

UMRA UNewsletter

A Communication of the University of Minnesota Retirees Association

SEPTEMBER 2005

Columnist Lori Sturdevant to speak on Minnesota's disappearing middle ground

How has Minnesota changed? Here are some bench marks. A generation ago, when Governor Wendell Anderson was featured on the cover of *Time Magazine*, holding up a prize walleye, the caption read: "The State that Works." Contrast that with the last two years in which the State Legislature has gone into extra sessions, in the last, failing to pass a budget on time and forcing a partial halt in state services.



Another contrast: In 1946, Republican Governor Luther Youngdahl won election by pledging to rid the state of gambling (including slot and pinball machines), to enhance public education, and improve state hospital care. The popularity of his "liberal" ideas won him bipartisan support and three terms.

Today finds the state (for a number of years) operating its own lottery for revenue. The legislature long ago authorized American Indian bands to operate casinos, and its recent session explored casino expansion that would enable the state to share the proceeds. At the same time, budget shortfalls have scaled back state support for education and programs that assist low income individuals and families with their health care insurance.

Here at the University, the model for higher education has been changing—first slowly, but recently at an alarming rate—from low tuition and high access to high tuition and

selective access. The generational compact that supported the great state universities of the Middle West and West and contributed so much to the growth of the middle class has been broken. It is not yet clear what will take its place.

Minnesota has, until recently, enjoyed the reputation of being an overachiever. How else can we explain that, with a relatively small population base, it supports a major comprehensive university with instruction, research, and scholarship at all levels, as well as a mechanism for transferring the results of these programs to the public for their use?

Minnesota is often cited for its cultural assets, professional sport teams, abundant environmental and recreational amenities, clean government, and high voter participation. Many attribute the state's accomplishments to cold winters and a Scandinavian heritage with a disposition toward cooperation and collaboration. Whatever the origins, one can argue that a large middle ground has benefited Minnesota. If that is the case: What are the prospects for Minnesota in an era marked by polarization?

Our speaker on September 27, Lori Sturdevant, columnist for the *Star Tribune*, is particularly well qualified for addressing this question. Ms. Sturdevant is a graduate of Coe College, summa cum laude, where she earned a B.A. in science journalism, followed by graduate work in journalism at the U of M. At the *Star Tribune*, she became the lead State Capitol reporter (1980-86), and as assistant

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

SEPTEMBER
LUNCHEON MEETING

Tuesday
September 27, 2005
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Featured Speaker

Lori Sturdevant, editorial writer and columnist for the *Star Tribune*

"Where Have You Gone, Elmer Andersen? Minnesota's Disappearing Middle Ground"

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, September 22

To reserve your place(s) send a check, payable to the University of Minnesota Retirees Association, to Ben Zimmerman at 2225 Folwell Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108; call him at 651-645-1662; or e-mail him at zimme011@umn.edu.

Reservations requested after Sept. 22 will be on a waiting list. Cancellations must be received by noon Wednesday, Sept. 21.

Parking

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

Board Meeting at 10 a.m.

UMRA NEWSLETTER

FROM THE PRESIDENT

September signals the end of summer, and as we begin to contemplate fall's activities, I extend a warm welcome back to UMRA. This newsletter suggests the association's continuing concern for retiree benefits and opportunities to support the University and its programs.

Last year, through the vigorous leadership of our president, John Howe, retiree discounts were secured at a variety of University locations. This year will mark the implementation of these new agreements, so we will look forward to learning about your individual experiences. It would be unusual if there were not a "glitch" or two. Please let us know. A communication from the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics to UMRA members concerning ticket discounts is in the offing, and a representative from the department will be on hand at the September luncheon meeting to answer questions.

The other side of the coin marked "benefits and privileges" is marked "opportunities for service." I call your attention to the article from the University Volunteer Center describing some of the existing opportunities. We will post new possibilities over the course of the year ahead.

Members will be pleased that Ted Litman continues to represent UMRA on the Benefits Advisory Committee. This fall he will alert us to the implementation of Medicare, Part D, the new prescription drug insurance.

Frank Miller, our new president-elect, and I have begun to schedule a series of monthly noontime programs, which should engage and enlighten us. Following past practice, the programs will be held on fourth Tuesdays and will be announced in monthly newsletters and on the UMRA Web site.

On your behalf, I thank Robert Plunkett, past treasurer, and David Wark, past secretary, for their years of service. We welcome Judy Howe and Ben Zimmerman who will carry on their work, and David Wark, who will continue serving UMRA as a member of the board.

With the Board of Regents' approval of the University's strategic plan to advance its standing in instruction, research, and scholarship, the UMRA Board is eager to explore ways by which our association can contribute to that vital effort. It should be an interesting year.

Cordially,
Warren Ibele, President

Spring banquet was a great success

Nearly 100 members and guests gathered in the West Wing of the Campus Club on the evening of May 24 for the annual spring banquet. After a social hour and one of the Campus Club's better dinners, President John Howe called the business meeting to order. New board members and a new president elect were elected.

After a few remarks about plans for the coming year, incoming president Warren Ibele introduced the evening's featured speaker, Associate Justice Alan C. Page of the Minnesota Supreme Court, who spoke on "Judicial Independence." Justice Page's remarks were well taken, particularly since recent court decisions on matters surrounding the election of members of the state judiciary have made concerns for politicizing the process more imminent.

In the question and answer period, Justice Page described the Page Education Foundation, which assists Minnesota students of color with financial need to attend institutions of higher education in the state. The foundation funded 580 this year. We have received a number of questions about the foundation's work since the May presentation, so we want to provide you with contacts at the foundation who will be pleased to answer your questions and give you complete information: Page Education Foundation, P.O. Box 581254, Minneapolis, MN 55458-1254; phone: 612-332-0406; e-mail: info@page-ed.org.

The Retirees Volunteer Center always needs more volunteers

Whatever your skills and interests, we'll welcome you. Among our ongoing projects:

- 1) Partners in English—An opportunity to have a weekly conversation with an international T.A. to help him or her with colloquial, spoken English.
- 2) Usher at the Ted Mann and Rarig Center Theaters
- 3) Bloodmobile Red Cross, greeters and servers are needed
- 4) Participate as a subject in a research project
- 5) Tutoring—at area schools, Phyllis Wheatley Center, etc.
- 6) Help get out mailings for University offices

And whatever other projects come along...

Please call the Volunteer Center office at 612-625-8016, for more information or to register your interest.

— Helen Briggs, Communications Chair

A word about Health Care Benefits and the advent of Medicare Part D

Beginning January 1, 2006, Medicare will enact Medicare Part D and offer optional insurance coverage for prescription drugs to anyone who has Medicare Part A and/or Part B. Since last February, a University committee that includes Ted Litman, UMRA board member and Retiree Subcommittee representative for the University's Benefits Advisory Committee, has been working on how best to incorporate changes in Medicare's prescription drug coverage for 2006 into the University's retiree medical plans. The goal is to provide retirees with the best coverage possible.

Although many details concerning Medicare Part D are still being determined by Medicare and the University's retiree medical plan providers, the following information outlines some of the outcomes thus far:

- The University will continue to offer its same four medical plans to retirees in 2006, all of which have prescription drug coverage. These are:
 - » University of Minnesota Retiree Plan (Blue Cross Blue Shield)
 - » HealthPartners Freedom Plan (previously Health Partners 65+)
 - » Medica Group Prime Solution
 - » UCare for Seniors
- The prescription drug coverage for 2006 for each of the above plans will be better coverage than that offered through Medicare Part D alone in terms of what is covered and the cost.
- Outside of some minor design changes that often occur, the basic structure of these plans will likely remain the same as it is in 2005, with the exception of the University of Minnesota Retiree Plan (Blue Cross Blue Shield), which may change slightly. More information will be provided by the University to retirees as it becomes available.
- University retirees 65 years of age and older will automatically be enrolled in Medicare Part D as a member of any of the University's retiree medical plans. They will not need to do anything to enroll in Medicare Part D.
- Medicare estimates that the monthly premium for Medicare Part D will be about \$32. It is likely this amount will be included in the monthly premiums of the University retiree medical plans.

— Maggi Aitkens, University Benefits

Rec Sports welcomes retirees

Recent studies and recommendations detailing the benefits of physical activity can be quite overwhelming. It seems that one day we are told to simply move three times per week for 20 minutes, and the next we are told that we must engage in strenuous activity for at least 60 minutes every day of the week. With all of that conflicting information, it can be difficult to decipher what to do, and how often to do it.

Regardless of frequency and intensity, any physical activity will help put you in control of your health. Maintaining an active lifestyle can help lower blood pressure and cholesterol, as well as reduce the risk of many diseases and bone loss. Also, physical activity can help reduce anxiety and depression, manage stress levels, and increase energy and self-esteem.

The Department of Recreational Sports on the Twin Cities campus is committed to providing outlets for activity through a wide variety of programming opportunities.

As a retiree of the University of Minnesota, you are eligible to participate in all of the programs and services offered by Rec Sports. Opportunities range from membership at the University Recreation Center and St. Paul Gymnasium to individually designed activity regimens.

Membership fees at the Rec Sports Center for retirees are as follows: semester, \$85; 6 months, \$150; annual: \$240. All memberships are subject to tax. For more information on any of the programs and services offered by the Department of Recreational Sports, visit www.recsports.umn.edu, or call 612-626-0553.

— Kara L Fresk, Rec Sports Membership Coordinator

Speaker — Continued from page 1

city editor (1986-92), she directed the coverage of city, county, and state government. Ms. Sturdevant has edited a number of works, including *A Man's Reach: The Autobiography of Elmer L. Andersen*, and *I Trust To Be Believed: Speeches and Reflections by Elmer L. Andersen*.

Since 2000, Lori Sturdevant's regular columns on state government and politics, higher education, and rural development have attracted wide readership because of her candor, clarity, and even-handedness.

We look forward to having Lori Sturdevant join us for our first program of the year.

— Warren Ibele

University of Minnesota Retirees Association — leadership for 2005–06

Keep this list as a handy reference throughout the year. UMRA encourages your active participation in UMRA affairs. To facilitate communication within the association, we offer this list of officers to contact, as well as board members and representatives.

OFFICERS

President: Warren Ibele, 612-377-1075, ibele001@umn.edu

President-elect: Frank Miller, 612-331-2145, mille005@umn.edu

Secretary: Ben Zimmerman, 651-645-1662, zimme011@umn.edu

Treasurer: Judy Howe, 651-645-2584, j-howe2@umn.edu

Past President: John Howe 651-645-2584, howex002@umn.edu

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Judith Coccia, Marty Dworkin, Jean Forsberg,
Evelyn Franklin, Jan Hively, Robert Holt, Rodney Loper,
Gene Mason, Betty Raygor, Burt Sundquist, David Wark

EX OFFICIO, EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Jacqueline Singer

LIAISONS

Morris Campus: Laird Barber

Retirees Volunteer Center: Alan Kagan

UMRA REPRESENTATIVES

Alumni Association: Sally Howard

Board of Regents: John Imholte

Campus Club: Hy Berman

Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs: Ted Litman

Senate Subcommittee on Retirement Plans: Burt Sundquist

Benefits Advisory Committee: Ted Litman, Rodney Loper

For additional information about
UMRA and its activities, visit the association's
Web site at www.umn.edu/umra.

University of Minnesota
McNamara Alumni Center
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Minneapolis, MN 55455-2002



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address, e-mail, or phone?**
1. Print new information below.
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Zip _____
Phone _____
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