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Public Affairs & News Bureau, Old Dominion University

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Visiting Lecturer Will Link Public Health Risks to Climate Change



Dr. Wendy Ring

Wendy Ring, a public health doctor who won notoriety last year by touring the United States on a bicycle to publicize public health threats caused by climate change, will speak at Old Dominion University on Friday, Oct. 25.

Ring, who spent most of her career as a rural family physician in Northern California, has followed up her much-publicized bike trip with regular climate-related speaking engagements. She will be in Norfolk for a talk organized by ODU's Climate Change and Sea Level Rise Initiative (CCSLRI). Other ODU sponsors include the Environmental Health Club, the Office of Intercultural Relations and the Center for Global Health.

The talk will be followed by a panel discussion titled "Mitigating Public Health Impacts in Hampton Roads." The event in North Café of Webb Center will begin at 6:30 p.m. Free parking will be available in the 49th Street parking garage opposite Webb Center.

Ring, who is trained in medicine and public health, founded a mobile clinic in Northern California in 1990 to care for the working uninsured, the homeless, undocumented immigrants and others lacking access to health care. She was medical director of the clinic until 2011, when she left to work on climate issues.

The message she will bring to ODU will focus on health emergencies that could come from climate change and sea level rise. The primary solution she promotes is decreased use of fossil fuels.

Climate change and global warming are causing people to suffer more infections, asthma episodes and heat stroke, Ring says. More pollen is produced so people suffer more often - and more intensely - from allergies. Increased ozone levels close to the Earth's surface irritate lungs, especially children's. And drought results in more wildland fires, the smoke from which causes serious respiratory problems.

Ring has been recognized by Congress, the California State Legislature, and both the California and American Medical Associations for her innovative work.

The goal of CCSLRI is to establish ODU as a leader in coastal urban adaptation to sea level rise and climate change. It is directed by Larry Atkinson, who is Slover Professor of Oceanography at ODU, and Hans-Peter Plag, senior faculty member in the Department of Ocean, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences.

Contact

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