

UMRA UNIVERSITY NEWSLETTER

A Communication of the University of Minnesota Retirees Association

MARCH 2010

If it's new on campus, VP Kathleen O'Brien can tell us about it, at meeting in March

All of us at the University can remember times when a room was too cold in the winter or too hot in the summer, when some lights didn't work, a toilet didn't flush (or flushed continuously), or an elevator wasn't running. (We tend to not remember when things usually worked just fine.)

Some of us have been involved in planning renovations of old buildings or even making input into the design of a new building. All of these activities come under University

Services where Vice President Kathleen O'Brien, our March speaker, is the Chief Honcho.



Kathy (as she is widely known) can approach her job with all the charm of the proverbial Irish

lass winning over people who don't even know they are being won over. But she can also assume the mantra of a Mother Superior, and those who don't shape up will feel the hell fires looming in their future.

Kathy became vice president for University Services in October 2002. She has system-wide leadership responsibilities on issues related to facilities, emergency preparedness, campus master planning, and environmental health and safety.

Among her recent responsibilities is overseeing the development of the East Gateway district, the largest expansion of the Twin

Cities campus in half a century. The 75-acre site district includes not only the new 50,000-seat TCF Bank stadium, but also up to 10 biomedical research buildings; a transit hub to accommodate cars, buses, and rail; and welcoming public spaces.

Prior to assuming her duties with University Services, O'Brien served as the city coordinator for the City of Minneapolis from 1994 to 2002. During her tenure, *Governing Magazine* named Minneapolis as one of the best-managed cities in the nation. She also served on the Advisory Panel to the President and Congress to Assess Domestic Capabilities for Terrorism (known as the Gilmore Commission) from 1999-2003.

Working for the University was not new to O'Brien; she had also served from 1989 to 1994 as chief of staff to University of Minnesota President Nils Hasselmo.

O'Brien received a B.A. from the College of St. Catherine, M.A. from Marquette University, and has completed coursework toward a Ph.D. in History at the U of M.

Mostly Kathy is a smart, dedicated, and effective University administrator. She has an almost unbelievable wealth of experience that makes her perfectly fitted for her job. Whatever is new on campus, Vice President Kathleen O'Brien is sure to be in the middle of it, and on top of it.

We look forward to our conversation with Kathy on March 23.

—Robert Holt, UMRA President

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

MARCH LUNCHEON MEETING

Tuesday
March 23, 2010
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Featured Speaker

Kathleen O'Brien, Vice President, University Services
"University Services: the what and why"

Location

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

Cost

Prepayment: \$12 per person;
\$14 at door for reservations that
are not prepaid.

Reservation Deadline Thursday, March 18

To reserve your place(s) and take advantage of prepaid price, send a check, payable to UMRA, to UMRA Reservations, c/o Betty Radcliffe, 806 Carla Lane Little Canada, MN 55109. Contact her at bpradcliffe@comcast.net or 651-484-5676.

Reservations requested after March 18 may be on a waiting list. Please let us know about cancellations by noon, March 18.

Parking

Parking is available in the East River Road Garage at UMRA's membership discount, \$5.00 for the entire day.

Board Meeting at 10 a.m.

UMRA NEWSLETTER

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

I overheard a conversation a couple of days ago. Two guys were lamenting the sad state of affairs in Washington with Congress getting most of the knocks. They weren't partisans; they weren't arguing. They agreed—the law-making machine is broken. And the tone was harsh. Then one of them remarked, “What can you expect. It's always been like this.” At that point I was about to blurt out “No!” In fact, it has not always been like this. The Washington that those of us in UMRA should remember was dramatically different, but I am afraid that most Americans and most of us in UMRA don't really appreciate how strikingly different it is. I don't want to preach: it's just the facts, ma'm.

In the early 1990s David Mayhew published an important book on the legislative process in the United States. He studied what he considered to be all the important pieces of legislation passed by Congress from 1946 through 1990 (267 in all)—Taft-Hartley, the NATO Treaty, the Marshall plan, major civil rights legislation, Medicare, a half dozen major environmental acts. Actions that reshaped the America into which we were born came out of this legislation. Many were very controversial. One might expect that there were bitter conflicts in Congress and sharp rivalries between parties and regions and political philosophy. But, in virtually all of the cases, the resolution of differences resulted in widespread agreement and general good feelings among the participants.

Of the 267 pieces of legislation, 206 passed with a two-thirds majority in both Houses of Congress; only 18 did not receive a two-thirds majority in at least one

house—196 received a majority of each political party in each house. If we define a party-line vote as one in which 90 percent of the members of one party votes in opposition to 90 percent of the members of the other party, then there were no party-line votes on the passage of any major piece of legislation in this period. Indeed, the number of times when the final votes reflected near unanimity is surprising.

Today the battle between the parties on the control of greenhouse gas emissions is best described by the poetic fight between the gingham dog and the calico cat. (I can use this metaphor with this audience but anyone under 65 won't know what I am talking about.) The past was not like this. The Clean Air Act of 1970—which led to a reduction of automobile polluting emissions by 90 percent, got the lead out of gasoline, and contributed to the collapse of a major American company—passed the Senate on a unanimous vote, while in the House there was only one “no” vote. The Clean Air Act of 1990, which put into effect a cap and trade mechanism to control sulfur emissions from coal burning plants, passed the House 401-25 and the Senate 89-10. Today a cap and trade provision provokes as bitter a controversy as ever emerged on the floors of our stately Houses of Congress. While Medicare/Medicaid passed with strong bi-partisan support, the Health Care Reform bill today is a prime example of extreme partisanship and a vicious conflict of competing ideologies that makes even the thought of compromise heretical.

We are seeing something strikingly different in Washington today; it does not auger well for our future.

— Robert Holt, UMRA President

Important Note: Reservations for Lunch Program

When you send in your reservations for the March program, please note that Betty Radcliffe is the person who is assisting you this month, and her contact information is on page 1.

It occurred to your editor that this is a wonderful time to thank Betty and other members who have stepped up to offer their assistance in this important task. They not only are responsible for reserving your place and ensuring that the Campus Club has a precise number for lunch, they also are helping to hold down the cost of your lunch. For without this volunteer help, UMRA might be forced to pay for this assistance, thereby increasing the price of admission.

Members who have served us as reservationists this year are: Pat Tollefson, John Anderson, Betty Radcliffe, Frank Miller and Cynthia Cone. Coming up are Corinne Ellingham in April and new member Judy Leahy Grimes for May.

President Bob Holt said, “Give them a particular thanks from me. These volunteers make my job much easier!” Unsung heroes, they are making a difference for us all! Please greet them with your special “thanks” when you see them.

As we come to the end of this year, please consider giving a little of your time to your UMRA organization next year. It's the principle of many shoulders—when everyone joins in to lift a little, the burden of every job gets a lot lighter.

—Ginny Hanson, editor

UMRA experiments with its first computer and Internet workshop in February

Following the February luncheon, 20 UMRA members participated in the first-ever UMRA workshop on computers and the Internet, some bringing their laptops to facilitate learning, among other things, how to connect to the University's wireless network. UMRA volunteers—John Anderson, Richard Skaggs, Judy Howe, and Virgil Larsen—were on deck to assist Ron Anderson, who led the main presentation, addressing topics such as Web browsers and Internet searches, favorites and most useful web sites, UMRA's site, and crisis prevention (security, privacy, e-mail spam, etc.).

In the ever-changing scene of computer updating, Ron informs all that:



A new version of Microsoft Office will come out in June; and as a matter of policy, the U will be assisting all students and staff to move from existing e-mail accounts to Google's Gmail through this summer. Watch for more information.

Slides from the presentation can be viewed in a PDF file on the UMRA Web site: click on the "Resources for Retirees" and find the link that says UMRA's Computer and Internet "Help Desk." Click on that and scroll down until you see the slides from workshop link. New resources will be added to this "help desk," so check on it from time to time.

Want to learn more about digital camera photos?

Ten or so UMRA members have expressed interest in a photo club in which UMRA members may share photos and techniques for working with digital photos. This group might hold informal meetings or organize other workshops. If you are interested in such a club, send a note to Ron Anderson at rea@umn.edu or umra@umn.edu.

Match your interests with volunteer activities through the U Retirees Volunteer Center

The following projects are vital to serving the University and community. Furthermore, they provide those who volunteer with intellectual, psychological, and physiological benefits. What more could you ask for—money? If one of these opportunities turns you on, call our office and we will set you up—612-625-8016 or e-mail urvc@umn.edu

Research: A new study in kinesiology starts in March. The subject is posture and cognition in one's aging years. A 30-minute non-invasive test will be conducted on campus.

Museum Activities: The Bakken Museum has a variety of volunteer jobs, and not all of them require a scientific background. Similarly, the American-Swedish Institute seeks volunteers, and you don't have to be Swedish!

Hospital Assistance: You can't believe how many and diverse volunteer activities there are at hospitals, but you do know how needy the hospitals are. We are seeking interested

people who can make a year's commitment of a few hours a week. The hospitals are Fairview-University, Hennepin County Medical Center, and Regions.

Radio Station Pledge: Do you listen to KBEM for jazz (or Blue-grass Saturday Morning)? This non-profit station (88.5 FM) in North High, Minneapolis, needs people to take phone pledges March 15 to 22. Sign up for a three-hour (or more) shift.

Red Cross Blood Donor Assistance: You don't even have to be able to donate blood to make a difference to a lot of people. The Federal Government requires that donors be provided with refreshment. Give a helping hand and greet donors at centers or Bloodmobile sites near you.

— Alan. L. Kagan, Project Director
University Retirees Volunteer Center
612-625-8016 or e-mail urvc@umn.edu

University of Minnesota
McNamara Alumni Center
Room 264, Suite 250
200 Oak Street S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55455-2002

First Class Mail
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Permit No. 155

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.

Name _____
Address _____
City, State _____
Zip _____ Phone _____
E-mail _____
Other Info _____

Welcome new members

Please give a hearty welcome to new members who recently joined UMRA. Greet them at the next lunch program and add this information to your 2009–10 directories.

Dwight A. Burkhardt, Psychology

5510 Humboldt Circle, Minneapolis, MN 55419
612-825-4153

June LaValleur, Ob/Gyn/Women's Health

4000 Linden Hills Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55410
612-925-4498

Norman E. Sladek, Pharmacology

5608 Gate Park Road, Edina, MN 55436

Judith A. Swanson, Academic Support Services

4914 Clear Spring Rd., Minnetonka, MN 55345
952-933-6509

James D. Tracy, History

1320 Riverside Ln, #410, Mendota Hghts, MN 55118
651-227-0466

In Remembrance

We report the passing of UMRA members as we learn of losses to our UMRA community. Our condolences to the family and friends of:

Janet Weiss, d. February 25, 2010. Janet was wife of Gerhard Weiss, German Language Department; Gerhard is a past president of UMRA.

UMRA Web site publishes supplementary materials from luncheon presentations

Starting in January, 2010, the UMRA Web site now includes supplementary material about and from the monthly luncheon program speakers.

In January, a week before the presentation, our web site featured a PDF file of the slides of Patrick Redig's colorful presentation on "The Peregrine Falcon." In February, I installed a three-minute video featuring our speaker James Kakalios talking about the physics of comic book superheroes.

If you miss a meeting, you can catch the flavor of it, because the materials will be on the UMRA website: umn.edu/umra/. Slide and video links will be preserved for about a year in case someone wants to check something from the presentations after the luncheon talks. Whenever possible, material from the speaker will be installed about a week before the actual presentation.

— Ron Anderson, UMRA Webmaster

Keep current on UMRA news, programs, and discounts with a visit to the association's new and ever-improving web site: www.umn.edu/umra
