



Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Newsletter

Fall 2024

1301 Gladewood Drive
Blacksburg, VA 24060
Website: www.uucnr.org
E-mail: info@uucnr.org
Phone: (540) 552-9716

We live our values aloud, not alone.

I am very excited about our UUC Board for 2024-2025 and our dedication to living in a world where all our communities thrive.

Our 2024-2025 Board Members are Laura Robinson, Chris Long, Wayne Neu, Beth McClellan, Margo Walter, Joseph Cooley, and Cassy Kost. Chris Long started attending UUC in late 2021 and has been a volunteer for almost the entire time he has been attending. Wayne Neu has been a part of UUC since the early 1990s and has served twice on the Board as a member-at-large and again as President-Elect and then as President. Beth McClellan is in her second year on our Board and was a professor of Geology at Radford University. Margo Walter is a past president of the UUC Board, has served on the Committee on Ministries, and was instrumental in founding UUC's Mental Health Justice Ministry. Joseph Cooley is an accomplished architect and brings over 30 years of experience as a Unitarian Universalist. Cassy Kost has attended our UUC since 2018 and works at Virginia Tech in diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. Please feel free to email us at board@uucnr.org.

Love holds us together. We have leaned on our staff and Sabbatical Committee while Rev. Pam Philips is on her much-deserved sabbatical (June 24-September 24, 2024). It is important to recognize and appreciate the initiative and dedication of our staff Rachel Craine and Bekah Parker during this time. And I love how our Sabbatical Committee volunteers have collaborated. Love is truly at the center of our work.

This is a unique year with the 2024 USA elections. We are nurturing the culture of voting. Our efforts are focused on nonpartisan voter education. We believe in radical inclusion and are committed to empowering voters to make their voices heard. We urge everyone to use all available tools to fully participate in our democracy. And no matter what happens in this election, remember that **Love** holds us together.

- Laura Robinson, UUC Board President

Newcomers' Orientation

New or not so new to UUC and interested in learning more about our congregation and Unitarian Universalism in general? Want to meet other newcomers? Come to our Newcomers' Orientation on Saturday, November 9 at 9:30 AM for conversation, coffee and refreshments followed by the orientation from 10 – noon and get your questions answered. Members of our Connections Committee and Rev. Pam will be there with much information and fun activities. Email [Pauletta Copenheaver](mailto:Pauletta.Copenheaver@uucnr.org) by November 6 if you can attend. Need childcare – let Pauletta know by November 2.

Contact Information

Minister Rev. Pam Philips
540-252-9156
minister@uucnr.org

President:
Laura Robinson
president@uucnr.org

President Elect:
Chris Long

**Director of Lifespan
Faith Development:**
Rachel Craine
540-392-8449
dlfd@uucnr.org

**Administrator/
Newsletter/Website:**
Bekah Parker
540-552-9716
administrator@uucnr.org

Pianist:
Jared Gibbs
pianist@uucnr.org

Choir Director:
Ella Kromin
choirdirector@uucnr.org

**Lay Pastoral Care
Ministry:**
LPCM@uucnr.org

UUC Website:
uucnr.org

UUC Office Phone:
540-552-9716

Staff Office Hours

Minister:
Tues-Thurs 9:00-
1:00pm by appointment

Administrator:
Tues 9-4 and select
Sundays

DLFD:
Hours by appt.

If you need access to the building, please give 24 hours notice by emailing [Bekah](#)

Paying Your Pledge

We continue to get questions about pledge payments like:

How do I pay my pledge?

Is my automatic payment updated to match my new pledge?

- so I've been asked to write a short article about pledge payment.

Your pledge can be paid weekly, monthly, yearly or whatever works for you. The easiest way to pay in installments is to set up an automatic payment using your bank's bill-pay feature. Usually, you will find a link in these online features to pay a company, or, pay a person, enter a payee manually or something similar. The UUC is not going to appear under the company link so you will need to use that alternate option, whatever it is called at your bank. It will ask for a name and an address of the payee. Use:

Unitarian Universalist Congregation

P.O. Box 10116

Blacksburg, VA 24062-0116

You can also use personal checks (which can be mailed to the above address or placed in the offering basket), cash or pay online, but online payments (VANCO) cost us a processing fee.

If you currently have a VANCO account and have automatic payments set up through VANCO, you will need to manage that payment yourself. For example, if you changed your pledge amount or have decided to switch to paying through your bank's bill-pay feature (which I recommend to save us the VANCO fees), you will need to make changes in VANCO. The best way to do this is to log into the VANCO app, click on the menu icon in the upper left corner and choose "My Account".

If you don't know your account information, our Administrator can help you cancel your VANCO payments.

No matter how you pay, please **notate each payment** to indicate it is a pledge payment and for which fiscal year, e.g., "24-25 Pledge". This helps our Administrator greatly.

Wayne Neu, UUC Treasurer

UUC Piecemakers Art on Display

Fabric and thread - simple components that have made practical and beautiful art for hundreds of years. Stitch layers of fabric together and you get a quilt.

UUC's quilting group is called Piecemakers (get it?). We meet semi-monthly to work on joint projects including paraments for the podium and candle table, comfort quilts for UUC members in need, and larger projects for UUC's annual auction. We even made a stole for Anna's graduation into the ministry. We help each other with personal projects too, offering advice and tips.

You'll see some of our work, individual and collective, displayed at UUC over the coming weeks. From wall hangings to king-sized bed quilts, the sizes and styles are different but the techniques are the same. We hope you enjoy the variety.

If you know of someone in the congregation who needs the comfort a lap quilt can bring, please let us know. We are Marilyn DuPont, Polly Stimson, Sarah Kelly, Jennifer Thomas, Alison Armstrong, Karen Holstein, Robin Cooley, Irene Peterson, and Molly McClintock.

You are invited to join the Piecemakers!



Calling all Crafters and Artists!

The UUC Art Committee would like to have a holiday craft show for the members of our congregation. This will be an opportunity for crafters and artists to sell their work such as jelly, jams, jewelry, small paintings, note cards, crocheting, knitting but not limited to those items. This will be held on Sunday mornings beginning in mid-November and end in December. Please email [Denise](#) or [Mary](#) if you are interested in participating.

We will use Elarth and the corridor of the art gallery. Tables and chairs will be provided but you will be responsible for your own setup. We only ask that you donate 10% or more of your proceeds to UUC. Set up would be around 9:00 or 9:15 on Sunday morning with a break for the service and then continue until 12:30. This event will not be open to the public or advertised as such. But you are welcome to bring friends or relatives to shop. More info to come!

We are always looking for new artists and crafters who would like to display their work at UUC. Please contact either [Mary Ratliff](#) or [Denise Martin](#) if you'd like to have an exhibit in the upcoming year.

Upcoming Art Exhibits:

UUC PieceMakers Quilting Group - September 1 to Oct 27

Denise Martin & Mary Ratliff - Nov 3 to Jan 1

The UUC Auction will be here before you know it!

Hello you beautiful rainbow of a congregation! The UUC's Fall fundraising Auction will be here before you know it. Specifically, it's scheduled for Saturday, October 19th. Our theme for this auction is Rainbow Connection, so come as your favorite color or wearing your (family friendly) Halloween costume. Anyone in our community, whether they are already a part of our UUC rainbow or a friend who wants to add their color to our spectrum, is welcome to join us for this fun, exciting event.

If you have any interesting items, engaging events, or superb services you would like to donate, please fill out this [Google form](#), and feel free to reach out to auction@uucnr.org with any questions. The donation form for this auction will be open until October 5th, with dropoff of silent auction items happening at a later time. If you would like assistance with filling out a donation form, please find a member of the Auction Committee after any Sunday Service and we'd love to help you out!

As we did last year, we will be hosting an online auction with some wonderful items from October 12th - 18th, which will be hosted through our auction website (keep an eye on the weekly newsletter for a link in the coming weeks). In addition to our online auction, we will have a separate silent auction in the library on the day of the event. A selection of these items will be open for viewing in the week leading up to the auction.

Our doors will open at 5pm with the silent auction being available for you to peruse and bid on whatever catches your eye. Childcare will be provided at no cost, but our DLFD has requested that you preregister, so she has time to prepare. A link to the registration form will be available [here](#). Kids will be supervised downstairs with their own costume party and food. This auction will not be a potluck but stay tuned for requests for food donations, as all food will be generously donated by congregants. Also, both alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverages will be available.

The live auction will begin promptly at 6pm. If you are unable to attend this event in person, you will be able to bid by proxy. While the Auction Committee cannot guarantee that they can help you find a proxy, the auction website will provide you with everything you'll need to tell your proxy. As with anything else in this announcement, if you have any questions, please reach out to auction@uucnr.org.

We are always looking for color to add to our rainbow (i.e., people to volunteer their time to ensure this auction is a success). Whether you'd like to help us solicit donations, set up the night before, or fulfill a role on the night of the event, we'd love to have you join us! Reach out to any of the members of the Auction Committee or send an email to auction@uucnr.org, and we'll make sure to get you started without taking all of your time. Regardless of whether or not you decide to volunteer your time with us, we hope to see you there!

Lifespan Faith Development

This Fall in Religious Education

This year our curriculum focuses on UU values and social action. Our preschoolers are using the curriculum *Rainbow Connection*, and our K-1 class is using *Picture Book UU*. Our 2-3 class will be trying out a new curriculum, *Superhero Academy*, which uses superheroes to learn about UU values. *Magic of UU* transforms our 4th and 5th graders into witches and wizards, fighting the evils of the world with love. Our 6-7 grade will be playing games while learning, with a new curriculum *Games to Build Community*.



Coming of Age will be offered for all youth in grades 8 and 9.

Still need to register? [Click Here](#)

Middle School Youth Group

MSYG meets once a month, usually on a Friday, for fun activities for youth in grades 6-8. Upcoming meetings:

September 13—MSYG kick-off meeting

Pizza and games at UUC
6:30- 8:30pm

October 11—MSYG at Sinkland Farms

Hayride, Corn Maze and more.
6:00-8:00pm

November 8—MSYG Friendsgiving

Share a holiday meal and games at UUC. 6:30-8:30pm

December 6—MSYG @ Holiday Parade

Walk in the parade with the UUC float! Timing and details TBD

High School Youth Group

YRUU (Young Religious Unitarian Universalists) meets weekly

Sundays from 6-8pm.

YRUU goes to Fall Con at the Mountain



The group is overseen by a the YAC (Youth-Adult Committee) which determines the group's activities for each month, ensuring a balance of social activities and outings, as well as a focus on spiritual practices and social justice issues. Any youth interested in leadership is encouraged to attend the monthly YAC meetings. The next meeting will be September 22 from 5-6pm, before

Social Action Projects

Got Books? Now accepting donations of all kinds of gently used books. This is a joint effort of the YRUU and the 4th and 5th grade class. Please leave donations outside Rachel's office between now and September 14.

YRUU will be hosting a book sale fundraiser on **Sunday, September 15 and 22**. Proceeds will benefit their trip fund. This year they are fundraising to go to the General Assembly in Baltimore in June, 2025. Please come support our youth!

The witches and wizards of the 4th and 5th grade *Magic of UU* class are working to fight illiteracy. They are helping collect books, and will be donating the remainder of the books to support literacy programs in the New River Valley.

It's Scary to be Hungry!

It's that time of year again. Time for the ghoulies and goblins to make their annual visit to scare us in exchange for candy. And while we totally support trick-or-treating, here's an opportunity to turn Halloween fun into something meaningful to others!

Sunday, October 27 is our annual It's Scary To Be Hungry event. That Sunday, kids should come to church in costume, and adults should bring lots of canned goods and other non-perishable food. During *For All Ages*, the kids will trick or treat for the food!

After church, LFD will be running a donation drive at the S. Main Kroger from 12:00-4:00 p.m. This is an ideal social action project for the whole family! Cute kids in costume get big donations! Sign up for a 1-hour shift online at <https://signup.com/go/WCJBmJQ> Those interested can also go to the Interfaith Food Pantry after the event to help stock the warehouse shelves.

All donations help support the Interfaith Food Pantry, an all-volunteer organization which helps provide food to those in need in our community. Learn more about IFP at <http://interfaithfoodpantry.acciai.us/>



Mitten Tree

November 1-17

Kick off the holiday season with a fun social action project for the whole family! Come experience the real meaning of the holidays by giving to others and help keep our neighbors in the NRV warm this winter.

Donate new mittens, gloves, hats, and scarves to be donated to the Montgomery County Christmas Store. Hang your donations on our Mitten Tree in the lower level as you attend RE classes or the service. A collection box will be outside of UUC as well. Leave your donations any time, and we'll put them on the tree. Gently used winter coats are also appreciated!

Learn more about the Montgomery County Christmas Store at <http://www.mcchristmasstore.org/>.



Adult Religious Education Programs



Date With Death Club—Hosted by Cynthia and Gretchen Luke and Amanda Morgan

Join us for a philosophical and spiritual exploration of mortality in community, with a balance of humor and earnest regard for the topic of mortality. This program provides a safe[r] and brave[r] space to explore the often-taboo topic of our mortality.

Sessions will be held monthly October through May 3rd Mondays from 6:30-

8:30pm at UUC. Each session stands alone. Register to be on the mailing list for class notifications and

[Register Here](#)

- 1: Getting Comfortable with Death Talk
2. Aging: Better than the Alternative
3. Afterlife /Afterlives
4. Circle of Life: Loving & Losing, Learning & Living
5. Dying, Death, & Poetry

Anti-Racism Discussion Groups—Meets the second Sunday 1:00-2:00 p.m. on Zoom

Topics are announced via email. Email dffd@uucnr.org to join the listserv to receive links to the discussion articles. [Zoom link](#).

Meditation Group—Meets Tuesdays 5:00-6:00 PM

Our meditation group meets weekly for those interested in starting or deepening their meditation practice. Meditators from all traditions and all levels of experience are welcome. In the Library and on Zoom. [Zoom link](#).

InSpire Group: InStill Mindfulness--Let's Talk, Meditate and Connect. Meets Tuesdays from 3:00-4:30 p.m. at UUC. All are welcome.

The Unitarian Universalist Young Adults Group (UUYA): for those 18-25 to meet, play games, engage with the community, and support our congregation. Tuesdays from 7-9 in Elarth. For more information, contact [Niko Rensberger](#) or [Lucas Machi](#).

Conversations on Our Faith—Meets Wednesdays 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Bring your lunch and join the conversation, as we discuss a book that deepens our spiritual journey. All are welcome, even if you have not read the chapters being discussed. Group members share their insights and personal experiences and all thoughts and opinions are welcome. Meets Wednesdays at noon, in person or on zoom. To learn more, contact Tim Pickering. [Zoom Link](#)

Yoga: Join this free group on Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m. All levels welcome. To get on the email list for weekly status of class, contact [Lori](#).

Parents as Tutors Class

Sundays from 1-3pm
Dates: 9/15, 9/22, 10/6, 10/13



Daniel Vogler will be leading an interactive class of four sessions with each session being about 2 hours in length. Daniel has taught at the high school, community college, and university levels. He has published extensively about learning and teaching. The class sessions will address learning theories, situational thinking/feeling/acting, assessment, and contemporary writing related to issues confronting the learner of the 21st century.

Parents and middle school age children or older should benefit equally. High school aged students that are providing tutoring, should find the class helpful. Childcare can be provided for parents with younger children, just indicate the need when you register.

Oh, BTW, the class will be seriously FUN!

[Register Here](#)

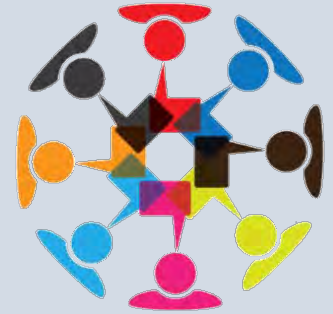
Sunday Circle

Sunday Circle—Join us for stimulating conversation on a variety of topics. Meets the first Sunday of the month at 8:30am, October-May, in the library and on [zoom](#).

October 6: Jamie McReynolds and Carolyn Rude lead discussion on topics from the book *Tyranny of the Minority*, by Levitsky and Ziblatt. No need to have read the book beforehand. This talk is sponsored by the Voting Rights Team.

November 3: Jim Bohland, from *Defending Democracies*, will lead a discussion on the upcoming election.

December 1: Join Carol Davis to learn about the sustainability projects and programs in the Town of Blacksburg.



Family and Multigenerational Opportunities

Parent Covenant Group—Meets monthly on a Friday from 5:30-7:30 p.m

Join other parents for socializing and guided discussion. Discussion topics are loosely based on the *Soul Matters* theme, but with emphasis on topics relevant to parents. This year, a light meal of child-friendly foods will be provided at 5:30. Meeting and childcare begin at 6pm. Childcare provided at no cost, but you must RSVP to [Rachel](#) so we can have the appropriate number of providers.

[Please register your family here](#)

Dates for Fall: September 20
October 11
November 15
December 13

The Buddy Project

Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to become buddies with a member of another generation! Registered children and adults will be paired and will exchange messages, ultimately meeting in a great Buddy Reveal at UUC.

Have you been a buddy before? Please email [Rachel](#) feedback and suggestions on how to improve the Buddy Project.

Register by **October 27** to participate, so don't delay! [Register HERE](#)



All Ages Monthly Fun and Game Nights

Come to UUC for a night of fun and games. Games will be set up in Elarth for people of all ages. Candy land, Chutes and Ladders, Jenga, Uno, Tellestrations, Settlers of Catan, Chess, Scrabble and many, many more. Feel free to bring your favorite games as well.

A light kid-friendly meal will also be provided—Pasta, Salad and rolls. Vegan and gluten free options too!. Nursery care will be provided for the very young. Please RSVP to [Rachel](#) if you require infant/toddler care or if you have special dietary concerns.

Dates: Friday September 27 **Time:** 5:30-8:30pm

Saturday October 26

Saturday November 23.



Events and Community News



Second Sunday Potlucks

Everyone is invited to stay and enjoy a potluck after the service on Second Sundays. Bring your family and friends, and a dish to share (enough for eight), to enjoy a delicious meal together. Please include a small card with the ingredients for those with allergies. If you're interested in helping with potlucks, please contact [Franklyn](#) for additional information.

The Grounds Casual Work Day is usually the first Saturday of the month.

The maintenance tasks for the grounds are endless so any help we can recruit (without arm twisting) is greatly appreciated. Examples of tasks needing to get done are spray painting additional lawn chairs (placed in the picnic area), moving mulch/woodchips, weeding, pruning shrubs, and spraying identification marks on all the tools needed to maintain the grounds.

Casual workdays are just that –casual, but so important for getting tasks done! Amanda Morgan, the organizer, keeps us focused. If you can help on the casual workday, you can earn “brownie points” by letting [Amanda](#) know in advance that you will be coming. JUST COME!!



Summer ½-Plate Donations

Thanks to your generosity, UUC continued its practice of helping others in both our community and beyond.

June 2: Plenty!, \$236.06

June 9: UU Fellowship of of San Miguel de Allende

June 16: Diversity Camp, \$186.44

June 23: Side with Love, \$187.34

June 30: SWVA PRIDE, \$183.42

July 7 EQUUAL Access, \$145.76

July 14: Race for ACCE, \$151.84

July 21: Sleep in Heavenly Peace, \$159.04

July 28: New River Valley Family Shelter, \$163.61

August 4: Habitat for Humanity NRV, \$177.76

August 11: DRUUM, \$178.31

August 18: Micah's Backpack, \$195.26

Check out our [Give webpage](#) for information on donating options.

Practicing Liberating Love

Our 2024-25 Themes!

September: Invitation

October: Deep Listening

November: Repair

December: Presence

January: Story

February: Inclusion

March: Trust


April: Joy

May: Imagination

June: Freedom



MONTHLY SUPPORT GROUPS AT UUC

<p>Surviving Spouses Support Group</p> <p>Surviving Spouses will be on hiatus through the summer. If you have lost a spouse or partner and would appreciate support, please contact Jane Mahone, head of Lay Pastoral Care Ministry.</p>	<p>Caregivers Support</p> <p>UUC hosts a monthly support group for caregivers to share their experiences and challenges. The group meets on the 2nd Tuesdays of each month from 7-8:30 PM via this Zoom link. Questions or concerns - contact caregiverssupport@uucnr.org.</p>
<p>NAMI Support</p> <p>Connections Support: Persons living with a mental illness are welcome to join this NAMI support group on the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month from 6-7:30 PM. Email for the Zoom link or for more info.</p> <p>Family Support: Family and friends of persons living with a mental illness are welcome to join this NAMI support group on the 3rd Wednesday of each month from 6-7:30 PM. Email for the Zoom link or for more info.</p>	<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p>Parent Bereavement Support</p> <p>A community-wide support group for bereaved parents and grandparents who have lost an adult or adolescent child. We come together once a month on 2nd Mondays from 6-7 PM to help one another on our journeys. For more info and the Zoom link, contact Katherine or Lisa.</p>

WEEKLY GATHERINGS

Women's Lunch

All women are welcome to join together for lunch on Fridays at 11:30 AM at local restaurants or noon at UUC. Check [online calendar](#) for locations and times for the following weeks.

UUYAs

If you're between the ages of 18 and 25, the UUYAs (Unitarian Universalist Young Adults) meet every Tuesday in Elarth Hall from 7:00 to 9:00 PM to play games, engage with the community, and support our congregation. Once a month they hope to have an event away from UUC. For more information, contact uuya@uucnr.org.

Women's & Men's Breakfasts

All are invited each Monday at UUC for coffee, breakfast (bring your own), and conversation with the men gathering from 7-9 AM and women from 7:30-9:30 AM. The two groups meet separately. Join in when you are able.

UUC Choir

UUC Choir: All are welcome to join every Wednesday in the sanctuary from 7 to 8:30 pm. No experience is necessary. Choir takes a break from mid-June to mid-August. Please contact [Ella Kromin](#) to find out more.

Sages

Join us on the 1st & 3rd Tuesdays of the month at 2 PM at UUC for stimulating conversation on topics that affect older adults and more. All ages welcome.

Yoga

Join this free weekly group at UUC on Wednesdays at 5:30 PM. Bring a mat if you have one. To get on the email list for the weekly status of class, contact [Lori](#).

NEWS FROM VOTING RIGHTS TEAM

100% Voting Congregation - Our UUC has pledged, via Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, to become a 100% voting congregation! Let's all do our part to make that a reality!

You can go to the citizen portal on the Virginia Dept. of Elections website (<https://vote.elections.virginia.gov/VoterInformation>) to register to vote, find your polling place , apply to vote absentee by mail or check your registration status. The latter is especially important if your address has changed since the last time you voted.

Below are a few important 2024 dates to remember:

September 20 – Early voting begins

October 15 – Deadline to register to vote or update an existing registration. (*Voters may register after this date, through Election Day, and vote using a provisional ballot.*)

October 25 - Deadline to apply for a ballot to be mailed to you

November 5 – Election Day

For additional information/dates go to <https://www.elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/calendars-schedules/upcoming-elections.html>

Virginia Voter Pocket Guide: This handy guide can be found at this site https://www.elections.virginia.gov/media/formwarehouse/2024-voter-outreach/voter-pocket-guide/11.5.24-VPG_English

UUC Get Out the Vote Activities – Our UUs and friends are engaged in a variety of non-partisan get out the vote activities.

Post Card Writing – In collaboration with the Center for Common Ground, we have already written approximately 2500 post cards. If you'd like to help, contact Sara Dalton <sarabdalton@outlook.com> or Barbara Taylor <barbara_jane63@hotmail.com>. Donations of post card stamps are also appreciated.

Voter Registration – Several of our congregants are engaged in voter information/registration events in the larger community. If interested, contact Sara Dalton sarabdalton@outlook.com

Officers of Elections - A few of our UUs serve as Officers of Election. Officers of Election/poll workers help the election run smoothly during early voting and on Election Day. Roles are based on the needs and staff availability in each location. Information can be found at this Virginia Dept. of Elections link <https://www.elections.virginia.gov/officer-of-elections/> or contact your local Office of Elections.

Encourage Voting - This is something we can all do to promote voter turnout by simply talking with friends and family to encourage them to vote.

VOTE. Democracy depends on it.



The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy will be hosting a fundraiser luncheon here at UUNRV on September 14 at noon. This group of cooperative justice-minded congregations (of which UUCNRV is a member) supports effective advocacy at the General Assembly around issues like criminal justice reform, fair labor laws, and housing and food security. Please consider attending and bring some friends!

Registration and sponsorship opportunities may be found here: <https://virginiainterfaithcenter.ourpowerbase.net/civicrm/event/info?reset=1&id=347>

Please note there is also an event in Roanoke later in September if you're interested in a more formal, gala experience: <https://virginiainterfaithcenter.ourpowerbase.net/civicrm/event/info?reset=1&id=348>



Disinformation in the Digital Age

"Disinformation in the Digital Age," a free non-partisan public information program, will be held on Thursday, Sept. 5, from 7:30-8:30 PM at the Lyric Theatre, 135 College Ave. in Blacksburg. The program's focus will include social media, generative AI, fact-checking, finding reliable sources and how all of this may impact elections. The program will conclude with a Q&A, and with tips for responding to disinformation.

Disinformation in the Digital Age

Can you trust what you read and see online?

Join mis/disinfo experts Aaraj Vij and Jeremy Swack for a FREE non-partisan program on navigating today's digital information landscape. Learn how to identify false, misleading, and AI-generated content designed to undermine our democracy.



Aaraj Vij
Co-Founder, VerbaAI LLC



Jeremy Swack
Co-Founder, VerbaAI LLC

Thursday, September 5th | 7:30 - 8:30 PM

Lyric Theatre
135 College Ave. Blacksburg, VA

Presented by Defending Democracies, a non-partisan grassroots organization in Southwest Virginia, and VTEngage: The Center for Leadership and Service Learning at Virginia Tech.



Aaraj Vij and Jeremy Swack, the program speakers, hold seven years of experience in research and development in the mis/disinformation sector. As Co-Directors of W&M DisinfoLab, Aaraj and Jeremy led the design and execution of multidisciplinary research on our information environment, including the impacts of social media and generative AI. They have spoken at events hosted by NATO Headquarters, the Global Research Institute, and the Data & Democracy National Security Conference. After years of researching mis/disinformation, Aaraj and Jeremy founded VerbaAI LLC to develop tools to strengthen our information environment.

The program is sponsored by Defending Democracies, a local non-partisan grassroots organization and VTEngage: The Center for Leadership and Service Learning at Virginia Tech.