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Contact: Kim Tarantino
kim@SeniorNavigator.org
(804) 525-7733

Elite Group of Health and Aging Professionals from Across Virginia Meet in Charlottesville with Goal of Supporting Family Caregivers

CHARLOTTESVILLE: The Advisory Council of the new *Institute for Innovations in Caregiving* convened at its quarterly meeting in Charlottesville at UVA-HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital on Thursday, January 23rd. Focused on collaboration, this group of professionals from across Virginia has joined forces with a shared vision of improving the physical and emotional health of family caregivers – a population growing by leaps and bounds as the number of Virginians over the age of 65 will double by the year 2030.

SeniorNavigator, a statewide non-profit health and aging organization, received grant funding from a private foundation that wishes to remain anonymous to lead the development of the *Institute for Innovations in Caregiving*. The Institute will develop innovations – leveraging best practices and technology to preserve and improve the wellness of family caregivers, with a special focus on the Alzheimer’s caregiver. The Institute’s ultimate goal is to improve caregivers’ self-care and their ability to manage emotional stressors and tough decisions while bolstering their access to the latest technologies and community resources.

“Caring for an aging loved one is challenging and the toll that caregiving can take on the care provider’s physical and emotional health is extensive,” said Dr. Richard Lindsay, Institute for Innovations in Caregiving Project Consultant and Professor Emeritus of Internal Medicine and Family Medicine at the University of Virginia Health System and founder and former Head of the Division of Geriatric Medicine at the University of Virginia Health System. “Simply put, a healthy caregiver is a better caregiver. It is the mission of this Institute and its revered Council to support Virginia caregivers in maintaining their health.”

The Institute for Innovations in Caregiving brings together partners through its Advisory Council* to facilitate out-of-the-box collaboration among Virginia’s academic programs in aging as well as key Virginia-based service providers. This Council serves as the backbone of the Institute and its activities offering unique peer-to-peer connections – fostering new thinking and practices that might not otherwise be created.

“As a true believer in the good work that can be accomplished through collaborative efforts and sustained interactions, one of the aspects of *The Institute for Innovations in Caregiving* that I am most excited about is the work of its Advisory Council,” said Gordon Walker, Institute for Innovations in Caregiving Project Consultant and retired CEO of the Jefferson Area Board for Aging (JABA). “It is truly energizing to witness this group of some of the most knowledgeable and dedicated health and aging professionals from across the Commonwealth come together for this common goal. No doubt it speaks to the pressing and critical need of supporting and preparing family caregivers who provide close to 90% of all eldercare in Virginia.”

Through its quarterly meetings *The Institute for Innovations in Caregiving* highlights regional programs and services showcasing the model programs in various communities. At its most recent quarterly Advisory Council meeting, two programs serving older adults and caregivers in the Charlottesville area were featured.

- Sue Friedman, President & CEO of The Alzheimer’s Association’s Central and Western Virginia Chapter presented information to Council Members on its Arts Fusion program. The mission of Arts Fusion is to create an environment through the arts that promotes creative expression, interpersonal connections, and enjoyment for persons with dementia. With an innovative approach that integrates, or “fuses,” a variety of art forms, the program serves participants from diverse backgrounds and at all stages of dementia. Arts Fusion also extends arts opportunities to caregivers and family members of those with memory loss as a way to reduce stress and reestablish connections with their loved ones.
- Carol Manning, Ph.D., Director of the Memory Disorders Clinic, Director of the Neurobehavioral Assessment Laboratory, Associate Professor of Neurology and Associate Chair for Faculty Development in the Department of Neurology at the University of Virginia Health System shared with the Council information about The Memory and Aging Care Division at the University of Virginia Health System. The Memory and Aging Care Division at the University of Virginia Health System provides individualized, multi-disciplinary care for people with dementia and other memory or cognitive disorders. The team approach utilized in the clinic is unique and provides expert diagnosis and treatment for patients and their families. The goal of the clinic is to attend to the changing needs of its patients and families. The treatment team includes neurologists, neuropsychologists, a psychiatrist, a social worker, a nurse practitioner and a nurse coordinator.

This Virginia-based Institute is an arm of SeniorNavigator with project management by its staff under the leadership of Adrienne Johnson, executive director. Two national experts in the aging field, Dr. Richard W. Lindsay, Professor Emeritus of Internal Medicine and Family Medicine at the University of Virginia Health System and founder and former Head of the Division of Geriatric Medicine at the University of Virginia Health System and Gordon Walker, retired CEO of JABA, serve as Institute consultants.

For more information about *The Institute for Innovations in Caregiving* visit its website at CaregivingInnovations.org or contact SeniorNavigator at (804) 525-7728; toll-free 866-393-0957 or via email info@SeniorNavigator.org.

**The Institute for Innovations in Caregiving* Advisory Council is comprised of an elite group of professionals from the following Virginia-based organizations and institutions:

- Alzheimer's Association of Central and Western Virginia
- Beard Center on Aging, Lynchburg College
- Care Advantage, Inc.
- Carilion Center for Healthy Aging
- Circle Center Adult Day Services
- George Mason University (GMU), College of Health and Human Services
- James Madison University (JMU), College of Health and Behavioral Studies
- Leaders Engaged on Alzheimer's Disease (LEAD) Coalition
- The LeadingAge Center for Aging Services Technologies (CAST)
- Riverside Center for Excellence in Aging and Lifelong Health (CEALH)
- Riverside Health System
- University of Virginia (UVA)
- University of Virginia Health System
- Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS)
- Virginia Caregiver Coalition (VCC)
- Virginia Center on Aging (VCoA)
- Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), Department of Gerontology
- Virginia Community College System
- Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)
- Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine
- Virginia Tech Center for Gerontology

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SeniorNavigator, a statewide non-profit, provides free health and community support information and guidance to older adults, family caregivers, and health care professionals, supporting independence, dignity, and quality of life. Designed as an award-winning service model combining information technology with community-building, SeniorNavigator offers a 'high-tech' and 'high-touch' approach to healthy lifestyle and long term care support. Seniors, caregivers, and adults with disabilities can find vital services and information through its websites at SeniorNavigator.org and disAbilityNavigator.org.