

2008

HNFE Happenings

A Message from the Department Head

“Our lives are not determined by what happens to us but by how we react to what happens, not by what life brings to us, but by the attitude we bring to life. A positive attitude causes a chain reaction of positive thoughts, events, and outcomes. It is a catalyst, a spark that creates extraordinary results.” –Anonymous



Joe Marcy

For the entire Hokie Nation, including HNFE, this year has been one of community and of building stronger relationships. Many of our students, alumni, and friends are active in VT Engage (www.engage.vt.edu/), and we thank you for your participation and commitment to service. If you have not visited the VT Engage website, I encourage you to learn more and become involved. Please join us in our mission of service – living out our university’s motto since 1896: *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve).

I hope you will find some news from the Department of HNFE that excites you to contact us, or better yet, come for a visit. We welcome all of our alumni and friends back to campus to see how we have grown and changed. I believe when you do visit, you will find a department full of energy and enthusiasm with both familiar and new faces.

Thank you for your interest in the Department of HNFE. We welcome the chance to build on our relationships with our alumni and friends. Please let us know if we can be of assistance to you.

Best regards,

Joe Marcy, Interim Department Head

HNFE Alumni Recognized

Carl N. King, Ed.D., 1979 graduate, has been selected **Outstanding Alumnus** for HNFE. He recently retired as Director of Preventive Cardiology, Cardiovascular Disease Management, and Cardiovascular Research at Forsythe Medical Center in Winston-Salem, N.C. King has been a leader in pulmonary and cardiac rehabilitation by devoting his energy and talent to helping colleagues, students, and health-care organizations build more effective and safer programs of clinical care. He recently served as president of the American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation and received its career award for clinical leadership. King has served Virginia Tech through teaching summer workshops for many years and as a member of HNFE’s Advisory Board.



Michelle Rockwell and Carl N. King

Michelle Rockwell, M.S., R.D., C.S.S.D., who earned her B.S. (1997) and M.S. (1999) in HNFE, was selected as the **Outstanding Recent Alumnus**. Rockwell founded the Sports Nutrition Department at University of Florida and served as its first Director of Sports Nutrition from 2000-2005. She is a co-founder of RK Team Nutrition that provides sports nutrition education to students, dietetic interns, registered dietitians, and athletes. She co-presented a Sports Nutrition Playbook conference on campus in February that was subsidized by the Gatorade Sports Science Institute to allow students to attend for a nominal fee. She has also spoken to HNFE students about her role as a sports nutritionist. She speaks nationally and has authored multiple publications.

Virginia Tech Dietetic Internship Wins National Award

The Dietetic Internship Program, directed by **Carol Papillon**, won the American Dietetic Association Public Policy and Advocacy Award in Dietetics Education in January. The award recognizes “outstanding examples among our dietetics programs of learning outcomes in policy advocacy and political action.” The internship program is based on a curriculum designed by **Susan Moore**, Northern Virginia Site Director.

Student Achievements

Zhuo Fu, graduate student in **Dongmin Liu’s** lab, was awarded an American Heart Association predoctoral fellowship of \$40,000.

Jessica (Fleischman) Stratton was named a Virginia Tech Graduate School Citizen Scholar and was awarded the ADA Foundation’s 2007 Ecolab Scholarship.

Five HNFE students won poster presentation awards at the **Deans’ Forum on Health, Food, and Nutrition** that was held at The Inn at Virginia Tech on November 5-6. Graduate students **Elizabeth Dennis** and **Zhuo Fu** won cash awards and undergraduate student **Nita Parsnani** and graduate students **Emily Jones** and **Abigail Pearis** received honorable mentions. **Stella Volpe**, an HNFE alumna, and **Paul Estabrooks**, an HNFE faculty member, were featured speakers at the conference.

Virginia Tech Helping Heifer Help Others

During spring break, Susan Clark took eight College of Agriculture and Life Sciences students to Heifer International Ranch. At Heifer, students learned of the program’s role in community development and self-sustainability in the United States and in many third-world countries. Heifer’s goals include ending world hunger, building stronger communities, and conserving the environment. Students performed service activities such as gardening, animal husbandry, landscaping, and construction. They spent one night in the global village where students were left without food or water. The community development skills taught by Heifer were put into practice as students pooled their resources so that no one went hungry. The knowledge and skills they acquired during this experience can be applied at Virginia Tech and in their own communities.

New HNFE Research Center Translates Research to Practice

The **Center for Translational Obesity Research** is a new HNFE research initiative led by **Paul Estabrooks**. Specifically, the center focuses on research that is practical and can easily be moved into practice. Estabrooks joined the faculty in August 2007 from the Institute for Health Research at Kaiser Permanente Colorado and is primarily based in the new **Roanoke Riverside Complex**. The primary tenet of the center is getting the right people in the right places involved in the research process at the right time to help ensure that the research benefits achieve a strong outreach into the community. The center’s mission is to enhance the quality of life of all Virginians by discovering and disseminating sustainable approaches to promote physical activity, nutrition, and healthful weight management. The center involves multiple stakeholders from the community, health care, and government organizations in addition to local residents. In August 2007, the center received its first large five-year award (\$2.5 million) from the National Cancer Institute and the National Institute of Diabetes, Digestive, and Kidney Disorders to study ways to help overweight employees lose weight. Other work involves studying the effect of physical activity promotion, post cardiac stress testing among minority women, and management of diabetes. **Fabio Almeida**, a scientist with expertise in social networks and lifestyle interventions, and Estabrooks are full-time faculty members at the center. Other collaborating investigators include **George Davis**, **Brenda Davy**, **Kevin Davy**, **Kirby Deater-Deckard**, **Mary McFerren**, **Elena Serrano**, and **Wen You**. Organizational partners include **Carilion Clinic**, **Kaiser Permanente**, **The University of Houston**, **Virginia Cooperative Extension**, and **IncentaHEALTH**.



Virginia Tech Students at Heifer International Ranch in Perryville, Arkansas, March 2008

Back left to right: **Teressa Tubia** (Dairy Science), **Jess Martin** (HNFE), **Karri Honaker** (Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences); Front left to right: **Stephanie Riviere**, (HNFE), **Melissa Hendricks** (HNFE), **Brittany Richardson** (Animal and Poultry Sciences), **Allison Bridges** (Animal and Poultry Sciences), and **Cindy Green** (Agricultural Sciences)

Summer Scholars Partner with Faculty on Research

They were a little apprehensive – “How much time will I spend in the lab?” “Do I have enough background knowledge to do research?” “Am I needed in their lab?” “Will I make too many mistakes?” – but plunged into the summer research program with few noticeable qualms. Five undergraduates were matched with a faculty mentor and participated in the first HNFE Summer Scholars program during the summer of 2007. The program allowed each scholar to participate in a weekly research seminar, write a project proposal, implement the project, write a final paper, and present at a symposium held on campus. The program was funded by a \$5,000 Provost’s Summer Session grant awarded to **Christina McIntyre**, former undergraduate coordinator for HNFE, and **Deborah Good**, associate professor in HNFE. One scholar, **Aaron Rudd**, presented his research at the ACC Meeting of the Minds Conference held at Florida State University on April 17-19. Applications for the summer 2008 program, which is now funded by a USDA Higher Education Challenge Grant, totaled 28. Eight undergraduates will participate.

The students in the 2007 program, their mentors, and their diverse research topics were:

Katharine Asta with Assistant Professor Young Ju studied “the effect of dietary peptide treatment on the growth rate of estrogen independent human metastatic breast cancer cells.”

Carmen Byker with Assistant Professor Elena Serrano studied “from farm to fork: a look at local eating.”

Aaron Rudd with Associate Professor Deborah Good studied “NHLH₂ expression in skeletal muscle tissue and



HNFE Summer Scholars and the CRC Laboratory Hokie Bird: From left to right, Christina McIntyre, Program Director, Carmen Byker, Katharine Asta, the CRC Laboratory Hokie Bird, Aaron Rudd, Kelly Wilson, Kristin Wahlberg and Deborah Good, Program Director

its putative role in the development of skeletal muscle tissue.”

Kristin Wahlberg with Assistant Professor Matthew Hulver studied “the role of TLR4 signaling through HIFI in the regulation of substrate metabolisms in skeletal muscle.”

Kelly Wilson with Assistant Professor Brenda Davy and Associate Professor Kevin Davy studied “habitual beverage consumption patterns of overweight and obese middle-aged and older adults.”

For more information about the Summer Scholars Program, contact Deborah Good at goodd@vt.edu, or visit the HNFE website at www.hnfe.vt.edu.

Undergraduate Highlights

HNFE students receive academic advising from our new undergraduate advisors, **Amanda Stanley** and **Kelly Lawson**. Both have been instrumental in getting the new **HNFE Academic Advising Center** opened with innovative features such as four hours of advising by online instant messaging each week, an appointment system, and a flat-screen monitor to highlight essential advising messages. **Joe Marcy**, interim department head, envisioned this creative solution to the challenging problem of our growing undergraduate enrollment, which is currently approximately 800 students. Each student is also assigned a faculty mentor to assist in career planning. The advising center and a much-needed classroom that seats 24 are located in renovated space that was a foods lab.

The Department of HNFE became a **restricted major** beginning in May 2007. The purpose of the restriction is to ensure that HNFE students succeed in their advanced courses and succeed in graduate and professional school acceptance. Students in the dietetics option must maintain an overall G.P.A. of 3.0 and those in the other options must maintain a G.P.A. of 2.5. All students must maintain a G.P.A. of 2.5 in their major courses and at least a C in key courses, including general chemistry, organic chemistry, and foods and nutrition.



HNFE Academic Advising Center

HNFE Welcomes New Faculty

Paul Estabrooks, Ph.D., is director of the Center for Translational Obesity Research based at the new Roanoke Riverside Center and teaches a graduate class related to behavioral interventions.

Laurie Bianchi, M.S., Heather Cox, R.D., and Jennie Hill, M.S., are new instructors in HNFE. **Bianchi** serves as the undergraduate coordinator and teaches an orientation course that helps HNFE freshmen plan for a successful academic career. She was formerly a pediatric dietitian and plans to contribute this expertise to HNFE students in the future. **Cox's** area of expertise is food communication and food-service management and she is completing her masters this spring. She has developed two new courses that have enhanced the dietetics curriculum. **Hill** teaches epidemiology and health counseling courses. She is completing her Ph.D. and researching influences of physical and social environments on physical activity and obesity.

George Davis, Ph.D., was hired jointly with Department of Agriculture and Applied Economics and collaborates with many HNFE faculty members. His research focus relates to food demand and health outcomes with particular emphasis on time allocation and childhood obesity.

Faculty Achievements

Brenda Davy, assistant professor, was awarded the **2008 Future Leader Award** by the North American branch of the International Life Sciences Institute. The award is given to promising nutrition and food scientists and supports new or existing projects.

Kevin Davy, director of the Human Integrative Physiological Laboratory, has been elected a **fellow of the American Heart Association** and the Council of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Metabolism. He is also on the editorial board for *Therapeutic Advances in Cardiovascular Diseases*.

Kathy Hosig won the **Certificate of Teaching Excellence** for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences in recognition her outstanding contributions to undergraduate and graduate education.

Carol Papillon, M.P.H., R.D., Dietetic Internship Program director, was awarded the **Outstanding Dietetic Educator** award from the American Dietetic Association.

The National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences awarded the Program Excellence Through Research Award to **Elena Serrano's program "Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids."** **Joan Wages**, Extension specialist, was instrumental in this effort.

Transitions

Christina McIntyre, former undergraduate coordinator and assistant department head, left HNFE to become the Associate Director of University Honors.



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Dongmin Liu wins Excellence in Research Award

Dongmin Liu, assistant professor of human nutrition, foods and exercise, was recognized with the HNFE Excellence in Research Award. His research focuses on identifying bioactive components that prevent diabetes and vascular disease and seeks to explain the cellular and molecular systems involved. Liu has published widely and has received more than \$1.3 million in funding for his research from the National Institute of Health, American Diabetes Association, American Heart Association, CVT Therapeutic, Inc, Virginia CommonHealth Health Research Board, and the Harvey Peters Foundation.

Susan Hutson Will Join HNFE Department in July

Welcome to Susan M. Hutson, Ph.D., who will begin her position as department head on July 1 and comes to us from Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center. Hutson is committed to the teaching, research, and outreach missions of the university. She is dedicated to supporting an undergraduate curriculum that meets the educational needs of students in today's changing economy.

Hutson has strong interests in faculty research development and mentoring, strategic planning to enhance our research profile, and the use of information technology to facilitate these goals. Nearly all of Hutson's work has been in nutrition and nutrition-related disciplines. She has been continuously funded for more than 20 years by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disorders of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). At Virginia Tech, Hutson is interested in working to bring people together and develop more collaborative multidisciplinary programs. "It is challenging to break into new fields," she said. Through collaboration, her research portfolio has become very diverse, and she hopes to help others do the same thing, especially since NIH is currently emphasizing multidisciplinary, collaborative research.



Susan Hutson

Hutson completed her B.A. in molecular biology at Vanderbilt and her Ph.D. in biochemistry at the University of Wisconsin. Currently, she is chair-elect of the Nutritional Sciences Council and a former chair of the Energy and Macronutrient Research Interest Section of the American Society of Nutrition, which is the primary national nutrition organization and publisher of the *Journal of Nutrition*, where she also serves on the editorial board.

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Indicate ways you would like to be involved (support scholarships, internship opportunities in your workplace, etc.):

Extension and HNFE Supporting Local Food Systems

Elena Serrano, Virginia Cooperative Extension specialist and HNFE faculty member, is actively involved in the growing national and international movement to increase access to locally produced foods. Consumers are seeking local foods because of the many potential benefits to the local economy, the environment, and society associated with supporting the local food system. Recent initiatives include:

- In 2006, **Nick Rose**, a Ph.D. student, conducted a “100-mile Diet” research project in which participants sought to consume as much of their food produced within a 100-mile radius of Blacksburg as possible. The results from this study suggest that a locally based diet may lead to improvements in dietary quality, particularly fruit and vegetable consumption.
- Serrano is serving on the board of the Friends of the **Blacksburg Farmers Market**. She is working toward promoting the market through weekly e-newsletters, a promotional local foods-based cookbook, and efforts to engage Virginia Tech students. She is also looking for opportunities to connect farmers with preschools to encourage children to learn more about where their food comes from.
- HNFE’s community nutrition course offered service-learning opportunities that included working with the farmers market. Students involved include **Carmen Byker, Madison East, Ashley Nichols, and Morgann Wagner**.
- HNFE was also represented at the recent Women in Agriculture conference held April 9 in Weyers Cave where Serrano spoke on Locavores and Local Food Initiatives.

HNFE Happenings

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Share a favorite and help the Fitness and Nutrition Club fundraising project! Send your favorite recipe to FAN@vt.edu with your name, your affiliation with HNFE (alumni, faculty, student, friend), the source of the recipe, and a brief story about the recipe. Thank you, and we are looking forward to your culinary contribution!



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