

# UMRA U NEWSLETTER

*A Communication of the University of Minnesota Retirees Association*

JANUARY 2012

## Marla Spivak, “Bee Queen,” will speak at UMRA’s January luncheon program

Did you know that: Most of the nation’s honey comes from the Upper Midwest? The University of Minnesota’s bee research and outreach program, operating since 1918, is the only one of its kind in the Upper Midwest? A nationally recognized authority on bees — Marla Spivak—has been teaching and conducting bee research here at the U for more than 18 years?

The first two facts are still little-known, but in 2007, when the news media reported bee colonies collapsing across the U.S., threatening a full third of our food supply, Spivak’s research came to the fore. Already well known in “bee circles,” Spivak had been at the U’s entomology department since 1992. Before then, her extensive experience included researching Africanized honey bees in Costa Rica for her Ph.D. degree from the University of Kansas. An award-winning researcher and teacher here at Minnesota, in 2009 she was named a Distinguished McKnight Professor, one of the University’s highest honors.

In 2010, she was awarded a \$500,000 “genius grant” from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; she is only the second faculty member in University history to win this award. MacArthur Fellows are selected for their creativity, originality, and potential to make important contributions



to the future. Spivak’s contributions are already bearing fruit—in improving honey bee health, breeding, and understanding bee behavior.

The accepted practice of using chemical pesticides to control mites in colonies was problematic. Spivak began breeding bees for genetically influenced behaviors that allowed entire colonies to become disease-resistant through the social interaction of the bees themselves. Her “Minnesota Hygienic” line of bees offers an effective and more sustainable alternative to pesticides. Spivak makes her work available through extension presentations, publications, and workshops. Based on her research findings, beekeepers across the country are establishing local breeding programs to rejuvenate the bee population overall.

Spivak also leads the University’s Bee Lab, which provides research and education to professional and amateur beekeepers. With her MacArthur grant funds, she hopes to establish a one-of-a-kind bee center — a combination research lab, honey production facility, museum, and education center.

Agricultural pesticides, disease, and lack of flowers are still decimating our bees, but because of Marla Spivak, both their future and that of America’s food sources look much brighter.

— Julie Medbery, Program Committee

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

JANUARY  
LUNCHEON MEETING

Tuesday  
January 24, 2012  
11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.

**Featured Speaker**  
Marla Spivak, Distinguished  
McKnight Professor and  
Extension Entomologist  
“Saving our Pollinators”

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

**Cost**  
Prepayment: \$14 per person;  
\$16 at door for reservations that  
are not prepaid.

**Reservation Deadline**  
Thursday, January 19  
To reserve your place(s) and  
prepay, send a check, payable to  
UMRA, to UMRA Reservations,  
c/o Frank Miller, 979 18th Ave.  
S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55414.  
Contact him at 612-331-2145 or  
mille005@umn.edu.

Please honor the reservation  
deadline date; if cancellations are  
necessary, please let us know by  
noon January 19.

**Parking**  
Parking is available in the East  
River Road Garage, with UMRA’s  
membership discount coupons—  
\$6 for the entire day. (Coupons  
will be available at the meeting.)

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

UMRA NEWSLETTER

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

'Tis the season of tidings of joy and annual reports. Let me embrace the occasion to bring you up to date on one ongoing initiative untaken on behalf of UMRA by the Board and several University committees. For some years now, UMRA has been exploring the desirability of establishing a “retirement center” similar to centers at other universities, such as the University of Southern California and Indiana University.

With input from UMRA, in 2007, the University Senate adopted a Resolution on Retiree Benefits that included a call to “consider the establishment of a University-supported Retirement Center.” A committee appointed by the provost reviewed background documents and submitted a report in the spring of 2010. The provost endorsed one of the report’s options called “Encore Minnesota,” and appointed a graduate research assistant, Jack Lam (summer 2011), to research the organizational structure of retiree centers at numerous academic institutions. Lam collected information from 10 institutions and prepared another report that has been submitted to Vice President Carol Carrier and will be made available to the incoming provost.

Many of the activities summarized in the two reports already occur here in various forms — in UMRA, in the University Retirees Volunteer Center (URVC), in the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI). However, we feel that with central direction these three organizations could better coordinate their activities to enhance the integration of the community of retirees within the University. A significant deficiency revealed by the reports is the lack of central oversight of retirees’ interests and the attendant minimal visibility of retirees within the University of Minnesota.

Retirees of the University constitute a resource that, at present, is undervalued and largely unrecognized to the detriment of the University. With the recent appointment of President Kaler and the imminent arrival of a new provost, we feel that the time is ripe to remedy this deficiency. It would be a first step toward the goal of establishing a retirees’ center, in line with the “Encore Minnesota” model.

Accordingly, we intend to urge the appointment of an administrator in the provost’s office to advocate for, coordinate, and monitor greater involvement of retirees in the University culture, to facilitate connections between University needs and retiree resources, and to promote “Encore Minnesota.” For an example, URVC currently provides hundreds of volunteer hours per month of service; however, if more University units were aware of this service and more retirees were aware of the opportunities, this resource could have far greater impact.

We know from the success of UMRA’s Professional Development Grants program that many retired faculty and staff continue to be productive scholars and resource persons, but most of this work goes unrecognized. The same is true of teaching. The actions of an advocate in the administration could lend credence and visibility to the contributions of retirees and thereby increase both opportunities and participation. The benefits to the University far outweigh the minimal costs involved.

We believe the measures we plan to recommend, pending further discussion and final approval at the January meeting of the Board, will result, if adopted, in a more vibrant and effective University community.

And on that hopeful note, I wish you all happy new year!

— Calvin Kendall, UMRA President  
kenda001@umn.edu

### Upcoming programs — Mark your calendars

**February 28** – Joanne B. Eicher, Regents Professor Emerita of the Department of Design, Housing, and Apparel. Joanne is editor-in-chief of the *Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion* (10 vols), from the Oxford University Press, 2010.

**March 27** – Eric Kaler, sixteenth and current president of the University of Minnesota.

**April 24** – Ira Reiss, Professor Emeritus of Sociology, will speak on the topic of his latest book: *An Insider’s View of Sexual Science Since Kinsey*.

**May 22** – Speaker to be announced (Walter Mondale declined; Garrison Keillor is considering; but we’re sure to end up with an interesting speaker for this year’s final and special luncheon.)

The Program Committee is looking for good speaker ideas for next fall and winter. If you have any suggestions, or would like to serve on the 2012–13 program committee, please contact Ron Anderson (rea@umn.edu).

## Join in the planning for a survey of all retirees from the University of Minnesota

Several UMRA members are designing a survey of all who retired from the U of MN over the past 10 years. We want to understand more about what they do and experience as retirees and how their lives and service might be improved. Anyone wishing to serve on the planning committee should contact Ron Anderson (rea@umn.edu).

## URVC seeks volunteers for Special Olympics

Minnesota's Winter Special Olympics focuses on hockey at the end of January. The University Retirees Volunteer Center is seeking volunteers to assist in a variety of service roles for the State Poly Hockey Tournament on January 28 and 29. For those of us who treasure the skills and rewards of hockey participation, this is a great opportunity to support and assist athletes with intellectual disabilities.

The location is Breck School in Minneapolis. There are officiating jobs for those with hockey experience, but that's not all. Other services include presenting awards, reporting results, registering, checking in and escorting athletes to stations, timing and scoring events, serving meals, running bingo games, and playing movies.

The deadline for volunteer registration is January 24, but we want to get you registered so we can give you your service choice(s) as soon as possible. Just contact URVC through e-mail (urvc@umn.edu) or call the office (612-625-8016) and ask for Special Olympics volunteer registration information.

The University Retirees Volunteer Center is committed to providing a wide diversity of volunteer activities. As with this project, in addition to service within the University, we offer community support in many areas: elementary and high school tutoring, food shelf work, museum assistance, science and arts fairs, Red Cross blood donor canteen work, and activities at health care facilities.

If you haven't participated in our projects, but are interested, request our survey of volunteer category interests.

— Alan L. Kagan, Project Director, URVC

## 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:

Victor Perman, Veterinary Medicine Administration, member since 2000, died December 11, 2011. His wife, Virginia, continues as a member of UMRA.

## Sharing, learning at the UMRA Photo Club

The last 2011 meeting of the UMRA Photo Club, on November 3, was a very good one. Viewing photos was much improved with the large screen monitor in Frank Busta's conference room in the Learning and Environmental Sciences (LES) building on the St. Paul campus. Frank and Jean Kinsey presented a slide show of their recent trip to Norway—very good stuff! Then the rest of us (ten in all) each showed a few recent photos, some of which were taken on our last two excursions together. The variety of photos taken in the same locale was testimony to the different and interesting ways of seeing that each of us has.

Agreeing to skip December, as it's a month busy with holidays and travel, we meet on January 5, 4:30 p.m., again in 120 E, the LES conference room. Those attending will share some recent photos (either wintry scenes or nice sunny vacation pics, but all with our own artistic touches). Vic Bloomfield will demonstrate how to adjust photos using iPhoto or a similar photo editing program.

We look forward to the February meeting when we plan to have a discussion with UMRA webmaster Dave Naumann about how to put our photos up on the web so we can share this interest with other UMRA members.

For information about upcoming meeting dates, locations, or information about joining in the fun, contact Photo Club leader Vic Bloomfield, victor@umn.edu.

## UMRA to present "Aging Workshops"

The UMRA Executive Committee has approved a plan for a series of workshops on aging and related topics beginning in April. At its January meeting the full UMRA board will discuss this plan and members are invited to make suggestions to the Aging Workshop Committee.

The plan calls for workshops to be held following UMRA luncheon meetings in the Campus Club. The goal for this series is twofold—first, to share expert knowledge and experiences regarding aging issues, and second to establish community partnerships for the purpose of increasing awareness of common activities.

The organizations we have begun to contact about this activity include Alzheimer's Association, Vital Aging Network, U of M School of Nursing, CaringBridge, Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging, Minnesota Network of Hospice and Palliative Care, U of M Center on Aging, and Minnesota Area Geriatric Education Center.

If you can help refine and implement this plan, please contact Ron Anderson (rea@umn.edu or 952-473-5910).

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address, e-mail, or phone?**

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City, State \_\_\_\_\_  
Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
Other Info \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Watch for your new UMRA directories to  
arrive in your January mail**

Every two years UMRA prints a directory of its membership and distributes them to all members.

This is the year for that, and Virgil Larson, membership manager, tells us that the directory is on its way—printed and mailed. But, because we are frugal, it was mailed at bulk rates so it may take a while to get to you.

As bulk mail, the directories may not be forwarded, so it is very important that you keep your information up to date. If you move, be sure to use the form above to register your new address, e-mail, and phone number information whenever necessary.

And, because new members are joining every month, please check the newsletter for their information and add it to your directories. That way, when you meet someone new at an UMRA meeting, you'll know how to get in touch.

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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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**Welcome new members to UMRA**

Please give a hearty welcome to new members who have recently joined UMRA. Greet them at the next lunch program, and check your new directory to see if any of this information needs to be added.

Stephanie Daily, Surgery, Civil Service  
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