

2007

HNFE Happenings



Joe Marcy

A Message from the Department Head

The tragic events of April 16, 2007, have left me at a loss of words to express our heartache for those students and faculty who were injured or killed. One Human Nutrition, Foods and Exercise (HNFE) student is now home recovering from her injuries. Our thoughts and prayers are with her and the entire Virginia Tech community during this time of healing.

In the days following April 16 it became clear the Hokie Nation was indeed special and we would prevail. Our sense of community and our connection with other Hokies has never been greater. This newsletter will be the first of many from HNFE as we keep in touch with our alumni and friends. Since we run out of space before we run out of news, we encourage you to visit the HNFE website (www.hnfe.vt.edu) for more news about the department and upcoming alumni events.

Change and growth are the best descriptors for the department, which is now a part of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. After Exercise joined HNFE in 1997, the undergraduate enrollment was 447; a decade later, we count 889 undergraduates in our program! Change and growth are also present on the physical level. The department has offices and laboratories in Wallace Hall, Wallace Annex, War Memorial Gym, Building XV at Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center (CRC), and the Carilion Riverside Research Center in Roanoke. In fall 2007 we will move from our temporary space in Building XV and occupy new offices and laboratories in a building at the CRC that is currently under construction.

I wish to sincerely thank our friends and alumni for their comforting and thoughtful messages in these difficult days. The future of the HNFE department is bright, and we look forward to having our entire community participate in future events.

Best regards,

Joe Marcy, Interim Department Head

HNFE Honors Outstanding Alumnae

Dr. Evaleen Jones, MD, who graduated with a B.S. in 1983, was selected as HNFE's Outstanding Alumna. Dr. Jones is an Assistant Clinical Professor in the Stanford University Department of Family and Community Medicine and is also a Registered Dietitian. She is the founder of Child Family Health International, an institute dedicated to improving health care to underserved populations around the world. Through her leadership, more than 600 medical students each year have the opportunity to complete an elective in a developing country. Donations of unused medical supplies valued at over \$1 million support the students' health services in their host countries. We are pleased to honor Dr. Jones as an outstanding educator and humanitarian.

Heather (Kelly) Cox, RD, who earned her B.S. in 1997, was honored as the Outstanding Recent Alumna. Cox has worked in a variety of leadership positions, including Director of Nutritional Services at Warm Hearth Retirement Community and Mid-Atlantic Corporate Dietitian for the Kroger Company. In 2002, she was honored with the Outstanding Young Registered Dietitian of the Year award and has served as a preceptor, speaker, and intern selection committee member for the Dietetic Internship. She is currently completing graduate studies in HNFE and leading the development of a new course to enhance the food service management knowledge of dietetic students.

Extension Faculty Impact the Health of Virginia Citizens

Virginia Cooperative Extension is implementing nutrition programs to promote nutrition and physical activity throughout the state to reduce the incidence of obesity, chronic diseases, and hunger under the guidance of HNFE faculty members.

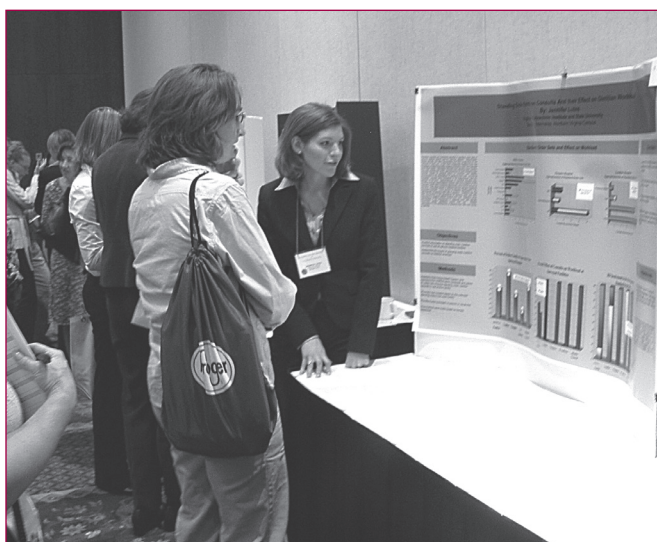
Have you ever imagined what it would be like to go to bed hungry? Eight percent of Virginians experience food security issues. Through the **Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)** and the **Food Stamp Nutrition Education (FSNE)** program, **Dr. Mary McFerren** assists impoverished Virginians to ease food security issues. Paraprofessionals across the state are on the front lines working with adults to teach them how to stretch their food stamps and food dollars to alleviate hunger in Virginia.

More than 535,000 Virginians have diabetes, and health care costs relating to this disease total over \$2 billion. **Dining with Diabetes**, directed by **Dr. Eleanor Schlenker**, helps people with diabetes and their families increase their quality of life. During four weekly classes participants learn about making healthy food choices to prevent disease complications. A three-month reunion class provides an opportunity for follow-up and outcome assessment. Virginia Cooperative Extension partners implement this program with the Virginia Department of Health and local health care professionals.

The **Virginia Parents Action for Healthy Kids (VPAFHK)** program helps schools reach goals in their local school wellness policies. VPAFHK provided a total of five mini-grants to five rural school divisions to encourage healthy rewards and nutritious foods in classrooms and to initiate or expand walking programs. The goal is for the recipients to partner with parents and parent-teacher associations to promote consistent messages at school and at home. The \$25,000 grant from the Kellogg Foundation is guided by faculty members **Drs. Elena Serrano** and **Kathy Hosig**.



Ana Moran, program assistant in Prince William County, teaches cooking skills in the EFNEP Program.



Jennifer Lutes, Dietetic Intern at the Northern Virginia location, was one of eight interns who presented a poster at the Virginia Dietetic Association Annual Meeting held at the Inn at Virginia Tech.

Dietetic Internship Prepares Dietitians for Unique Roles

The **Virginia Tech Dietetic Internship** successfully prepares 16 individuals to become registered dietitians each year. For nine months, interns work in health care and food service settings as well as unique workplaces, such as the university's athletics program, grocery stores, the American Heart Association, and American Dietetic Association Public Policy office. Sixty-five facilities affiliate with the internship program. Graduates pass the registration exam at a rate of 95 percent, and employers indicate our intern graduates are well prepared to work in the varied roles that dietitians now fill.

Students Benefit from New Foods Teaching Labs

Two new labs were designed on the 4th floor of Wallace Hall for teaching foods courses. The Food Selection and Preparation Lab offers an ideal layout that allows the instructor to oversee all five kitchens at the same time. Students indicate that the new equipment and the improved traffic flow provide them with an incentive to be fully involved in the lab classes. The Science of Food Lab next door has six preparation units and wet lab benches for chemical analysis. This new lab equipment provides students the opportunity to conduct food analysis tests that reflect industry standards. An added plus is that these labs offer one of the best mountain views on campus.



Students create new food products in the Science of Food Lab.

Under Dr. Frank Conforti's supervision, a graduate student, Laura Dengo, explains lab procedures to undergraduate students.

Research and Graduate Program Update

HNFE Faculty and Graduate Students Seeking Answers to Health Queries

Forty-two graduate students and their faculty advisors are working on vital research projects. The coordination of nutrition, foods and exercise provide unique opportunities to address critical health-related issues such as:

- The impact of obesity (insulin resistance, inflammation, other cardiovascular risks)
- Childhood overweight
- The effect of health habits on dietary intake and the weight of young adults
- Extending the life expectancy among boys with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy
- The consequences of obstructive sleep apnea on cardiovascular and metabolic factors
- Wheat-containing food products as a trigger for type 1 diabetes
- The influence of phytochemical intake on breast cancer and diabetes

Answering these important questions is made possible through varied funding sources, including the National Institutes of Health, USDA, American Diabetes Association, National Cancer Institute, and others.

Three New Faculty Members Expand HNFE Research Programs to the Corporate Research Center

HNFE recently expanded into new space at Virginia Tech's Corporate Research Center (CRC), where three new faculty members have launched their research programs.

Dr. Matt Hulver, who arrived in March of 2006, studies how muscle metabolism is impacted by chronic diseases/disorders such as obesity, insulin resistance, and type 2 diabetes. **Dr. Deborah Good**, who joined the department in August 2006, studies the genetic regulation of body weight control in the hypothalamus, a brain region key to maintaining a stable body mass. Drs. Good and Hulver are members of a multidisciplinary research group focusing on the public health problem of obesity. **Dr. Eva Schmelz**, our April 2007 arrival, is studying whether consumption of sphingolipids (a component of cell membranes) can prevent colon, breast and ovarian cancer.

These new faculty members provide exciting training opportunities at the CRC for graduate students and post-docs. A number of undergraduate students are also taking advantage of summer or honors research opportunities in these labs. For more information, contact **Franc-Eric Wiedmer**, research coordinator, at fwiedmer@vt.edu.

Undergraduate Highlights

Undergraduate Numbers on the Rise

The department's undergraduate student numbers have grown rapidly in recent years. We now have almost 900 HNFE undergraduates compared to 440 a decade ago. Students see HNFE as a way to engage their passion for nutrition and physical activity. More students are getting involved in undergraduate research projects, and this trend will grow with a new summer undergraduate research program starting this summer.

Undergraduates Select Between Four Options

Consumer Foods (CF): CF and other interested students continue to participate in a tour of regional food companies each spring.

Dietetic Option: Enrollment within the undergraduate Didactic Program in Dietetics, directed by **Dr. Susan Clark**, has grown to over 200 students. Students attend Dietetic Internship Application Workshops to optimize their chance at successfully matching with a dietetic internship program.

Exercise and Health Promotion: EHP students continue to gain hands-on experience working very early in the morning with clients in the Therapeutic Exercise and Community Health Program (TECH) now administered by the Via College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Science of Food, Nutrition and Exercise (SFNE): Professional schools in physical therapy, medical, osteopathy, dental and pharmacy seek out graduates from our SFNE option.

Student Organizations News

Student organizations have been busy this year with events, fund raising, and professional development.

- A group of **Exercise Science Student Organization (ESSO)** students attended the Southeast American College of Sports Medicine conference and became a part of this professional group by meeting professionals in the Exercise Science field.
- Our newest student group, the **Food and Nutrition Club (FAN)**, held two spaghetti dinners and sells granola to students on campus to raise money for the American Diabetes Association. They have already raised over \$600 this year.
- The **Student Dietetic Association (SDA)** held a Dietetic Internship Panel in November for the third year with six internship programs represented. Over 70 students attended and learned about dietetic internship options and expectations. Attendees indicated they appreciated learning how best to position themselves to be competitive for internships.

Connecting students with alumni and friends is a win-win proposition!

Do you have a paid or volunteer position for an HNFE student? Students who work during breaks or throughout their school years indicate they feel more prepared for their next step – a job, graduate school, or internship. Employers gain from their latest knowledge, energy, and passion. To connect with an interested student, contact **Laurie Bianchi**, Academic Advisor, at 540/231-2259 or lbianchi@vt.edu



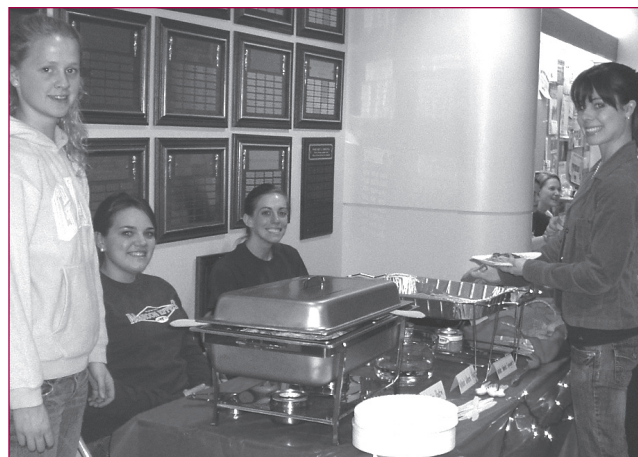
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FAN Club members held a spaghetti dinner fundraiser to support diabetes research.



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Name: _____

Classification (check one): alumni _____ retired faculty/staff _____ other _____

Year and Degree: (BS, MS, PhD): _____

Option: _____

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Employer: _____

Current Position: _____

Work Address: _____

E-mail Address: _____

News about Yourself: _____

Would you like to be contacted concerning the support of one of our scholarship programs or extra-curricular group activities?

Yes _____ No _____

Please Specify _____

Faculty and Staff Retirements

Sherry Terry, administrative assistant and departmental secretary, kept things running smoothly in the department for 25 years. She retired in July, 2006, after 42 years with Virginia Tech and is greatly missed by faculty, staff, and especially graduate students.

Three long-serving faculty members have retired recently and were all granted emeritus status in recognition of their dedication to and achievements at Virginia Tech.

Dr. Forrest Thye, a faculty member for 36 years, retired in December 2005 and continues to live in Blacksburg with his wife. Many alumni comment on how valuable his courses, Metabolic Nutrition and Methods of Human Nutrition Assessment, were to their success.

Dr. Ruby Cox retired to North Carolina with her husband in February 2006 after 17 years at the university. She oversaw the successful Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).

Dr. Frank Conforti retired in June 2006 after 16 years as a faculty member. Though officially retired, he continues to teach Food Selection and Preparation. His published food preparation lab manual is used in many programs throughout the U.S.

Transitions

Dr. Shelly Nickols-Richardson joined the nutrition faculty at The Pennsylvania State University in January. She served HNFE as a researcher, teacher, advisor, and Dietetics Undergraduate Program Director. She continues to serve as an Adjunct Professor in HNFE.

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Please contact Carol Papillon with comments or questions (e-mail cpapillo@vt.edu).

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