

# UMRA UNewsletter

A Communication of the University of Minnesota Retirees Association

FEBRUARY 2011

## It's all about the weather – February 22 with Mark Seely, University climatologist

From time to time all of us talk about the weather, but none of us can speak as authoritatively as this month's speaker, Professor Mark Seely, whose professional activities are focused on climatology. You have undoubtedly heard Professor Seely on Minnesota Public Radio or seen him provide expert commentary in documentaries aired on Twin Cities Public Television.

Through educational Extension programs, Professor Seely shows his audiences how weather and climate impact Minnesota agriculture, transportation, energy, tourism, and natural resources. Reams and reams of data analysis have revealed interesting trends that reflect the gradual changes to

our climate, which he can share with us.

Although Seely is a native of California, he has deep roots in Minnesota. His great great



grandfather founded the town of Mazeppa, served in the Minnesota Territorial Legislature, and then in the Minnesota State Legislature following statehood. Subsequent members of the Seely family were farmers near Appleton, Minnesota, until the drought of 1910 forced a change of occupations.

Seely obtained his Ph.D. in climatology from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Following an assignment at the NASA/Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas,

he came to Minnesota in 1978 to become the Extension climatologist and meteorologist working with the National Weather Service, the Minnesota State Climatology Office, and various state agencies, as well as regional Extension offices around the state. He holds a faculty position at the University of Minnesota in the Department of Soil, Water, and Climate.

In addition to Extension programs reaching out widely to adult audiences, Professor Seely has edited a successful series of children's books called the *Amazing Science Series*. He recently authored *Minnesota Weather Almanac*, a 200-year history of Minnesota weather. Seely has won many awards: the Sigma Xi Science Communication and Education Award, the Mn/DOT Research Partnership Award for his work with the deployment of living snow fences, and, most recently, the Extension Director's Award for Distinguished Faculty. In 2007 he received the University of Minnesota Alumni Association Faculty Volunteer Award and the Career Achievement Award from *Minneapolis/St. Paul Magazine*.

Although it may be cold outside on February 22, we can expect to be warmly entertained by Professor Seely's commentary about notable weather events of the past—from hot to cold and from wet to dry. Although we can't do much to impact a change in our February weather, we will certainly enjoy learning more about the extensive variety that is a characteristic of our northern, mid-continental climate.

—John Anderson, President

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

FEBRUARY  
LUNCHEON MEETING

Tuesday  
February 22, 2011  
11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.

**Featured Speaker**  
Mark Seely, professor of climatology and meteorologist  
“Minnesota's Weather Events: History and Current Trends”

**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, February 17**  
To reserve your place(s) send a check, payable to UMRA, to February UMRA Reservations, c/o Pat Tollefson, 4210 Polk St. NE, Columbia Heights, MN 55421. Contact her at 763-781-9747 or p-toll@umn.edu

Please honor the February 17 reservation date; if cancellations are necessary, please try to let us know by noon February 17.

**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

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

### *Exploring the University's archival cache*

Several years ago, when I regularly walked across the Washington Avenue Bridge to my classroom on the West Bank, I took great interest in observing the excavation and construction project that was to become the Elmer L. Andersen Library.

Recently, I visited that library to get a sense of its architecture and the nature of its contents. The open, multi-story lobby is circular with a distinctive curving stairway that leads to landings for each floor. The other half of the circle opens to various exhibits, archives, and special collections. This arrangement is the upper extension of a subterranean vault (known as the Andersen Library Caverns) whose lower entrance is located at the base of the river bluff under the bridge.

Andersen Library is filled with special collections and unique exhibits.

The **University Archives** specializes in materials that document the history of the University and the professional activity of faculty. Included are faculty papers, University publications, reports, departmental records, and historical data as well as more than 20,000 photographs of buildings, staff, students, and events.

The **Immigration History Research Center** focuses on interdisciplinary research on international migration and develops archives documenting immigrant and refugee life, especially in the United States. Interesting displays greet visitors as they enter the IHRC. Several books have resulted from research based on materials in the IHRC archives. A recent example is *Uncle from America*, which

deals with activities of Czech and Slovak Americans during the first half of the 20th century.

Another very different collection, the **Charles Babbage Institute**, chronicles development of computers and information technology from the time of electromechanical calculators to main frame computers to modern mini- and microcomputers, including software and networking technologies. Other special collections include the Givens Collection of African American Literature, the Children's Literature Research Collections (which includes the Kerlan Collection), the Kautz Family YMCA Archives, and the Social Welfare History Archives.

Beneath the public sections of the library are two enormous underground caverns, each about two stories high and 200 yards long. These caverns were excavated under the 30-foot thick layer of limestone, which lies beneath another 30-foot thick layer of surface overburden. Concrete walls and arched ceiling of the caverns provide support of the limestone layer and protect library contents. Because of their subterranean nature, these cavern spaces are easily maintained at a constant temperature and humidity important for optimal preservation of books, film, and videotape. One cavern contains archives, manuscripts, and research materials from the University of Minnesota's collections, while the other cavern is reserved for lesser-used materials from libraries across the state.

If you desire more information about the Andersen Library or its special collections, visit in person or by web site at [andersen.lib.umn.edu/](http://andersen.lib.umn.edu/).

— John Anderson, UMRA President  
ander049@umn.edu or 651-489-4330

## Survey reveals interest in special activity groups — let's get started!

When UMRA conducted its survey last fall, a goodly number of our members indicated they might be interested in adding special interest activities to expand their retiree socializing opportunities. Book discussions, attending musical and theater performances together, and a writing group were among those mentioned most frequently. Members who are interested in forming a group may contact John Anderson, president, [ander049@umn.edu](mailto:ander049@umn.edu) or 651-489-4330.

### **Book Discussion Group**

To start this off, Pat Tollefson is interested in organizing a book discussion group, possibly with an international

theme, "But that," she says, "will be up to the group to decide" as well as how often to meet, etc. So, would you like to join other UMRA members in a book discussion group? If you are interested in exploring this further, contact Pat Tollefson at 763-781-9747 or [p-toll@umn.edu](mailto:p-toll@umn.edu).

Other activities are open to anyone who would like to form a group or plan a one-time event. This newsletter will make space available for publicizing any groups or activities you would like to initiate. And the UMRA list-serv and website will post your meeting times and events as well.

So, what are we waiting for? Let's get to organizing!

## URVC seeks judges and general volunteers to support State Science Fair

The Minnesota Academy of Science will hold its annual state Science and Engineering Fair, **March 19 through March 22**. This annual event showcases Minnesota's best and brightest science students. From schools across the state, 350 students will be selected to present a project at the fair; and 70 more will participate in both the fair and the Junior Science and Humanities Symposium.

The University Retirees Volunteer Center is aiding this exciting project by seeking your support as an expert judge or a volunteer to assist in activities associated with the event.

Judging experts are needed in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math-related fields. Needed immediately are paper-reading judges for senior high proposals—you may work at your own location. Paper judges will listen to presentations, ask questions, and submit scores for high school papers on Saturday, March 19 (afternoon or evening), or for middle school papers on Sunday, March 20. Project judges will observe students' research presentations, ask questions, and submit scores on Monday, March 21 (morning & afternoon) for both high school and middle school students. The symposium and fair will take place at the Sheraton Bloomington Hotel (Hwys 100 and I-494).

**Who can be a Project or Paper Judge?** Any person who has an advanced degree or years of experience in a science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) field, and who enjoys encouraging smart, young students to pursue science! You do not need to have previous judging experience.

**New judges are very welcome!**

**General Volunteers** are needed March 19, 20, 21, 22. Specific duties include help for registration, meal ticket check-in, room and hall monitors, and office support.

Are you ready to volunteer, or want more information? Contact the URVC office (612-625-8016) or project directors Alan Kagan kagan001@umn.edu and Sally Schakel sschakel1@comcast.net.

— Alan L. Kagan, Project Director,  
University Retirees Volunteer Center

## CSH offerings include Dalai Lama in May

The U's Center for Spirituality and Healing and the Tibetan American Foundation announce a special Twin Cities visit by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, May 8–9, "One Heart, One Mind, One Universe." For more information or to purchase tickets, please visit [www.dalailama.umn.edu](http://www.dalailama.umn.edu). For other CSH offerings, see [www.csh.umn.edu](http://www.csh.umn.edu)

## Forthcoming: On-campus events to note

**School of Music** — [music.umn.edu/events/index.php](http://music.umn.edu/events/index.php)  
Symphonic and University Bands

February 16, 7:30 p.m., Ted Mann Concert Hall

Symphony Orchestra

March 7, 7:30 p.m., Ted Mann Concert Hall

Stravinsky, Petrouchka; Sibelius, Seventh Symphony

**University Theatre** — [theatre.umn.edu/events](http://theatre.umn.edu/events)

March 3–6, *Euripides Iphigenia* at Aulis Stoll Thrust Theatre, Rarig Center

March 4–5, Spring Dance Concert, Barker Center for Dance, West Bank

**University Libraries** — [andersen.lib.umn.edu/fridays](http://andersen.lib.umn.edu/fridays)

**First Fridays** (Presentations based on materials from the University Libraries' special collections and archives)

March 4, noon, Room 120, Andersen Library

"Wartime Military Censorship and Detention Camps,"

Immigration History Research Center and Social Welfare History Archives

**Institute for Mathematics and its Applications** —

[www.ima.umn.edu/public-lecture/2010-2011](http://www.ima.umn.edu/public-lecture/2010-2011)

March 9, 7 p.m., Willey Hall 175

"Secrecy, Privacy, and Deception: the Mathematics of Cryptography" Jill Pipher, Brown University

— Events compiled by Craig Swan, UMRA member

## Health Benefits update: 2011 open enrollment results for U's Retirees' Plan

According to enrollment figures from Employee Benefits, some 2,237 of us and/or our spouse/partners 65 years of age and older (1,598 retirees and 639 spouse/partners) signed up for medical coverage under the University's Retiree Health Plan for 2011, a number which is down slightly (-0.7 percent) from a year ago.

By medical plan, Blue Cross/Blue Shield's U of M Retiree Plan, although declining by 2 percent, remains the most popular option—38.5 percent with 861 enrollees (631 retirees, 230 spouse/partners). Next is Health Partners 65+ at 32.9 percent, increasing by 0.5 percent, with 735 (511 retirees, 224 spouse/partners); and Medica's Group Prime Solution at 15.8 percent with 354 (246 retirees, 108 spouse/partners), which is down 1.7 percent. Finally, U Care for Seniors is at 11.9 percent with 267 (194 retirees, 73 spouse/partners); that's up 4.3 percent from a year ago, perhaps because of its lower premium cost.

In addition, it is interesting to note that in the wake of the withdrawal of Medica's Group Advantage Solution option,

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Minneapolis, MN 55455-2002

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## Welcome new members

Please give a hearty welcome to new members who have recently joined our merry band of retirees. Greet them at the next luncheon program and add this information to your 2009–2010 directories.

Patrick and Carol Brezonik, Civil Engineering, faculty  
12879 Falcon Drive, Apple Valley, MN 55124  
952-997-2909; 612-625-2374 brezonik@umn.edu

Roger G. Schroeder, Carlson School, faculty  
2217 Heritage Ln., New Brighton, MN, 55112  
651-633-8426 rschroed@umn.edu

Myrna G. Smith, OVPR/Graduate School, P&A  
1605 Fulham St., St. Paul, MN 55108  
651-644-3530 mgsmith@umn.edu

Joe May, University Child Care Center  
10533 W. River Rd., Brooklyn Park, MN 55443-1231  
(Joe joins spouse, Sherilyn Goldsmith, already a member)

Barbara Heinemann, Student Services,  
College of Design, P&A  
2214 Ferris Lane, Roseville, MN 55113  
651-644-5136; 651-334-6318 bheinema@umn.edu

Paul and Katharine Weiblen, N. H. Winchell School of  
Earth Science, faculty  
1519 Brook Ave. S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55414  
612-331-7755; (Ofc) 612-627-4780 x217  
pweib@umn.edu

## Health Benefits update — Continued from page 3

which had served the needs of our retirees residing outside the state, 12 of that plan's former enrollees switched their coverage to Health Partners National Plan and 2 switched to the Blue Cross/Blue Shield offering.

U Dental coverage plans cover 2,646 retirees, which is down 0.5 percent from last year. Delta Dental continues to be the overall preferred provider with 1,763 or 74.6 percent of the U Plans retiree dental enrollment as compared to 673 or 25.4 percent for Health Partners. By plan option, Delta Premier remained the top pick of our retirees with 1,403 or 53 percent of the enrollees, followed by Health Partners Dental with 419 or 15.8 percent; Delta Dental PPO has 263 enrollees, or 9.9 percent; Health Partners Dental Choice has 254 or 9.6 percent, and Delta Dental's University Choice has 232 or 8.8 percent.

—Ted Litman, UMRA's Representative  
to the University's Benefits Advisory Committee

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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](http://www.umn.edu/umra)

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