center was pleased to have Dr. Judith Warren present at the fall research forum. Her presentation entitled, Texas Grow! Eat! Go!, detailed a five-year grant project focusing on decreasing childhood
obesity among 3rd grade students throughout the state of Texas. A gerontologist by training, Dr. Warren serves as Professor and Special Initiatives Coordinator for the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. In this role, she became involved with a state-wide needs assessment examining the culture of health in Texas. “What we kept finding was that prevention of heart disease, adult obesity, and Type II diabetes was the most common obstacle to older adults aging well.” With this in mind, Dr. Warren explained, “We needed to get upstream on health issues and prevent the downstream costs of chronic disease.”

In 2011, Dr. Warren’s team secured a five-million dollar grant from USDA to address childhood obesity. Their sample included 28 schools from across the state of Texas (50% urban, 25% suburban, 25% rural), with over 1500 children. Using a social-ecological approach, the purpose of the study was to introduce children to different health and nutrition programs (growing, vegetable tasting and recipes, walking program) that incorporated experiential lessons in science, language arts, and math and also reached into the home to engage parents with cooking, physical activity, and using vegetables in family meals.

“We were able to bring together researchers and practitioners from nutrition, horticulture, family development, public health, and sociology.” Dr. Warren explained. Overall, the program saw improvements in eating habits and physical activity levels, and decreased consumption of sugar-sweet drinks in students who engaged in both the Walk Across Texas and Junior Master Gardener programs. The project received the 2015 National Extension Diversity Award from The Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA, for its efforts in working with minority families.

**Futures Board Spotlight: Mr. Frank Peck**

Frank Peck has dedicated his career to ensuring better care and services for older adults in Virginia. At the age of 22, Mr. Peck was thrust into his first in a long host of management-level positions with nursing homes and assisted living facilities (ALFs). “Right out of college I became the administrator of a new 120-bed nursing home outside of Richmond and was blessed to have a great group of people who worked with me and supported me,” Peck explained. He was then recruited to open a new Roanoke Valley nursing home where he worked for Horace Fralin. “Mr. Fralin,” Peck notes, “had a huge impact on me, both professionally and personally. Through working for him, I grew to admire and respect his level of commitment to the Virginia Tech and Roanoke Valley communities.”

Ready for a change of focus, Mr. Peck served from 1984 to 1996 as the Director of Development with Medical Facilities of America and affiliated companies, where he installed marketing and service initiatives for some of the first assisted living facilities (ALFs) in Virginia and helped the organization adapt to changing times. In 1996, Mr. Peck branched out on his own to develop the first free standing ALF in the Roanoke Valley and started his own consulting firm, Premier Consulting Services, Inc. In a consulting role, he provides strategic planning recommendations for medical facilities, assists with securing certificates of need, and shares knowledge about markets, nursing home requirements, and Medicaid and Medicare changes.

For Mr. Peck, serving on the Futures Board fuels his passion for research, his admiration for the university, and commitment to older adults. “In 2004, I was made aware of the board and felt drawn to
serving with like-minded members of the community,” Mr. Peck explained, “[I] saw the board as a great way to stay up-to-date on initiatives, research, and issues affecting older adults from across the Commonwealth.” The board serves as not only a networking opportunity, but as a way to enable scholarship and witness the pursuit of an idea. “I thoroughly enjoy reviewing applications for scholarships and seeing research germinate at Virginia Tech. It shows that young adults are committed to serving older adults, and that is truly satisfying.”

In addition to serving on the Futures Board, Mr. Peck has also served as a member of the state health planning board, a gubernatorial-appointed position, under two governors. A native of Pennsylvania, Mr. Peck is a graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University. Currently, Mr. Peck continues working with his wife, Pam, as business partners in Roanoke.

**Best Wishes to Center Faculty Affiliate, Dr. Shannon Jarrott**

This fall, Dr. Shannon Jarrott, a long-time affiliate of the Center, accepted a position as a Professor in the College of Social Work at Ohio State University. In her new position, Dr. Jarrott is engaged in teaching at the graduate level and is involved in a community-based participatory research project. Jarrott explained, “In November I started my research with the Champion Intergenerational Center in Columbus where I am involved in a collaborative effort with the Columbus Early Learning Center and the National Church Residences Adult Day Services. I’m looking forward to the research opportunities connected to this site, including arts programming to support youth cultural identity development and interventions to address food insecurity of older adult community residents and their households.” Dr. Jarrott has been a consultant on this project since its initial exploration.

Dr. Jarrott has remained engaged with several research projects at Virginia Tech. “This year marks the last year of the USDA Children Youth Family at Risk grant, which helped implement the Project TRIP (Transforming Relationships through Intergenerational Programs). I am working with doctoral students from both Virginia Tech and OSU to support the three TRIP sites as we work to provide best practices for intergenerational, culturally appropriate, and person-centered programming,” Jarrott explained.

In reflecting on her new position and home, “Columbus sure isn’t Blacksburg. We miss the mountains and our friends. However, it’s hard to beat the energy of being in a new place.”

**Thank You to Project Coordinator, Megan Stuart**

The Center said goodbye to our Appalachia Community Cancer Network (ACCN) Project Coordinator, Megan Stuart. With the ACCN project coming to a close, Megan accepted a position at the Virginia Tech Research Institute in November. There she is serving as a research coordinator in the Addiction Recovery Research Center. We are happy that Megan remains part of the Virginia Tech family and we wish her the best in her new endeavor.

Thank you Megan and best of luck!
GSA Student Presentations, Honors, and Awards

The Center was pleased to have numerous graduate students represent Virginia Tech at this year’s Gerontological Society of America (GSA) annual meeting held in November in Orlando. Congratulations to everyone their presentations and involvement at GSA!

**Aaron Olgetree** & Shannon Jarrott. A Delphi Review of an Adult Day Services Integrated Participant Assessment System (Poster)

**Aaron Olgetree** & Rosemary Blieszner. Extending Terror Management Theory to Increase Understanding of Older Adults’ Views of Death (Poster)

Aaron Olgetree & Rosemary Blieszner

**Michelle Kozimor** (Butner). Caregiving Stress, Coping Strategies and Health Outcomes: Results from the REACH II Study (Poster)

Michelle Kozimor

Laura P. Sands, **Yimeng Xie, Miao Yuan**, & Yili Hong. Change in Reports of Unmet Need for Help with ADL or Mobility Disabilities across Three Years (Paper)

Laura P. Sands, Yimeng Xie, Miao Yuan, & Yili Hong


Megan Dolbin-MacNab, Shannon Jarrett, Lyn Moore, Kendra O’Hora, & Colleagues

Pam Teaster & **Raven Weaver**. Findings, Implications, and Next Steps in the Study of the Worldwide Face of Elder Abuse (Symposium)

Pam Teaster & Raven Weaver

Tina Savla, **Sujee Kim, Yujun Liu, Michelle Kozimor** (Butner), Karen A. Roberto, Nancy Brossoie, & Rosemary Blieszner. When More is Not Always Better: Management Strategies for MCI Can Reduce Rewards of Caregiving (Symposium)

Tina Savla, Sujee Kim, Yujun Liu, Michelle Kozimor

**Raven Weaver**, Nancy Brossoie, **Emma Potter**, Tina Savla, & Karen A. Roberto. Service Use and Family Caregiving of Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) (Symposium)

Raven Weaver, Nancy Brossoie, Emma Potter

Shannon Jarrott, **Aaron Olgetree**, Ila Schepisi, & **Yujun Liu**. Ongoing Data Collection Yields Results: Findings from a Small Town Adult Day Services Program (Poster)

Shannon Jarrott, Aaron Olgetree, Ila Schepisi, & Yujun Liu

**Sujee Kim**, Rosemary Blieszner, & Karen A. Roberto. Effects of Family Discrepancy in Perceptions of Mild Cognitive Impairment on Care Partner Well-being (Poster)

Sujee Kim
Xiaofu Ma, Yujun Liu, Karen A. Roberto, & Jeffrey Reed. Using Wireless Sensing Technology for Medication Management by Older Adults (Poster).

Xiaolu Dou & Yujun Liu. Elderly Chinese Return Migration: Motivations, Patterns, and Influences (Poster)

Yujun Liu, Yimeng Xie, Nancy Brossoie, & Karen A. Roberto. Alcohol Consumption and Symptoms of Depression among Older Adults in China (Poster). Based on this research, Yujun was a finalist for GSA’s Social Research, Policy, and Practice section Outstanding Student Poster Award.

Kendra O’Hora receives Florence Gray-Soltys Graduate Student Award

Doctoral student in Human Development and Graduate Certificate in Gerontology recipient, Kendra O’Hora received the 2015 Florence Gray-Soltys Graduate Student Award for Exemplary Research or Practice in the field of Reminiscence and Life Review. This award was presented to Kendra at the 2015 meeting of the International Institute for Reminiscence and Life Review in Orlando, Florida in November.

Raven Weaver Selected as 2015 GIA Fellow

In October, Raven Weaver was one of six graduate students from across the region selected to participate in the annual Grantmakers in Aging (GIA) conference held in Washington, DC. The GIA conference brings together philanthropic organizations and resources, individuals, and groups dedicated to improving the process of aging. “This year,” Raven explained, “the focus of the conference was on reframing aging and age-friendly communities, with an emphasis on rural aging and how we can build on existing programs already in place.”

As a GIA Fellow, Raven presented her dissertation ideas during one of the breakout sessions. “It was a great opportunity to see what projects are getting funding and to receive feedback on my own research.” Raven and Dr. Roberto attended the First-Time Attendees reception together and connected with both new and familiar faces. “It was great to see Bob Blancato (Volunteer President, AARP Virginia), meet with funders, and to hear the Keynote Speaker, Ajen Poo,” said Raven.

Over 200 grantors and grantees from across the United States attended the conference. Raven reflected, “I am honored to have represented the Center – I’ve taken away new lessons in how funders are moving away from the traditional concept of healthcare and ‘successful’ aging and highlighting how person-centered approaches make a big difference.”
Karen Roberto Delivered 2015 Fall Graduate Commencement Address

On December 18th, Center Director and University Distinguished Professor, Karen A. Roberto gave the keynote address at Virginia Tech’s 2015 fall Graduate School commencement ceremony in Cassell Coliseum. Dr. Roberto said she was “deeply honored to have the privilege to speak to attendees.” She joked with the students, saying she was “pretty confident that ‘the perils of aging’ was not on the top ten list of what they wanted to hear about on their momentous occasion!” What she did share were some key life lessons learned from the many older people with whom she has interacted both personally and professionally. Dr. Roberto’s message to the new graduates: listen with an open mind; take action with humility, accountability, and a calm confidence; and do not forget the incredible power of relationships.

The Center Welcomes New Member to Futures Board

The Center extends a warm welcome to James “Jim” Dau, our newest member of the Futures Board. Mr. Dau is the new AARP Virginia State Director. We are happy to have Jim join our advisory board and look forward to working with him for years to come.

Welcome, Jim!

New Graduate Research Assistants Join the Center

Aaron Ogletree is a first-year doctoral student in the Adult Development and Aging program. He received his Master of Science in Human Development from Virginia Tech and his Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Berry College. Aaron is working with Drs. Laura Sands and Rosemary Blieszner to explore the relationships among significant life events, religion/spirituality, and health outcomes. His other research interests include spiritual development across the lifespan, with a particular focus on older adults' experiences with adversity and death. Aaron enjoys traveling, weight lifting, and eating.

Zhe Wang is a first-year graduate student in the Department of Statistics. She holds a Ph.D. degree in Psychology from Virginia Tech specializing in the development of individual differences from childhood to adolescence. At the Center, Zhe works with Drs. Roberto and Savla on several projects, including the nursing home relocation project. She is particularly interested in utilizing a variety of longitudinal data analytic techniques to understand the changes and development in the wellbeing of elders and their families.
Happy 80th Birthday, Social Security!

2015 marked the 80th birthday of the passage of the Social Security Act of 1935, and the Salem Red Sox organization held a Night at the Ballpark event to commemorate the importance of this event. The ballpark hosted an AARP dinner and information session.

The first pitch was thrown by AARP Virginia Volunteer State President, Robert “Bob” Blancato. Dr. Karen A. Roberto, a member of the executive committee for AARP Virginia, also attended the event.

Mr. Blancato and Dr. Roberto ceremoniously cut the birthday cake

Hold the Date

The 20th Annual Graduate Certificate and Awards Recognition Ceremony will be held on April 7th, 2016 from 7-9 pm at Fralin Life Science Institute Auditorium.

Our Keynote Speaker is Margie Lachman, Ph.D., Minnie and Harold L. Fierman Professor of Psychology and Director of the Brandeis University Lifespan Initiative on Healthy Aging.

Your Donation Matters

Contributions to the Center help us continue to fulfill our mission and support the research and professional development of our graduate students as they learn about current and future issues facing the aging population. One of this year’s scholarship recipients, Aaron Ogletree, noted:

I am extremely honored to be the recipient of the AARP Memorial Fund Scholarship. This scholarship helped support my attendance at the annual meeting of the Gerontological Society of America and helped off-set the costs of software that I will use for publication and dissertation development.

Center for Gerontology Staff

Karen A. Roberto, Ph.D., University Distinguished Professor & Director
Pamela B. Teaster, Ph.D., Professor & Associate Director
Tina Savla, Ph.D., Associate Professor & Research Methodologist
Laura P. Sands, Ph.D., Professor
Nancy Brossoie, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate
Rosemary Blieszner, Ph.D., Alumni Distinguished Professor & Senior Fellow
Carlene Arthur, B.S., Operations Coordinator
Emma Potter, M.S., Raven Weaver, M.S., Sujee Kim, M.S., Yimeng Xie, B.S., Miao Yuan, B.S.,
Zhe Wang, PhD, Aaron Ogletree, M.S., Graduate Research Assistants
Contact Us

ISCE (0555)
230 Grove Lane
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
Phone: (540) 231-7657 Fax: (540) 231-7157
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.

“Virginia Tech hires only U.S. citizens and those eligible to work in the U.S.”
Virginia Tech is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer