

# VIRGINIA GWEP 2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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*The Virginia Geriatric Education Center (VGEC) is a HRSA funded Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP).*

*Its mission is to improve the interprofessional education and training of health professionals in Virginia through faculty development, continuing education and the clinical training of students in geriatrics.*

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**VGEC**  
Virginia Geriatric Education Center



## Letter from the Director

The 2024–2025 year marks another milestone for the Virginia Geriatric Education Center (VGEC) and our Geriatrics Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEPs), as we continue to strengthen Virginia’s capacity to deliver Age-Friendly Health Systems grounded in the 4Ms—What Matters, Medication, Mentation and Mobility—and expand our reach into multi-complexity care.

Across 13 statewide initiatives, our collaborative network of educators, clinicians and community partners has reached over 6,600 individuals, including healthcare professionals, students, caregivers and older Virginians. This year’s efforts emphasize not only implementing the 4Ms framework but also cultivating interprofessional competence and systems transformation in diverse care settings—from primary care and nursing homes to faith-based communities and tribal partnerships. Through initiatives such as Senior Strong, SAGE (Summer Academy for Geriatrics Exposure) and CIRCAA (Creating Interprofessional Readiness for Complex & Aging Adults), our programs have empowered learners and organizations to apply age-friendly principles in real-world contexts, resulting in measurable gains in geriatrics preparedness and care quality.

Our Project ECHO programs have been instrumental in this expansion, offering two distinct models of knowledge sharing and capacity building. The IDD ECHO Series has dramatically enhanced dementia-related knowledge among providers supporting adults aging with intellectual and developmental disabilities—improving understanding from 42% to 89% post-training—while the Alzheimer’s and Dementia Care ECHO Program for PACE (Program for All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly) Sites builds upon an established history of collaboration between GWEPs and regional PACE programs, which have actively participated in previous geriatrics education programs, including ECHO-based learning. Together, these efforts underscore VGEC’s commitment to innovation through education, mentorship, and partnership. Whether through dementia-friendly EMS training, oral health education in nursing home settings, or faith-based engagement through ALTER, our collective work demonstrates that age-friendly care is not a single program—it is a statewide movement. As we look to the year ahead, we remain inspired by the resilience, creativity and compassion of our partners and trainees who are redefining what it means to age well in Virginia.

Leland “Bert” Waters, PhD

Director, Virginia Geriatric Education Center

Associate Director, Virginia Center on Aging

Associate Professor, Department of Gerontology

College of Health Professions, Virginia Commonwealth University

**A key effort of Virginia GWEP is to implement the 4Ms plus multi-complexity care to create Age-Friendly Health Systems.**

**In 2025...**

**4**

**AFHS CURRICULA**

were developed,  
enhanced or adopted.

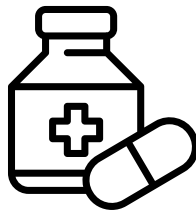
**25**

**PUBLICATIONS**



### **What Matters**

Know and align care with each older adult's specific health outcome goals and care preferences including, but not limited to, end-of-life care and across settings of care.



### **Medication**

If medication is necessary, use Age-Friendly medication that does not interfere with What Matters to the older adult, Mobility or Mentation across settings of care.



### **Mentation**

Prevent, identify, treat and manage dementia, depression and delirium across settings of care.



### **Mobility**

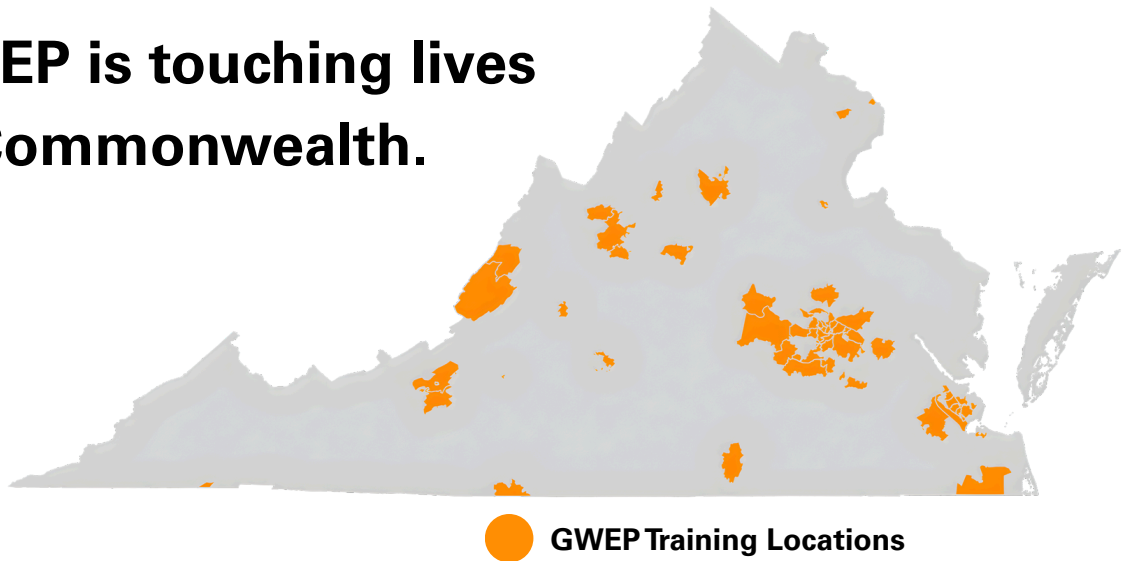
Ensure that older adults move safely every day in order to maintain function and do

... What Matters.

## **Quick Stats**

- Interprofessional readiness and geriatric preparedness improved from an average of **74.2% before the CIRCAA training to 92.5% following the training.**
- Dementia knowledge related to aging with lifelong intellectual disabilities increased from **41.96% before the IDD ECHO training to 88.99% after the training.**
- Interprofessional readiness improved from **67% before the SAGE program to 84% following the program.**

## Virginia GWEP is touching lives across the Commonwealth.



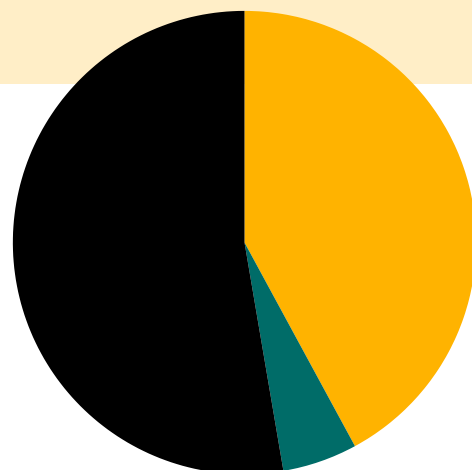
### The VGEC educated three types of trainees: professional workforce, students and community members.

- Professional workforce trainees consisted of pharmacy, nursing, facility admin, office support, medical, CNA/PCA/DirectCare, community health workers, behavioral health and NP/PA professionals.
- Student trainees consisted of dental, dental hygiene, pharmacy, nursing, medical school, PT/OT, advanced practitioners, behavioral health and other students.
- Community member trainees consisted of patients, family caregivers and others.

**Total Trainees**

**6,605**

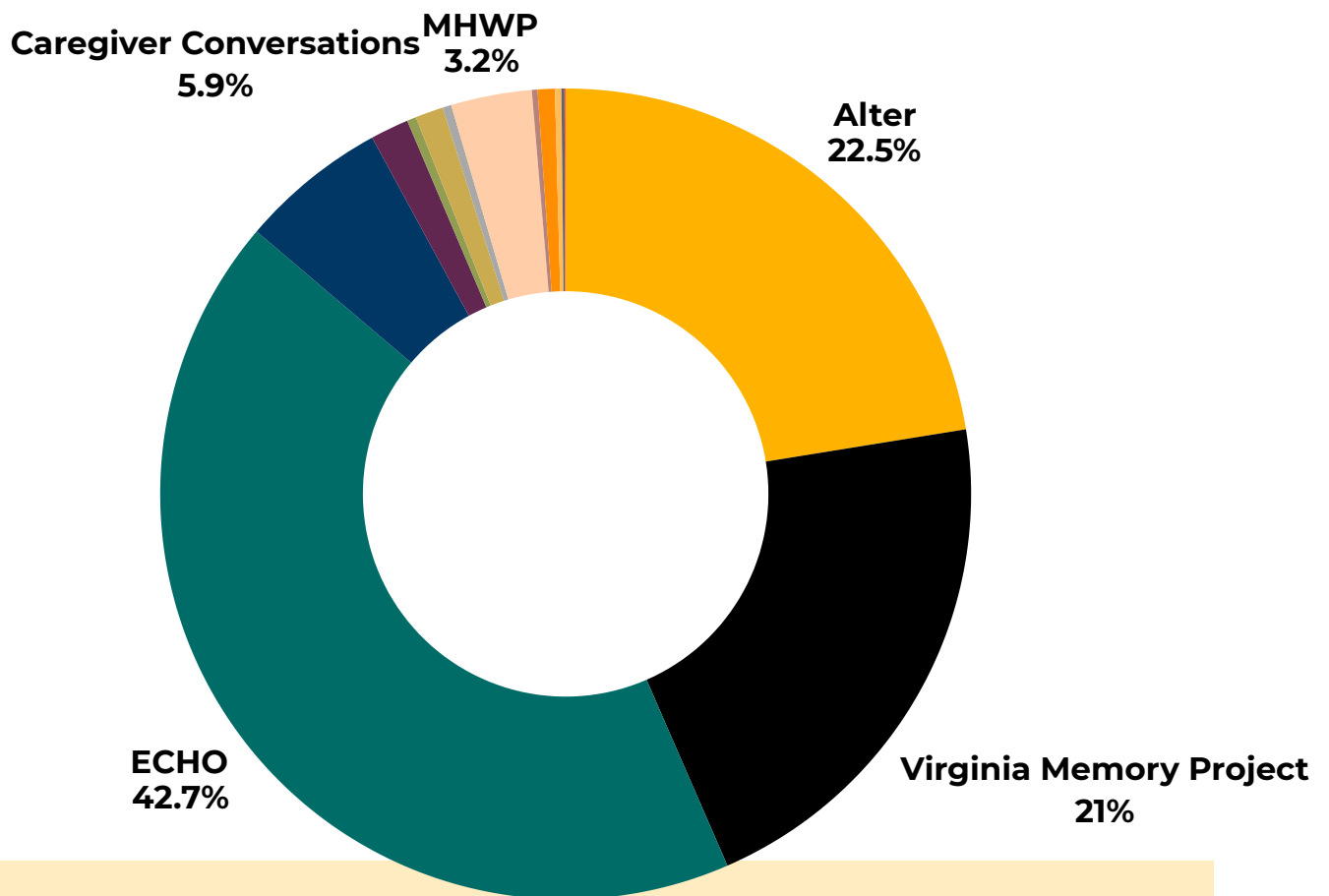
**Community Member**  
52.7%



**Professional**  
42.1%

**Student**  
5.2%





<i>ECHO</i>	<b>2,823</b>
<i>ALTER</i>	<b>1,438</b>
<i>Virginia Memory Project</i>	<b>1,388</b>
<i>Caregiver Conversations</i>	<b>388</b>
<i>MHWP</i>	<b>213</b>
<i>EMS</i>	<b>101</b>
<i>Lucy Corr Dental Clinic</i>	<b>74</b>
<i>Oral Health Education &amp; Screening Site</i>	<b>45</b>
<i>Senior Strong</i>	<b>24</b>
<i>NEAT</i>	<b>23</b>
<i>CIRCAA</i>	<b>17</b>
<i>EVMS</i>	<b>15</b>
<i>SAGE</i>	<b>8</b>
<i>VCU Family Residency Program</i>	<b>3</b>

## Initiatives



### **Embark on coalition building with VGEC and the tribal community**

The VGEC GWEP is partnering with the Chickahominy Indian Tribe in Virginia to promote age-friendly care for tribal elders. This initiative shares the journey of embarking on relationship building and collaboration with the Chickahominy Indian Tribe including establishing relationships with tribal leaders and staff, being present in the community for pow-wows and other events, conducting an age-friendly needs assessment with tribal elders, offering culturally adapted educational opportunities

identified as important by the elders and hiring a tribal citizen, Lindsey Johnson, to join our GWEP team. The activities have generated positive impact and support coalition building with tribal nations, including the identification of primary care practices serving Chickahominy tribal elders to join our Age-Friendly Champions program that provides support in defining their age-friendly practice and attaining age-friendly recognition, and greater engagement of the Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) with the Chickahominy elders. Currently, tribal leaders and elders are co-creating with the VGEC GWEP a video-based curriculum to train healthcare professionals and students about the history, culture and meaning of health and wellness in the tribal community. Taking what we are learning from the partnership with the Chickahominy, we are seeking to build relationships with other federally recognized tribes in Virginia, each with their own unique traditions, culture and healthcare ecosystems.



## Initiatives



### **Training Students of Oral Health Care (OHC) in Nursing Home and Community Settings**

This initiative supports the rotation of dental students in a nursing home dental clinic and provides oral health education and instruction to members of the geriatric population residing in a nursing home, the community and to care providers. Upon completion of their rotation, students expressed a high level of certainty in clinical confidence when treating geriatric patients with medical, physical and intellectual/cognitive disabilities as well as economic challenges and diverse cultural backgrounds. More than half of the students

indicated that age should not prevent the provision of complex or expensive dental treatment, nor is the provision of care to older adults too time consuming. This clinical training experience and community outreach option builds the confidence of future OHC providers enhancing competence and improving patient care and quality of life for older adults.



### **Nursing Education for Nursing Home Care**

The GWEP has supported two initiatives within the Riverside College of Health Careers. This institution is developing a geriatrics curriculum to use within the BSN program that will eventually be scaled to other programs. The GWEP supported this initiative through financial resources to purchase equipment as well as non-financial through provision of educational materials. The institution is also developing a Nurse Externship program for registered and practical nursing students to increase clinical

experiences in TTOUR sites and increased education in age friendly care. The GWEP supported this program through outreach and recruitment. This support allowed the program to increase enrollment and recruit from more schools than in the past.



## Initiatives



### **Intergenerational Mentoring Program**

Over this year, this initiative has expanded the Intergenerational Mentoring Program to George Mason University, where they have seven social work students and five mentors participating in the program. A poster on *Learning Across Generations: The Dual Benefits of Intergenerational Mentoring for Students and Society* was accepted at the Gerontological Society of America based on the work conducted. In continuing the program at Virginia Commonwealth University, this initiative has impacted 193 first-year medical school students at the university, with the help of 96 mentors. Its mentorship enrollment has also increased by 40 older Virginians. Lastly, the initiative has started developing a scale to measure the geriatric openness of health professions students for working with older patients.



### **Dementia Friendly Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Care**

We've hosted focus groups with regional EMS offices so that we can better learn about the experiences and challenges their first responders have in working with and caring for older adults. We have offered several training sessions in the Newport News and Richmond areas for first responders. For the person-centered dementia care training for first responders, efforts of this project have allowed us to meet their needs as the training is now mandated. The training attendees are engaged in the training and indicate that reviewing the content and case studies gives them new strategies and techniques in working with and caring for persons living with dementia and their families.

## Initiatives



**ALTER**

Alter strives to empower faith communities to become dementia friendly. Founded in 2018 by Dr. Fayron Epps, Alter has welcomed over 100 churches since its launch across the nation. Alter welcomed its first Virginia faith community in 2024, and now, six Virginia faith communities are Alter partners. All Alter sites have an Alter box with resources for a dementia library. At least twelve people from Alter faith communities have signed up to participate in a dementia and movement

study at Virginia Commonwealth University. One of the faith communities launched a transformative initiative, the "Brain Care Ministry," to serve caregivers, those living with dementia and people with autism. This ministry, with its focus on brain health, is an example of how faith communities are innovative in their Alter programming. The Alter Champions include a professional with a geriatrics certification, nurses, health educators, a pastor, a retired social worker and a pharmacist/professor. Since faith communities are not one-size-fits-all, Andrea Price, the Alter Virginia site coordinator, works closely with each Alter Champion to develop programming that best fits their needs and the needs of their community.





## Initiatives



**Summer Academy for Geriatrics  
Exposure**

The Summer Academy for Geriatrics Exposure (SAGE) is an interprofessional, 8-week training program where students from six health professions engaged in age-friendly care, quality improvement and community-based practice with primary care and underserved populations in summer. Early feedback from students and partner practices has been overwhelmingly positive. Students reported increased confidence and interest in caring for older adults, as well as a desire to continue their quality improvement projects beyond the program. As part of the experience, students also participated in a novel, in-person escape room simulating a home visit, which highlighted the 4Ms framework, interprofessional teamwork and the unique skills of each discipline.



**Senior Strong: Age-friendly Training  
for Medicine Residents**

This initiative is designed to equip teams with practical tools, mentorship and inspiration to transform their workflows around the 4Ms and deliver truly age-friendly care. The energy and enthusiasm from the partners have been contagious, and the initiative has launched a program this fall that promises meaningful impact for both providers and the older adults they serve.

# Stories & Statements

**"I thought the information was well taught and think it's important to understand how to interact with patients who require more understanding and patience."**



**Dementia Friendly Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Care**

The EMS training helped:

- "Change my bedside manner to accommodate patients with Alzheimer's."
- "Explain resources to family members of patients."
- "Be more mindful of what kind of affects the disorder may have on people, and take my time with them if they are not understanding. Be sure not to rush them."
- "Be aware of how I approach patients living with dementia, be more gentle, more compassionate."



**Creating Interprofessional Readiness for Complex & Aging Adults (CIRCAA)**

and education practices, thus building stronger relationships with an extensive reach. I highly recommend this program to reignite and change the way you think, interact with and provide services to older adults and the aging population in the community you serve!" - Tracey Boseman

"The VCU CIRCAA program has been instrumental in shaping and advancing my senior care business for veterans for not only myself, but also my team. Through its training and support, I've gained deeper insights and have been able to implement processes, admin practices and policies on how to better meet the unique needs of aging veterans when enrolling them into the community-based Veteran program. The program's emphasis on the 4M's has helped me improve our quality of service, reestablishing our community engagement



## Stories & Statements



**Summer Academy for Geriatrics  
Exposure (SAGE)**

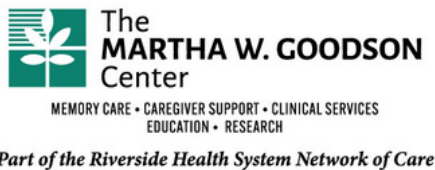
**"The most meaningful aspect of SAGE was being able to interact with other students from different disciplines, particularly during our rotations with MHWP. This helped me understand the roles of various healthcare providers in the health setting."**



"SAGE was an amazing experience that I will always look back on fondly. If I had to choose just one moment that was the MOST meaningful, I think it was my second day at an MHWP (Mobile Health & Wellness Program) center. With my first day essentially being spent shadowing someone who knew the routine, I was the "leader" of most conversations on my second day, and I felt like I was starting to contribute to the care and well-being of the participants through MHWP. Being able to continue improving after that second day and continue to come back to participants was a shining moment in the SAGE experience. I hope more people will have the opportunity to experience this program for years to come."

"The most impactful part of my SAGE experience was interacting with providers across various sites and disciplines. By learning from individuals from all walks of life (both providers and patients) I was able to learn how to better communicate, work with, and learn from my peers which I believe has and will continue to benefit me tremendously in all of my future endeavors."

# VGEC Consortium



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## VGEC Community Partners

- ALTER
- Alzheimer's Association
- Chickahominy Indian Tribe
- Health Quality Innovators
- Lucy Corr Foundation
- Old Dominion Emergency Medical Services Alliance, Inc.
- Rappahannock Tribe of Virginia
- Rappahannock-Rapidan Emergency Medical Services Council
- Rhode Island Geriatric Education Center
- Riverside College of Health Sciences
- The Span Center
- University of Minnesota Inter-GWEP Interprofessional Geriatric Case Competition
- Virginia Association of Area Agencies on Aging
- Virginia Community Health Worker Association
- Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services
- Virginia Health Workforce Development Authority
- Virginia Pharmacy Association

# VGEC Plenary Members

The Plenary is the interprofessional team responsible for all initiatives of the VGEC and its GWEP. **This dedicated group meets regularly to collaborate and ensure success of the VGEC's many initiatives.**

- Shannon Arnette, MS - VCU Virginia Center on Aging
- Christian Bergman, MD - VCU Health System
- Daniel Bluestein, MD, MS, CMD-R, AGSF-R - VCU Virginia Center on Aging
- Peter Boling, MD - VCU School of Medicine
- Trish Bonwell, RDH, PhD - VCU Virginia Center on Aging
- Hong Chartrand, DrPH - VCU Virginia Center on Aging
- Aisling Clardy, MSc - VCU Virginia Center on Aging
- Kimberly Davis, MS, RN - VCU School of Nursing
- Sheryl Finucane, PhD, PT - VCU Department of Physical Therapy
- Robert Fix, PhD, MS, OTR/L - VCU Health System
- Kaye Geaney DNP, RN, AGCNS-BC, FNP-C- Eastern Virginia Medical School at Old Dominion University
- Laure Gill – MBA, BHSA, VCU Health System
- Kevin Grunden, MS, CCC-SLP - InnovAge Virginia PACE - Blue Ridge
- Patricia Heyn, PhD, FGSA, FACRM - Marymount Center for Optimal Aging
- Sarah Hobgood, MD – VCU Health System
- Bonita Hogue, MSW - VCU Health System
- Emily Ihara, PhD, MSW, FGSA - GMU Department of Social Work
- Kim Ivey, MS - VCU Virginia Center on Aging
- Charlene Jensen, DPT, MMHPE - Riverside College of Health Careers
- Christine Jensen, PhD - Riverside Martha W. Goodson Center
- Adrienne Johnson, MS - VirginiaNavigator Family of Websites
- Lori Landes, MD, PhD – VCU Health System
- Sarah Marrs, PhD - VCU Virginia Center on Aging
- Maddie McIntyre, BS - VCU Virginia Center on Aging
- Ethlyn McQueen-Gibson, DNP, MSN, RN-BC – Eastern Virginia Medical School at Old Dominion University

## VGEC Plenary Members

- Andrea Price, MPS, MBA - VCU Virginia Center on Aging
- Elvin Price, PharmD, PhD - VCU School of Pharmacy
- Tiphane Raffegeau, PhD - George Mason University
- Rachel Regal - VCU School of Nursing
- Annie Rhodes, PhD, CGCM - VCU Virginia Center on Aging
- Mary Rubino, MD - Eastern Virginia Medical School at Old Dominion University
- Lana Sargent, PhD, RN, FNP-C, GNP-BC, VCU School of Nursing
- Patty Slattum, PharmD, PhD - VCU Virginia Center on Aging, VCU School of Pharmacy
- Ashley Staton, MSW - VCU Virginia Center on Aging
- Mary Martha Stewart, MA - Riverside Martha W. Goodson Center
- Pam Teaster, PhD - Virginia Tech Center for Gerontology
- Jodi Teitlelman, PhD - VCU Virginia Center on Aging
- Cathy Tompkins, PhD, MSW - GMU College of Public Health
- Cindy Warriner, RPh, CDE - Health Quality Innovators
- Bert Waters, PhD - VCU Virginia Center on Aging
- Ishan Williams, PhD - UVA School of Nursing
- Rita Wong, PT, EdD, FAPTA - Marymount Center for Optimal Aging
- Kristin Zimmerman, PharmD, CGP - VCU School of Pharmacy



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