

OCTOBER 2004

## October meeting will feature Silha Professor of Media Ethics and the Law

We live in a media-saturated world. Television and the Internet, print media and shock radio bombard us 24/7 with messages of every sort—commercial and religious, cultural and political. And, the drumming seems only to have intensified during the present election year.



Even as the noise increases, however, the variety of messages, or at least of political

points of view, appears to diminish as media conglomerates gobble up once independent outlets and journalistic independence comes under increasing pressure. A too frequent casualty is the confidence we have in the accuracy of the messages we receive. Under such conditions, issues of media freedom and fairness, matters of fundamental importance in a democratic society, take on urgent meaning.

Our October speaker, Professor Jane Kirtley, director of the Silha Center for the Study of Media Ethics and Law in the University's School of Journalism and Mass Communication, is admirably qualified to talk with us about such things.

Professor Kirtley came to the University in 1999 after serving as executive director of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press in Arlington, Virginia. She received a J.D. degree from the Vanderbilt University School of Law in 1979 and holds both bachelor's and master's of journalism degrees from Northwestern. She has worked as a reporter for the Evansville Press in Indiana and Nashville Banner in Tennessee and as an attorney in Rochester, New York, and Washington, D.C. In 1993, she received both the John Peter Zenger Award for Freedom of the Press and the People's Right to Know Award from the University of Arizona in recognition of her work on First Amendment issues. She was named to the affiliated faculty of the University's Law School in 2001. In addition to her teaching, research, and administrative duties here at Minnesota, she lectures frequently on freedom of information issues in the U.S. and abroad.

It would be difficult to find a more timely topic—or one of greater importance in our troubled world—than the one she has selected for presentation on October 26: "The Right to be Wrong—Squaring Media Responsibility with the First Amendment Paradigm."

## Free parking continues for UMRA luncheon meetings

Several months ago, central administration informed the Campus Club that it would not renew its subvention of lunch-time parking, including UMRA luncheons, for the 2004–05 academic year. Persuaded that free parking is an important incentive for members to attend our monthly gatherings, the Board has made an arrangement with the Campus Club to share the cost of covering two hours of free parking in the East River or Weisman garages for our Tuesday occasions. So, as in the past, your parking tickets will be validated. Special thanks go to Ann Holt and her colleagues on the Campus Club Board for helping with these arrangements.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

OCTOBER 26  
LUNCHEON MEETING

### Featured Speaker

Jane Kirtley, director, Silha Center for the Study of Media Ethics and the Law

**"The Right to be Wrong—Squaring Media Responsibility with the First Amendment Paradigm"**

### When

Tuesday, October 26, 2004  
11:30 a.m.

### Location

Conference Room ABC  
Campus Club, Fourth Floor,  
Coffman Memorial Union,  
East Bank Campus, U of M

### Cost

\$12 per person (tax included)

### Reservation Deadline Thursday, October 21

To reserve your place(s), send a check, payable to the University of Minnesota Retirees Association, to David Wark at 1313 5th St., SE, Mpls, MN, 55414; or call 612-379-3854.

Reservations requested after October 21 will be placed on a waiting list.

Cancellations must be received by noon Wednesday, Oct. 20.

### Free Parking

For two hours of free parking in the East River Road and Weisman Museum garages, bring your ticket in for validation.

**Board Meeting at 10 a.m.**

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

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As I noted in the September *UMRA Newsletter*, important programs and effective communication are hallmarks of any successful organization. This is especially true of an organization like UMRA, in which members come together once a month and conduct association business only at the annual spring banquet, and which is so dependent for its effectiveness on members' voluntary participation.

In recent months, the UMRA Board has taken a number of steps, announced in this and September's newsletters, to improve communication and the flow of useful information between the Board and the membership. Among these have been establishing an electronic listserv that includes all association members with active e-mail accounts, enhancing the content and appearance of the monthly newsletter, and creating an association Web site. More recently, we have begun to form several working groups, made up of Board and other association members, to develop recommendations on a variety of issues important to UMRA's well-being.

Several of these working groups and their agendas are described elsewhere in this edition of the newsletter. Colleagues interested in helping out on any of them are encouraged to contact me. As my wise grandmother was fond of saying, "Many hands make light work."

In a further effort to improve communication and encourage members' participation in association affairs, the minutes of monthly Board meetings will soon be available on the UMRA Web site, via a newly created link. Look for a fuller description of that innovation in the pages that follow.

As always, association officers and other members of the Board solicit your responses to each of these ventures, as well as your suggestions concerning additional ways in which UMRA can better serve the needs of all faculty and staff retirees.

Cordially,

John Howe, President

howex002@umn.edu  
651-645-2584

## Join UofM retiree volunteers in serving the U and the community

In the past year, members of the University of Minnesota Retirees Volunteer Center have:

- served as jurors for mock trials at the University Law School and for the Minnesota Bar Association;
- tutored and mentored for the public schools of the Twin Cities, the Phyllis Wheatley Community Center, the Hubbs Center and others;
- served as subjects for research projects in Medical School and Human Factors Research Labs;
- acted as interviewees for the Pharmacy Department to train students learning to compile dossiers on medications that people take;
- judged for science fairs at area high schools;
- acted as docents at Eastcliff and helped with special events there;
- worked as greeters and canteen workers at Red Cross Bloodmobiles,
- stuffed thousands of envelopes, helped to get out mailings, and many other projects.

You are invited to join in the fun. If you would like more information about participating in this service, you may call Helen Briggs at 612-625-8016.

## New educational enhancement program for exceptional students invites volunteers

The Volunteer Center is initiating a new project for the instruction and guidance of exceptional children in middle and high schools. Volunteers have long provided tutoring for remedial programs, but the need for help with educational enhancement programs has received little attention.

You can bring your expertise and love of subject matter to enthusiastic youngsters—future scholars, scientists, performance artists, and business leaders—by providing special knowledge and skills to these gifted children. A typical program may require two to three hours per week for a short period or term. You can choose your own topic in consultation with the teaching staff.

To find out more about any of the above opportunities, call the Volunteer Center Office at 612-624-8016 or send an e-mail inquiry to [urvc@umn.edu](mailto:urvc@umn.edu).

## Retrieving your U of M e-mail account

Last year, by working with Vice President Carol Carrier and Jackie Singer, our University Human Resources representative on the UMRA Board, we were instrumental in securing continuing access to the University's e-mail system for retired staff as well as faculty.

If you or anyone you know has had difficulty retaining a University e-mail account, please get in touch with John Howe. There may also be some retired faculty or staff colleagues whose accounts have lapsed and who, for reasons either of convenience or cost, would like to reinstate them. Anyone, whether UMRA members or not, wishing to do so should contact John as well.

## Board business goes online

In September the *UMRA Newsletter* provided information on recent improvements to the UMRA Web site. In a continuing effort to strengthen the Web site's capacity to provide information and facilitate communication within the association, the Board has decided to create a new link containing the minutes of its monthly meetings.

The link should be up and running soon. To view reports on Board activities, go to the Web site homepage ([www.umn.edu/umra](http://www.umn.edu/umra)) and click on "Board Meetings." As new minutes come on line, copies from previous months will be archived and retrievable. Members without Internet connections may request hard copies by contacting Secretary David Wark.

## Working group will serve to advise newsletter and communications

By now you've received and had a chance to look over the reborn *UMRA Newsletter*. Kudos to our new editor/publisher Ginny Hanson, as well as to Bob Swoverland and Shawn Welch at University Printing Services, for making the effort such a success. Ginny and the Board are now eager to hear what you think about our progress so far and to receive your suggestions about further improvements that might be made.

At its September meeting, the Board decided to form a working group and ask it, not to oversee the production of monthly editions, but to develop general recommendations concerning content and layout, as well as ways that the newsletter might be used in the recruitment of new members and to strengthen the association's visibility on campus. Anyone who wants to help out should contact the president, John Howe.

## Retirees see relatively modest changes in health coverage costs

We call your attention to the insert, enclosed in this month's newsletter, that outlines changes in health care coverage for 2005–06. In light of the continuing rise in the cost of health care and predictions of higher insurance premiums both locally and nationally, we are pleased to be able to report that University retirees, 65 and over, enrolled in the UPlan, can expect to experience relatively modest changes in their cost of medical coverage next year. (See Table 1 on the insert or go to the UMRA Web site for more information.)

Ted Litman

UMRA's representative to the Benefits Advisory Committee

## Newsletter is available electronically

Thanks to the work of Judy Howe and Kathy Allen in University Relations, the monthly newsletter is now available on the UMRA Web site in a form visually identical to the new hard copy version. To check it out, go to [www.umn.edu/umra](http://www.umn.edu/umra), click on the "Newsletter" link, and follow the simple instructions.

Several individuals have recently indicated that, as a matter of convenience, they would prefer to receive the *UMRA Newsletter* exclusively in electronic form via the Internet rather than in hard copy through the U.S. mail. Arranging to do so at this time, however, would complicate our record keeping unduly, because the association's membership and mailing lists are one and the same. Because the newsletter is now available in its new format via the Web site, individuals may simply ignore the hard copy or use it to interest friends and colleagues in joining the association.

## Report on Alumni Association Advocacy

On September 8 and 27 the Alumni Association Advocacy Committee met to discuss progress of the Citizens League Higher Education Task Force, which was appointed by Governor Pawlenty last May, and which is due to report to the governor very soon. Rondi Erickson, cochair of the Task Force (who also spoke at the UMRA luncheon on September 28), reported to the Advocacy Committee on September 8.

Surveying the higher education landscape in Minnesota, the Task Force has grappled with a number of issues: What do we expect as outcomes from Minnesota's higher education systems; what are the current trends; and what are the roles of basic and applied research, creative activity, and general education? The Task Force considered questions such as: How should these be

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structured and financed? Should the state's financing be mainly directed toward student grants or tuition adjustments? How can the educational systems be held accountable? Is there unnecessary program overlap among the institutions? Should each institution have a sharper focus? Does credit transfer between the U of M and MNSCU need to be clarified? Should Minnesota require two years beyond high school? Whatever the answers, a central requirement for success emerged from their discussions: the urgency for clear and forceful leadership.

John Adams, professor of public affairs and geography, who has been monitoring the discussions of the Task Force through these months, led the discussions at both meetings of the committee, and he was instrumental in highlighting issues and concerns. Margaret Carlson, executive director of the University Alumni Association, chaired the meetings.

At UMRA's meeting on September 28, I distributed information from the Alumni Association's Travel Program director, Cheryl Jones, inviting retirees to consider joining some travel groups in 2005. Anyone not in attendance that day who is interested should contact Cheryl at 612-624-2323 or e-mail [umalumni@umn.edu](mailto:umalumni@umn.edu) or fax 612-626-8167.

Vern Jensen  
UMRA Representative to the Alumni Advocacy Committee

## Reminder: Dues deadline October 26

A number of you have received a reminder about dues. In accordance with the UMRA Bylaws, this edition of the newsletter is the last one you will receive unless the treasurer receives your dues by October 26.

A number of members go south for the winter months. If you will mail or e-mail your winter and summer addresses and the months involved to the Treasurer, we will send the *UMRA Newsletter* to your current address.

There are now 10 people who have made this arrangement and I am ashamed to admit I hit the wrong button on the computer on September 1 so that the September issue was sent to their winter addresses. I found this out because I am one of the 10 whose newsletter was so missent!

Robert Plunkett  
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Minneapolis MN 55454  
[plunk001@msn.com](mailto:plunk001@msn.com)

### Have you changed your address, e-mail, or phone?

1. Print new information below.
2. Cut out this form and address label.
3. Mail both to the address above.

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