Annual Report
Of the
Virginia Center on Aging
Virginia Commonwealth University

Accomplishments in 2001
And
Goals for 2002
Overview

This report summarizes activities of the Virginia Center on Aging (VCoA) during calendar 2001. It is organized by calendar year because of the practice of providing an annual report to the Virginia General Assembly when it convenes in January.

Calendar year 2001 contained, of course, September 11th, which changed irrevocably how life is lived in America. The terrorist attacks on Americans altered how we live each day of our lives and this, cumulatively, is what we call “aging.” We do not know, and we will not know for some time, how the experiences of growing older --- the routines, social interactions, frustrations, and dreams of everyday life --- will be different henceforth. We can, however, continue to do our best. This is true for all of us, individuals or agencies.

In the enabling legislation, VCoA was charged with 10 responsibilities, encompassing three principal functions: 1) interdisciplinary studies, including training in aging-related topics and the education of older adults; 2) research; and 3) information sharing. VCoA maintains a statewide commitment, conducting at least one of its three principal functions in all five geographic regions of Virginia every year. VCoA annually lists agencies and businesses it has worked with by geographic region. In calendar year 2001, VCoA worked with over 280 regional entities, 31 statewide departments, coalitions, and non-profit organizations, and 27 units of Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in satisfying its legislated mandates. (See Appendix A for a listing of those we worked with.) These partnerships enabled us to accomplish far more than our staffing level would suggest.

Calendar 2001 once again proved that partnering or collaborating is the key to leveraging resources for a relatively small unit like the Virginia Center on Aging. The following pages describe many partnerships initiated, maintained or improved during calendar 2001. Moreover, this practice will become ever more important as an effective way of serving Virginia’s elders and their families, for funding sources within Virginia and elsewhere require more impact for their diminishingly available support. As we have said before, this is fine with us. We see work with our colleagues across Virginia as the natural way of doing more.
Mission

- The General Assembly, in creating the Virginia Center on Aging by amendment to the Code of Virginia in 1978, charged it to be “an interdisciplinary study, research, (and) information and resource facility for the Commonwealth of Virginia…” It is the only such Center in the Commonwealth. The Virginia Center on Aging (VCoA) is satisfying its mandate from the General Assembly and is operating across Virginia, in a statewide capacity. Characteristically, the VCoA is accomplishing its activities through partnerships with various units, both across the Commonwealth and within Virginia Commonwealth University. VCoA believes that these partnerships serve the aging-related needs of Virginia in a most cost-effective manner and broaden the capacity of units within VCU to conduct aging-related research, education, and community service.

Under “interdisciplinary study” the General Assembly’s mandate includes:

- Continuing education and in-service training for those who work with the elderly
- Education and training of older persons
- Educational preparation of non-gerontology students

Under “research” the General Assembly’s mandate includes:

- Conduct of research in the field of gerontology
- Dissemination of research findings

Under “information and resource facility,” the General Assembly’s mandate includes:

- Collection and maintenance of data about older persons statewide and regionally
- Serving as a resource to the State Office on Aging (now called the Virginia Department for the Aging) and to all organizations and state agencies involved in aging-related planning and service delivery
Activities in 2001

During calendar 2001 the Virginia Center on Aging interacted and collaborated with colleagues in state, regional, and local agencies and organizations, both public and private, and with units of Virginia Commonwealth University, in order to achieve its responsibilities. The following are representative activities.

Highlighting activities in 2001:


- VCoA and the Professional/Consumer Advocacy Council, which it developed during the Partners III project on aging with lifelong disabilities, coordinated an assessment by a VCU graduate student intern of the Personal Assistant Services programs at the Department of Rehabilitative Services and the Department of Medical Assistance Services.

- VCoA participated in “Keeping the Person at the Centre: Developing Effective Models of Social & Health Care for People with Developmental Disabilities and Dementia,” an international invitational conference in Edinburgh, Scotland in February that developed research and services protocols for dementia among older adults with lifelong intellectual disabilities. Entitled *The Edinburgh Principles*, these protocols were published by the World Health Organization.

- VCoA joined the Steering Committee of the Virginia Elder Rights Coalition (VERC), a network of organizations, agencies, and individuals to promote the rights and autonomy of older Virginians. In early 2001 the American Bar Association awarded VERC one of 10 Partnerships in Law and Aging Program grants in the nation. The grant funded the development of a Virginia-specific Elder Rights Notebook and Website for professionals in law and aging.

- VCoA continued its work throughout 2001 within a small coalition of individuals and agencies seeking to establish a new senior center in Chesterfield County. In 2001 this group formalized an administrative relationship for the proposed center with the Senior Center of Richmond, and successfully sought monetary support for further development from county, business, and private foundation sources.

- VCoA held its Eighth *Love of Learning* program, its traditional Valentine’s Day introduction to lifelong learning for older Virginians, at the Chamberlin Hotel at Fort Monroe in an expanded two-night format. This year’s sold out program offered a series of mini-lectures on topics explored more fully in VCoA’s other lifelong learning and Elderhostel offerings across Virginia.
VCoA partnered with the Jefferson Area Board for the Aging in presenting a program on implications of an aging population, the 2020 Community Plan, in Charlottesville in March.

VCoA contributed a feature article on aging with lifelong disabilities for a special issue of the Catholic Virginian focusing upon aging published in May. This periodical reached over 75,000 homes from Tidewater to Southwest Virginia.

VCoA partnered with statewide aging-related organizations in order to provide research findings and training for professionals across Virginia. VCoA co-sponsored the Seventh Annual Conference of the Virginia Coalition for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, in Virginia Beach in June, and the 2001 Joint Conference of the Virginia Association on Aging and the Virginia Coalition for the Aging, in Richmond in November.

VCoA conducted several targeted training programs for administrative and direct service staff in long-term care, including a workshop entitled Maintaining Competence: The Environmental Press Model as a Tool for Appraisal that was given at the 45-Hour Qualifying Course, “Introduction to Activity Management,” of the Virginia Health Care Association in June.

VCoA provided content support in the launch of SeniorNavigator.com, a new Internet resource for Virginians on health and aging issues, finances, legal questions, family caregiving, exercise, and related matters. VCoA was a founding endorsing organization.

VCoA continued its efforts to increase awareness of the Alzheimer’s and Related Diseases Research Award Fund (ARDRAF) as a stimulus to innovative inquiries into the causes, consequences, and treatment of dementia; in 2001 VCoA emphasized the utility of ARDRAF for practical research, in mailings to over 500 nursing homes and adult care residences across Virginia, and explored how several other states set and manage their dementia research programs.

VCoA co-represented Virginia Commonwealth University in meetings throughout 2001 on the Steering Committee to conceptualize and refine the course of development of The Center for Excellence in Aging and Geriatric Health, in Williamsburg. This Center would join academic, clinical practice, and human services entities in creating a model community to promote well-being among older adults. Led by the Williamsburg Crossroads Coalition, this initiative has won some grant support to continue development and solidify collaboration.

VCoA continued its initiative to educate clergy and lay leaders in communities of faith in matters of aging and wellness, conducting programs for older adult ministries in Glen Allen and Midlothian, and for the Virginia Baptist Mission Board in Richmond.
VCoA partnered in an initiative led by the Virginia Department of Health and the Virginia Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation entitled the Virginia Arthritis Task Force (VATF). Funded by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, VATF assessed the status of arthritis awareness in the Commonwealth, in early 2001 published the guiding document, *2001-2005 Virginia Arthritis Action Plan*, and in October held the Arthritis Summit where it reviewed the *Action Plan* and issued the *2001 Virginia Arthritis Report*.

VCoA and other members of the Consortium on Successful Aging from the Medical College of Virginia campus of VCU and the McGuire Veterans Administration Medical Center helped VCU’s Department of Internal Medicine to develop a successful grant proposal to the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation; over the course of several years, the project will expand geriatric education for faculty, students, house staff, and community physicians through increased gerontological content in basic sciences, an endowed lecture series, and several other initiatives.

VCoA served as one of three entities representing Virginia at a multi-day conference of the Council of State Governments entitled “Health Policy Forum on Medical Innovation & the Aging of America” held in Williamsburg in October for elected legislators and policy makers from states along the northeast seaboard.

VCoA lent its support in a practical manner to the Alzheimer’s Association, Greater Richmond Chapter, furnishing a team of fund-raising walkers in the annual Alzheimer’s Association Memory Walk in October.

VCoA maintained over 175 aging-related videos in its Information Resource Center, all catalogued and cross-referenced, and promoted their availability through its web page (http://views.vcu.edu/vcoa) and printed mailings. During calendar 2001, VCoA loaned some 150 videos cumulatively to individuals and to 43 agencies and organizations across Virginia.

VCoA participated in a select national research forum on aging with lifelong disabilities in November entitled “Invitational Research Symposium: Promoting Health Aging, Family Support, and Age-Friendly Communities,” organized by the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Aging and Developmental Disabilities of the University of Illinois at Chicago.

VCoA is a founding organizational member of the Central Virginia Coalition for Quality End-of-Life Care. In 2001 this coalition conducted five discussions and eight forums connected to two series on dying by PBS and Knight-Ridder Newspapers, established its strategic plan, and identified community resources.

VCoA staff gave substantial services to Virginia’s agencies and citizens by serving on the boards of a dozen non-profit organizations, providing leadership, technical assistance, and *pro bono* services to groups such as the Shepherd’s Center of Richmond and the Alzheimer’s Association.
Short recaps of selected activities in 2001 follow, organized according to the respective mandate from the General Assembly:

a. **Interdisciplinary Studies**

Healthy and Unhealthy Lifestyles in Later Life. VCoA and the VCU Department of Gerontology jointly submitted a proposal to, and received funding from, the Delaware Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities for a multi-part project to help older adults who wish assistance to break unhealthy habits. The project, entitled *More Life Left to Live: Educating Older Adults About Healthy and Unhealthy Lifestyles*, received funding June 1st and will continue for over three years. The project is conducting a statewide survey of older Delawareans to document the need for health promotion and disease prevention education, and will develop and implement a special statewide model education and prevention program for older adults and service professionals in aging, health, mental health, and substance abuse. This model intervention uses a “train the trainer” approach to broaden the project’s impact, and content will address such unhealthy behaviors as compulsive gambling, smoking, alcoholism, depression, and suicidal ideation, through alternative activities that foster health promotion and wellness.

Domestic Violence Against Aging Women. VCoA organized a partnership of organizations across Virginia to address domestic violence in culturally diverse populations. Unfortunately, neither age nor race offers sanctuary against battering in domestic settings. While significant progress has been made in improving public awareness of, and community response to, domestic violence in general, similar efforts intended to benefit older, racially and ethnically diverse populations tend to lag behind. To address this deficit, VCoA proposed to develop, conduct and evaluate a meaningful and cultural competent training program in diverse communities across Virginia with the collaboration of other organizations, and under the guidance of an Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from Native American, African American, and Hispanic American populations. VCoA assembled an array of service providers, advocates, researchers, and trainers from the Virginia Institute for Social Services Training Activities (VISSTA); Mattaponi-Pamunkey-Monacan, Inc., the social service organization representing all eight of Virginia’s indigenous Indian tribes; the Central Virginia Task Force on Older Battered Women; and the Virginia Coalition for the Prevention of Elder Abuse to carry out this initiative. As the lead agency, VCoA wrote a proposal, Domestic Violence Against Aging Women: Culturally Competent Responses and Mutual Aid, which it submitted for funding to the Office of Community Services, Administration for Children and Families, USDHHS. We are awaiting news on the status of this proposal.
• Elderhostel and Lifelong Learning Programs. VCoA conducted 54 programs for older adults, including weeklong and short-term Elderhostels and its Love of Learning. These attracted 1774 older adults to our four sites in Virginia: Hampton/Yorktown, Richmond, Natural Bridge, and Petersburg. This represented a decline in enrollments of some 11% from calendar 2000 that can be accounted for by the loss of 200-250 Elderhostel registrations in September and October following the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Elderhostel enrollments in VCoA’s multi-state region and across the United States dropped 15% and 14%, respectively, and more than 600 national and international programs were cancelled. VCoA introduced 24 new Elderhostel programs in 2001, including eight at Hampton/Yorktown, four at Richmond, and 12 at Natural Bridge. VCoA also offered two new Lifelong Learning residential programs and sponsored a series of new classes at Lakewood Manor Retirement Community in Henrico County. These new programs provided a greater variety of format and coursework, as well as expanding VCoA’s faculty and community alliances. In February VCoA’s traditional “Love of Learning” program sold out, while in May we introduced our first three-day Lifelong Learning program, “Appalachian Echoes: Lee Smith and the Southern Literary Voice.” The latter featured three newly affiliated instructors, including the author of Lee Smith, Annie Dillard and the Hollins Group, and it filled to capacity, as well.

b. Research

• Virginia Geriatric Education Center (VGEC) Core Grant. VCoA is partnering in this five-year (2000-2005) grant project, directed by the VCU Department of Gerontology and funded by the Bureau of Health Professions, Health Resources and Services Administration, USDHHS. VCoA is directing evaluation of each objective to improve the training in geriatrics of pre-service and in-practice health professionals, including curriculum development, faculty and practitioner training, and the clinical training of students. Featured initiatives in this grant project include a Geriatric Health Professional Mentoring Program, a Kids Into Health Careers Partnership, and Geriatric Case Management.

• Dementia-Specific Training of Long-Term Care Personnel. VCoA and the VGEC, in partnership with the Virginia Department for the Aging (VDA), the Alzheimer’s Association Chapters, and the Nursing Assistant Institute (NAI), are evaluating each aspect of an innovative, progressive, three-step training project that is designed to increase the knowledge and skills regarding dementia of those who work in long-term care settings, especially those who deliver most of the hands on care. VCoA’s other partners have primary responsibility for implementing each of the three steps that VCoA is evaluating: 1) the Alzheimer’s Association Chapters, for providing dementia-specific training to 1,000 long-term care personnel, 2) VDA and NAI, for preparing 500 nursing assistants who have participated in this dementia training to be able to conduct in-service training on
VGEC, for offering 40 hours of job-focused training for 100 nursing assistants who have successfully completed both the dementia-specific training and the train-the-trainer module. The latter curriculum being developed by VGEC, with assistance from pastoral care, rehabilitation counseling, social work and nursing professionals, derives in part from a statewide needs assessment that VCoA conducted with nursing assistants and Directors of Nursing at long-term care facilities this year. The overall project will continue for some years, with VCoA assessing longitudinally the impact of the progressive three-step model upon the job satisfaction and career commitment of nursing assistants.

- **Older Women and Domestic Violence: An Economic Analysis.** VCoA developed and submitted a grant proposal to the Guggenheim Foundation to examine national secondary data sources to determine whether women aged 50 and over differ systematically from younger women with regard to several variables that may simultaneously predict the level of violence in abusive relationships and account for the underuse of domestic violence services by older women. The variables to be studied include characteristics of the individual, the domestic relationship, and the domestic violence service program. Unfortunately, this proposal was not funded.

- **The Health Consequences of Childhood and Adult Abuse.** VCoA collaborated with researchers from VCU’s Department of Gerontology and Winthrop University to develop a grant proposal to examine the relationships between abuse, experienced as a child or as an adult, and the health and behavioral characteristics of women currently aged 50 and over. Using data from the National Violence Against Women Survey, this team would investigate associations between a history of abuse and present health outcomes. Results would provide information that could guide future policy decisions in health care and domestic violence services. This proposal was not funded.

- **Statewide Survey of Older Virginians.** The last comprehensive interviews with older Virginians to determine their physical and mental health statuses, socioeconomic circumstances, and awareness and use of needed community resources were conducted by VCoA in 1978-80. These data were of such high quality that they maintained their usefulness well into the early 1990s. However, the absence of related current information affects human services agencies in their planning and resource allocations. In calendar 2001 VCoA continued its efforts to conduct this statewide research that would identify elders most in need of assistance. In late 2000 the Joint Commission on Health Care (JCHC) of the General Assembly unanimously endorsed the Statewide Survey and identified House and Senate patrons to introduce budget amendments in the 2001 Session for its implementation. VCoA testified on these in the 2001 Session, but the amendments were not passed. In late 2001 JCHC again selected and unanimously endorsed the Statewide Survey, following a rigorous priority process. Patrons introduced budget amendments to be considered in the 2002 Session.
Alzheimer’s and Related Diseases Research Award Fund (ARDRAF). VCoA manages this seed grant program for the Commonwealth without administrative cost. ARDRAF appropriations support promising lines of inquiry by Virginia researchers into clinical, biochemical, behavioral, pharmaceutical, and other aspects of dementing illnesses, in order to better understand their causes, consequences, and treatment. In 2001 the General Assembly’s appropriation of $125,000 allowed VCoA to make five awards in the 2001-2002 competition, two on brain biochemistry, and one each on pharmaceutical intervention, clinical care, and respite care for caregivers. (See Appendix B for summaries of the 2001-2002 awards and the review committee and Appendix C for abstracts of the Final Reports of the 2000-2001 ARDRAF awardees)

c. Information and Resource Sharing.

Community Dissemination. VCoA completed a variety of community-based efforts to disseminate aging-related data and resources, as well as information about its research and training, current and future Lifelong Learning and Elderhostel programs. These included two hour-long radio programs on aging issues broadcast from studios in the Northern Neck, two radio interviews on-site at stations in Richmond, and participation as an exhibitor at 18 local conferences, fairs, workshops, and special events, in places from Tyson’s Corner, to Virginia Beach, to Williamsburg, to Charlottesville. These included Senior Day at the Hanover County Parks and Recreation Center, the Crater District Senior Day in Colonial Heights, the Annual Fair of the Chesterfield County Triad, and the Christopher Wren Association in Williamsburg.

Web Page (http://views.vcu.edu/vcoa). VCoA continued to upgrade its web page during calendar 2001. The web page contains the main features of each quarterly issue of Age in Action since fall 1997; listings of current and near-future Elderhostel and other lifelong learning programs; data on older Virginians, as well as links to other web-based data resources; links to aging-related organizations both within Virginia and elsewhere; a comprehensive overview of the Alzheimer’s and Related Diseases Research Award Fund, including past awards since inception in 1982, the current year’s awardees, and application procedures; a statewide calendar of aging-related events; biographical sketches of VCoA staff members and synopses of some of their research interests; and a detailed catalog of VCoA’s audiovisual holdings available for loan to individuals, groups, and organizations within Virginia.
Age in Action. VCoA’s quarterly 20-page publication, co-produced with the Virginia Department for the Aging and Virginia Commonwealth University’s Department of Gerontology, reaches some 4,500 professionals, paraprofessionals, elders and families each issue, with case studies, opportunities, research, and educational information. Each issue begins with a case study of a condition or topic of broad gerontological relevance. Volume 16’s four case studies included “Vision and Hearing Loss in the Older Adult – ‘Double Trouble’” (Winter 2001), “Enhancing the Quality of Life of Nursing Home Residents with Late Stage Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Disorders” (Spring), “Bridging Aging and Domestic Violence Services in Our Communities” (Summer), and “Avoiding Medication Pitfalls” (Fall).
Goals 2002

VCoA will continue its self-appraisal in order to ensure accomplishing the Priority Goals promulgated by its Advisory Committee. VCoA will dedicate two of the quarterly joint meetings of its Advisory Committee and University Council to monitoring progress in attaining annual objectives, modifying strategies and activities, and establishing new objectives, while attempting to accommodate changes in the national economy, in administrative and promotional policies of the national and regional Elderhostel headquarters, and in priorities of funding sources. The terrorist attacks of September 11th and downturns in the economy have certainly had far-reaching consequences on many sectors of state and federal government, business, and higher education. Subsequent effects upon our operations remain to be seen.

VCoA will, of course, continue its commitment to its legislated mandates, maintaining alertness for opportunities to leverage its resources to the benefit of older Virginians and their families. We anticipate that partnerships and affiliations will again help maximize VCoA’s productivity. The following outline of activities intended for 2002 is organized according to the mandates of interdisciplinary studies, research, and information and resource sharing.

Interdisciplinary Studies

- VCoA will continue its new joint project with the Department of Gerontology at VCU, funded by the State of Delaware, that seeks to offer older adults with gambling, alcohol, or other unhealthy behaviors various health promoting alternatives. In calendar 2002 VCoA intends to continue its development of a statewide survey of older Delawareans to gauge prevalence of unhealthy lifestyles; further its creation of a wellness curriculum; and script a video on healthy and unhealthy behaviors. Because of the project’s focus upon both older adults and service providers in a number of aging- and health-related fields, VCoA believes that the project’s processes and outcomes will have ready relevance to the Commonwealth of Virginia.

- VCoA intends to continue its active collaboration in the new multi-year Core Center grant directed by the Virginia Geriatric Education Center. VCoA staff will help to accomplish goals intended to improve the geriatrics training of health professionals and their care of older patients. Key features of this initiative include a Geriatrics Health Professional Mentoring Program, Geriatric Case Management, and a Kids Into Health Careers Partnership.
VCoA intends to continue to innovate in the formats and content of its Elderhostel and Lifelong Learning programs, in order to continue the growth of enrollments in the former and the diversity of geographic settings in the latter. Both of these were interrupted by the tragic events of September 11\textsuperscript{th}.

VCoA intends to continue its developmental work in the matter of domestic violence against older women. So far, this has involved leadership in a regional task force, some presentations before professionals in adult protective services, and several creative but unsuccessful grant proposals on economic and health correlates.

VCoA intends to maintain its involvement in the Virginia Arthritis Task Force, led by the Virginia Department of Health with funding from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and to help prioritize tasks in implementing the 2001-2005 Virginia Arthritis Action Plan.

**Research**

VCoA will continue its evaluation of the partnered project to increase both the dementia-specific training of long-term care workers and their likelihood of remaining. A collaboration of the Virginia Geriatric Education Center, the Virginia Department for the Aging, the Nursing Assistant Institute, the Alzheimer’s Association network of Chapters, and VCoA is in the middle of a progressive, three-part train-the-trainer initiative potentially affecting some 1000 nursing assistants. VCoA will evaluate outcomes of the training, including its impact on the nursing assistants’ job satisfaction and career commitment.

VCoA intends to conduct a research and education conference in 2002 highlighting the multiple contributions of the Alzheimer’s and Related Diseases Research Award Fund (ARDRAF) to better understanding of the causes, consequences, and treatments of dementing illnesses. This second, biannual conference will be co-sponsored with the Alzheimer’s Association of Greater Richmond in order to reach an added audience of family caregivers and human services providers, and with the Maguire Veterans Administration Medical Center in order to increase the involvement of physicians. This second conference will feature past ARDRAF awardees, as well as notable invited speakers, and will serve, among other purposes, as a means of demonstrating that ARDRAF is an important stimulant to innovative research into biochemical, clinical, behavioral, caregiving, public policy and other aspects of dementia.
VCoA hopes to gain the support of the General Assembly and of private sector sponsors for the conduct of a much-needed Statewide Survey of Older Virginians in order to document more comprehensively the physical, mental, and socioeconomic statuses of older Virginians and their families, as well as their knowledge and use of relevant available community resources.

**Information and Resource Sharing**

VCoA intends to continue its leadership in two productive alliances for preventing and responding to violence against older Virginians, namely the Central Virginia Task Force for Older Battered Women and the Virginia Coalition for the Prevention of Elder Abuse.

VCoA intends to continue to partner with statewide aging-related organizations as an effective means of disseminating research findings and training for professionals across Virginia. VCoA will co-develop and co-sponsor the annual conferences of associations throughout the year.

VCoA intends to maintain its extensive involvement on the boards of numerous non-profit aging-related organizations, offering *pro bono* gerontological expertise and technical assistance to the benefit of the elders and families that these organizations serve.

VCoA intends to computerize the holdings in the Information Resource Center (IRC), the lending library of films and books that it maintains for the citizens of the Commonwealth. Our hope is to see that these holdings are updated and computer-registered, and that a computer-based loan program is operational in the forthcoming calendar year.
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Appendix A

List of Agencies Worked with in 2001 by Geographic Region
Appendix B

Alzheimer’s and Related Diseases Research Award Fund
Announcement of 2001-2002 Awards, and Membership on the
Review Committee
Appendix C

Abstracts of Final Reports of 2000-2001 Awardees in the Alzheimer’s and Related Diseases Research Award Fund