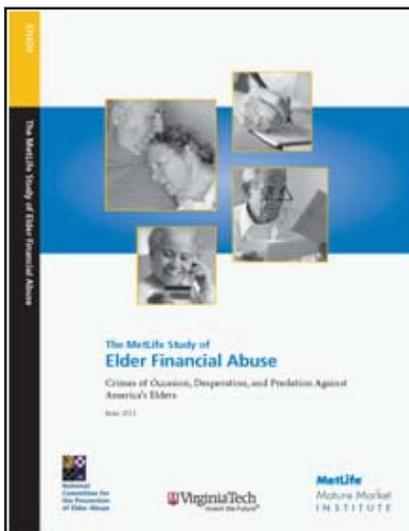


Spring 2011 Newsletter

Older Americans are Losing \$2.9 Billion Annually to Elder Financial Abuse

According to a recently released research report by the MetLife Mature Market Institute, older Americans are losing \$2.9 billion annually to elder financial abuse, a 12% increase from the \$2.6 billion estimated in 2008. Other major findings from the study, which was led by Center Director Dr. Karen Roberto and Dr.

Pamela Teaster at the University of Kentucky, in collaboration with Metlife and the National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (NCPEA), include:



- Women were nearly twice as likely to be victims of elder financial abuse as men.
- Most victims were between the ages of 80 and 89, lived alone, and required some help with either health care or home maintenance.
- Nearly 60% of perpetrators were males, mostly between ages 30 and 59.
- Victims were particularly vulnerable to abuse by family and friends during the holidays.

In the most common scenarios, strangers targeted victims who were out shopping, driving, or banking, and often looked for particular flags of vulnerability such as handicap tags on cars, walking canes, or apparent confusion. Crimes included cons and purse snatchings and associated physical assaults. In cases involving a person known to the victim, trusted helpers including caretakers, handymen, friends, “sweet-hearts,” children, lawyers, and others seized upon opportunities to forge checks, steal credit cards, pilfer bank accounts, transfer assets, and generally decimate elders’ financial safety nets.

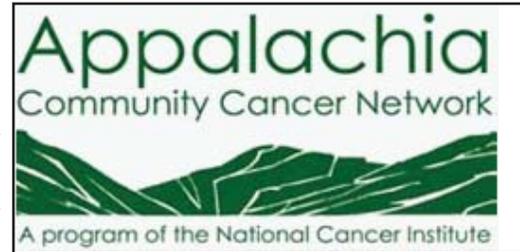
The report, “The MetLife Study of Elder Financial Abuse: Crimes of Occasion, Desperation, and Predation Against America’s Elders,” a consumer guide, “The Essentials: Preventing Elder Abuse,” and tip sheets for older adults and caregivers may be downloaded from www.gerontology.vt.edu/resources.html or www.MatureMarketInstitute.com.

New Project

The Appalachia Community Cancer Network (ACCN) is a National Cancer Institute (NCI)-funded initiative to reduce cancer health disparities in the Appalachian region through community participation in education, research, and training. Based at the University of Kentucky Prevention Research Center, the ACCN serves the Appalachian regions of Kentucky, Maryland, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia,

and West Virginia. Center director Dr. Karen Roberto is a member of the multidisciplinary, multi-state leadership team, serving as the PI for Virginia. Other members of the Virginia team include project coordinators Sharon Dwyer at the Center for Gerontology and Susan Marmagas, Associate Professor in the Master's of Public Health Program at Virginia Tech.

With new funding from NCI (6.5 million; 2011-2016), the ACCN is continuing its mission of addressing the cancer burden in Appalachia. A primary focus of ACCN II is the development, implementation, and evaluation of a faith-based intervention to reduce obesity and increase physical activity. The project also seeks to identify and train newer faculty members and post-doctoral scholars to further cancer research which takes into consideration the unique aspects of Appalachia history and the strong cultural norms of its residents. ACCN staff also work with members of Appalachian communities to implement evidence-based and community-designed cancer prevention and awareness programs. For more information about the ACCN go to <http://www.accnweb.com/>



Spring 2011 Research Forum

Acting Gendered Age: Lessons from Finnish Middle-aged Men

On April 14, 2011 faculty and students attending the Center for Gerontology's Spring Research Forum learned about health perceptions of working-class, middle-aged men living in Finland when the Center



for Gerontology welcomed visiting scholar, Ilkka Pietilä from the Centre for Advanced Study of the Institute for Social Research at University of Tampere to share his research and expertise with the faculty and students. Dr. Pietilä presented his qualitative investigation of male paper mill workers age 40 and older in Finland and how they conceptualized aging in relation to their health. He noted that for the men he interviewed, "Chronological age is reinterpreted in relation to the condition of the body." The men viewed age categories as being flexible, with old age being more associated with a decline in physical health than with

age per se. Regardless of chronological age, many did not understand themselves to be "old" because they were still in good health. In addition, the men expressed a desire to distance themselves from illness and frailty, believing them to be traits not associated with masculinity, and they disapproved of those who spoke about their health issues in public. Dr. Pietilä's research helps to illuminate how individuals negotiate the aging process and how they define "old."

Dr. Pietilä's two-week visit to Virginia Tech, co-hosted by the Center for Gerontology and the Department of Sociology, also marked his first time in the United States. In addition to taking advantage of some of Blacksburg's outdoor activities, including hiking, he spent the majority of his time working with Center affiliate, Dr. Toni Calasanti, examining data they have collected independently related to masculinity, aging, male bodies, and health. They explored common areas of research and possible cultural comparisons. He explained that not all differences are cultural; some differences such as the Finnish universal health care system and labor market conditions, must be recognized as societal differences. Also while at Virginia Tech, Dr. Pietilä spent time discussing his research with groups of undergraduate and graduate students.

Dr. Pietilä is currently seeking funding for research on Finnish men with prostate cancer. He is interested in the decision-making and evaluation processes they use in deciding to accept treatments with known

serious side effects before being fully aware of the prognosis of their cancer. Dr. Pietilä's next trip to the United States will be to Boston in November, where he plans to attend the 2011 meeting of the Gerontological Society of America.

Featured Futures Board Member

Passionate about Older Adults and Virginia Tech



Debbie Petrine truly embodies the entrepreneurial spirit! Her career accomplishments demonstrate a combination of dedication and innovation. At the age of 19, while still an undergraduate student at Virginia Tech, she began her career in gerontology as a secretary/receptionist for a long-term care facility in Blacksburg, a job to help pay her way through college. Twenty years later she left that company, having worked her way up to Chief Operating Officer, a position in which she served for eight years. During her tenure there, the company expanded to 18 skilled facilities. Debbie's other responsibilities and accomplishments while employed there included managing an assisted living company and founding home health and pharmacy companies.

In 1995, Debbie struck out on her own, partnering with a developer of health care facilities to found a skilled care facility operating company. As Debbie explained, "He supplied the capital. I supplied the 'blood, sweat and tears' with an opportunity to earn ownership." Their one facility grew to 14 facilities in five years. Selling that company enabled her to form her current company, Commonwealth Care of Roanoke, Inc. CCR owns and operates 11 facilities in Virginia with a 12th under construction. They care for approximately 1,400 elderly and disabled residents and provide short-term in-facility care for persons needing rehabilitation services. CCR employs approximately 1,450 people.

Accompanying those achievements, Debbie has a number of career highlights:

- Received the 2011 Distinguished Alumnus Award for the Pamplin College of Business
- Chosen by the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services to serve as the first Temporary Manager in the Commonwealth – she was hired to manage troubled facilities and get them reinstated in the Medicaid and Medicare program
- Received the Virginia Health Care Association's James G. Dunton Lifetime Achievement Award for Service to the Elderly
- Appointed by Governor Wilder to serve on the Department of Health Nursing Home Licensure Board
- Appointed by Governor McDonnell to serve as a member of the Governor's Advisory Council on Revenue Estimates
- First woman President of the Virginia Health Care Association

Debbie served on the Center for Gerontology's Futures Board as its first Chairperson in 1993, and returned to the Board in 2007. "Being involved in the Center over the years has given me an opportunity to give back, but it has also provided many benefits for me. It keeps me informed and up to date on many aspects of aging that are outside my direct experience in skilled care and assisted living centers. It has also provided an opportunity for me to get to know the other Board members who bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise in the field of aging. I am passionate about the elderly and Virginia Tech, so it's a perfect match. "

In addition to a busy and successful career, Debbie also has an active family life. Debbie's husband, Jim, whom she met while attending Virginia Tech, is a Civil Engineering graduate and owns his own development company, Enirtep, Inc. at Smith Mountain Lake. Their daughter graduated from Virginia Tech in

2009 and currently is employed in Northern Virginia while also pursuing Virginia Tech's MBA program. Their son is in his third year at the Rosen College of Hospitality management at the University of Central Florida in Orlando.

Note: We just learned that on July 1, 2011 Governor McDonnell named Debbie to the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors. Congratulations Debbie!!

15th Annual Awards and Recognition Ceremony

Looking Back, Looking Forward

On April 27, 2011, more than 40 people attended the 15th Recognition and Awards Celebration honoring graduating students in the Graduate Certificate in Gerontology program and faculty and students receiving awards for their scholarship and dedication to the field of aging. Dr. Ingrid Connidis, Professor of Sociology at the University of Western Ontario, presented the keynote address, *Looking Back, Looking Forward: Learning from our Elders and Aging Research*. She is a distinguished author of the numerous articles and the book, *Family Ties & Aging* (2nd ed., Sage/Pine Forge Press, 2009).

During her presentation, Dr. Connidis shared personal experiences and anecdotes along with contemporary research findings. For example, she noted that individuals who experienced physical setbacks that commonly accompany aging (such as a fall injury) viewed these incidents as inconveniences or inopportune happenstances, as opposed to components of the aging experience. This behavior seeks to keep the individual from being defined as "old."



L-R: Karen Roberto, Katherine Allen, Tina Savla
Neal King, Ingrid Connidis, Toni Calasanti,
and Rosemary Blieszner

Dr. Connidis also discussed concepts of continuity and change as "the benchmarks of living." She discussed the value of reading memoirs and biographies of old adults as a means of understanding the context in which an individual lived. Finally, Dr. Connidis described how major events in history, such as September 11, 2001, can be used as a gauge, measuring time "before" and "after" an event, and how the experiences and outcomes of particular events vary, depending on the individual's age and position in the life course.

The Celebration was held in conjunction with Careers in Aging week sponsored by the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education.

Center Awards and Recognitions

Student Awards

The Graduate Certificate in Gerontology is awarded to Commonwealth Campus students and to master's and doctoral students who complete a set of gerontology courses, a practicum, and research in conjunction

with their degree requirements. Students combine their major studies and a concentration in gerontology with the goal of contributing to improving the quality of life for older adults through teaching, research, and practice in their chosen fields.

2011 Graduate Certificate in Gerontology Recipients



Andrea Mendes, MS student, Human Development, Chih-ling Liou, PhD candidate, Human Development, and Tom Tillar, Vice President, Alumni Relations

AARP Memorial Fund Scholarship (\$500)

Andrea Mendes, MS student, Human Development, Bill Kallio, Virginia State Director AARP, and Lauren Ermann, PhD candidate, Counselor Education



Center for Gerontology Future's Board Scholarship (\$2,000)



Stefan Pasymowski, PhD student, Human Development, receives scholarship award from Cathy Thompson, Futures Board Chair, along with other board members

Peggy Lavery Gerontology Research and Professional Development Award (\$500 each)

Karen Roberto, Director with award winner Rebecca Bivens, PhD student, Human Development



S. J. Ritchey Scholarships (\$3,000 each)



Chih-ling Liou, PhD candidate, Human Development,
Rosemary Blieszner, Associate Director, and Kelly A. Munly,
PhD student, Human Development

Vetra R. Mancini & Jay A. Mancini Research Prize (\$500)

Crystal Duncan Lane, PhD candidate, Human Development, was
awarded the prize by Karen Roberto and Rosemary Blieszner



Undergraduate Research and Education Award (\$500)



Thomas Markley Anderson, International Studies & Spanish, received
the award from Karen Roberto and Rosemary Blieszner

Graduate Certificate Student and Alumni Recognitions

The Center's current and former Certificate students received a variety of special honors and awards.

Bradford Wiles, PhD candidate, Human Development
Research Grant, US Department of Health & Human Services

Phyllis Greenberg, (PhD 1998), St. Cloud State University
2011 Dutch Kastenbaum Award for the Minnesota Outstanding Gerontologist

Raeann K. Hamon (PhD 1988), Messiah College
Fellow, National Council on Family Relations

Erica Husser (PhD 2010), Ripple Effects Communications, Inc.
Plain Language/Clear Communication Award, National Institutes of Health

Brandy R. McCann (PhD 2010), University of Louisiana at Monroe
2011 Outstanding Dissertation in Social Sciences, Business and Humanities,
Virginia Tech Graduate School

Faculty Affiliate Recognitions

Sixty-five faculty, representing university administration, 7 colleges, and 30 academic units across campus, are affiliates of the Center. This year, several of core and affiliate faculty received significant awards and recognitions.

Dr. Katherine R. Allen, Human Development

2011 Outstanding Dissertation Advisor, Virginia Tech Graduate School

Dr. Martha Ann Bell, Psychology

Outstanding Scholar Alumni Award, College of Education, University of Maryland

Dr. Rosemary Blieszner, Human Development and Center for Gerontology

Invited address, 2010 Fall Symposium on Relationships and Resilience in Later Life:

Mechanisms for Optimal Aging, Purdue University Center on Aging and the Life Course

Dr. Toni M. Calasanti, Sociology

E. Gordon Ericksen Award for Outstanding Graduate Faculty, Virginia Tech Department of Sociology Program Chair

Behavioral and Social Sciences Section, Gerontological Society of America

Vice President, Southern Sociological Society

Dr. Karen A. Roberto, Center for Gerontology/Institute for Society, Culture and Environment

Invited address, 2010 Turkey International Symposium on Long Life, Natzilli, Turkey

Dr. Jyoti S. Savla, Human Development and Center for Gerontology

Chair, Education Committee, Division 20 (Adult Development and Aging), American Psychological Association

Dr. Muzaffer Uysal, Hospitality and Tourism Management

2011 Award for Excellence in International Programs, Virginia Tech Pamplin College of Business

Invited keynote address, International Conference on Tourism Sustainability, Mbombela-Nelspruit, South Africa

Futures Board Member Recognitions

The Center also recognized awards received by two members of the Futures Board.

Dr. Richard Lindsay, Professor Emeritus, University of Virginia

2010 Eva Teig Hardy Award for Exceptional Leadership and Service, Senior Connections and the Capital Area Agency on Aging

Ms. Deborah Petrine, Commonwealth Care of Roanoke, Inc.

Wachovia Distinguished Speaker, Virginia Tech Pamplin College of Business

2011 Distinguished Alumna Award, Virginia Tech Pamplin College of Business

Thanks for making a difference!

Your donation to the Center for Gerontology supports a variety of activities including student travel, special publications, scholarships, and professional development activities.

As noted by Certificate and Human Development doctoral student, Stefan Pasmowski, Futures Board Scholarship recipient:

“I’m very thankful for having been awarded the Futures Board scholarship. This will be a great help to me professionally, providing the financial means to attend several conferences in the next year. Additionally, the expectation of collaborating with faculty and publishing a manuscript related to my research interests is one that I am eager to take on this summer.”

The recipient of the AARP Memorial Fund Scholarship, Andrea Mendes, also indicated that receiving a scholarship helps her manage the costs of graduate education. Andrea will complete her master’s degree in Human development this Fall.

“I appreciate receiving the AARP scholarship because it contributes to tuition payments and relieves some of the financial pressure that accompanies being a full time graduate student.”

Donations can be mailed directly to the Center, or be made on-line: <http://www.campaign.vt.edu/campaign-vt/>

Center for Gerontology Staff

Karen A. Roberto, Ph.D., Professor & Director
Rosemary Blieszner, Ph.D., Alumni Distinguished Professor & Associate Director
Tina Savla, Ph.D., Assistant Professor & Research Methodologist
Nancy Brossoie, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate
Marya McPherson, M.S., Research Associate
Carlene Arthur, Administrative Assistant
Katie Barrow, Matthew Cox, Lauren Ermann, and Hassan Karimi, Graduate Research Assistants

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The Virginia Tech Center for Gerontology is a Collaborating Centre in the International Association for Gerontology and Geriatrics.