

Meeting Aging-Related Needs in 2016

By

Edward F. Ansello, PhD

Our Virginia Center on Aging has four program focuses. All benefit from partnerships, community, institutional, business, and individual. These programs are (alphabetically): dementia, elder abuse and domestic violence in later life, geriatrics education, and lifelong learning. Each achieved substantially in calendar 2016.

A. **Dementia.** VCoA administers the **Alzheimer's and Related Diseases Research Award Fund (ARDRAF)** for the Commonwealth as a seed grant program to help Virginia researchers investigate promising lines of inquiry into the causes, consequences, and treatments of dementing illnesses. Researchers submit proposals, which we have screened and evaluated by third party reviewers both in Virginia and around the world, depending on the research topic of the proposal. Often, awarded researchers use their pilot findings to obtain far greater awards from NIH and other federal and foundation sources, returning many times our investment in them.

In calendar 2016 we granted seven ARDRAF awards. These included the following recipients and research topics: Christopher Newport University: blood lipid profiles and olfaction in a mouse model of Alzheimer's Disease; University of Virginia (UVA): mechanistic link underlying amyloid beta, nutrient signaling, and mitochondria dysfunction; UVA: brain structure volume and the APOE gene in early and advanced Parkinson's patients with dementia; Virginia Tech: diverse approaches to caregiving for persons with Alzheimer's disease living in Appalachia; VCU: the influence of tau on hippocampal inhibitory neurons and pathological synaptic connections; VCU: use of antipsychotic medications among older adults with dementia residing in assisted living facilities; and College of William and Mary: altered gene expression in Huntington's disease. Importantly, a generous gift from the family of Mabel Sullivan in Fredericksburg enhanced these awards.

ARDRAF has grown to be the most effective state-funded research program in the United States and a significant lever for research on dementia in Virginia, with researchers subsequently returning to Virginia an average of \$9.75 for every \$1.00 of General Fund appropriation.

B. **Elder abuse and domestic violence in later life.** VCoA in 2016 administered three externally funded projects related to these too-often overlooked issues. 1) In the **Virginia Elder Justice Training and Services** project, VCoA partnered with the Virginia Department on Aging and Rehabilitative Services and other statewide and local collaborators on a local/statewide elder abuse training and collaboration project, funded by USDOJ Office on Violence Against Women. The project operated in southwest Virginia in Washington County and the City of Bristol, and ran from October 2012 through September 2016. In 2016, we staffed local monthly meetings of the Coordinated Community Response Team subcommittee for Abuse in Later Life, working with these partners to review policies and procedures to ensure that they include considerations for older victims; coordinated multidisciplinary trainings for law enforcement and victim

services in Bristol; and, importantly, provided technical assistance to our local partners in their successful efforts to secure funding to continue their new services beyond the life of the grant.

2) VCoA received continuation funding in 2016 for the **Central Virginia Task Force on Domestic Violence in Later Life Project**, through the Virginia Services, Training, Officers, Prosecution (V-STOP) Violence against Women grant program, administered by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). We are working with partners to develop a comprehensive, coordinated, and cross-trained community response to domestic violence and sexual assault in later life. In 2016 we conducted seven site visits/consults to partner agencies; served on five task forces and coalitions; trained 166 law enforcement, allied service professionals paraprofessionals, judicial/court personnel, and volunteers; worked in Multi-Disciplinary Teams in three jurisdictions to provide stronger collaboration among law enforcement, Adult Protective Services, and local service providers; served as the Team Organizer for the Metro Richmond Adult Fatality Review Team (MRAFRT), the first in Virginia, to finalize its mission statement and operating guidelines; and much more.

3) In the **Family Violence Project**, VCoA, as lead agency, received continuation funding through the Virginia Domestic Violence Victim Fund, DCJS, to develop a coordinated community response to family violence in later life, employing initiatives similar to the V-STOP project above. In 2016 we conducted six site visits/consults and technical assistance to partner agencies; served on four task forces and coalitions, and trained 108 law enforcement, allied service professionals, paraprofessionals, judicial/court personnel, and volunteers.

C. Geriatrics Education. VCoA administers the **Geriatric Training and Education (GTE)** initiative for the Commonwealth. It strengthens the geriatrics and gerontology workforce by supporting locally identified, needs-based training with small monetary awards, after objective third party reviews. In calendar 2016 we supported 15 workforce development training events across Virginia. A sample of recipients and their training areas included: The Riverside Center for Excellence in Aging and Lifelong Health (Williamsburg) on Mental Health and Aging; Arlington Community Foundation on Advance Care Planning Education and Skill-Building; Southwest Virginia Westminster Canterbury (Charlottesville) on Creating a Dementia-inclusive Community in the Shenandoah Valley; SeniorNavigator (Richmond) on Promoting Caregiver Health through Interdisciplinary Education and Innovation; Virginia Geriatrics Society (statewide) for Virginia Community Provider Geriatrics Education Scholarships to attend its annual conference; Palliative Care Partnership of the Roanoke Valley (Roanoke) on The 3-R's of Advance Care Planning Navigation, for Care Managers, Community Health Workers, and Clergy/Health Ministries; Virginia Coalition for Prevention of Elder Abuse (statewide) for Conference Scholarships for its 21st Annual Conference in Virginia Beach; Alzheimer's Association, Central and Western Virginia Chapter (Charlottesville) for Creative Expressions in Dementia Care: A one-day training workshop for sustainability of arts programming in four rural regions; and more.

The **Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program (GWEP)** is a consortium of VCU, UVA, and Eastern Virginia Medical School (EVMS), supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration, USDHHS. Its purpose is to train pre-clinical students, health care providers, and other professionals so that they think and act as interprofessional teams in geriatrics, and to educate family caregivers so that they have greater capacity in dementia –related issues. We accomplish this through such initiatives as year-long and semester courses, multi-week on-site contact hour training, teleconsults, single day conferences, and more. This year we trained: 603 VCU pre-clinical students in medicine, nursing, pharmacy, and social work to work as teams through a one-semester, web-based course based on an unfolding complex case in geriatrics; 26 pharmacy students at Hampton University; 97 health professionals in grand rounds at EVMS; 55 health professionals and 92 caregivers and community elders through VirginiaNavigator; and three teleconsults with staff at Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc., on topics they requested as needed and supported two staff trainings for 181 nurse aides there; and more.

In GWEP we offered two 24-contact hour evidence-based practice (EBP) programs on falls prevention, the first at Riverside Regional Medical Center in Newport News and the second at Bonview nursing and rehabilitation center in Richmond. We completed one 200-hour Faculty Development Program with 12 Scholars and began another with 21 new Scholars. With our community partners across Virginia, we also offered dementia-related conferences for health professionals, direct service providers, and family caregivers in Danville, Fairfax, Norfolk, and Roanoke, plus staff training at the Richmond Alzheimer’s Chapter.

Also, we have been measuring the impact of our interprofessional geriatrics training on falls prevention by accessing the patient charts of individuals being cared for by the various professionals we have trained at Riverside in Newport News and the McGuire Veterans Administration Center in Richmond. There are no specific patient identifiers like names. We examine these charts three-months before we train their providers and then at different points after the training; we employ between 25 to 150 metrics per patient for each professional (Nurse Practitioner, OT, PT, pharmacist). Findings so far show these changes in practice: increased documentation of the causes of falls, increased assessment of risk factors, increased EBP interventions, minimized medications, implemented home modifications, implemented patient education, implemented management of postural hypotension, and more.

D. Lifelong Learning. We offer residential lifelong learning experiences for older adults in several locations across Virginia through **Road Scholar**, an international, non-profit organization. Learners attend college-type, non-credit courses for several days to a week on a variety of subjects, from nature to Shakespeare. We contract with hotels for lodging and meals, businesses for transportation, faculty and local experts for instruction, and local course-related sites for admissions. In 2016, we drew 520 learners from across the country to our 24 residential programs in Big Meadows, Fredericksburg, Harrisonburg, Richmond, and Staunton.

The Lifelong Learning Institute (LLI) in Chesterfield County, founded and co-sponsored by the Virginia Center on Aging, Chesterfield County Public Schools, and Chesterfield County government, has grown to become a magnet for mid-life and older adults. It offers a rich menu of

daytime, nonresidential, college-level courses and related activities. Membership grew to 1,092 participants in 2016. Our LLI offered 595 classes over three semesters, with 17,438 registrations, taught by 196 peer instructors. LLI learners, all Virginians, represented 29 different zip codes.