



OCTOBER 2017

**Town Hall Meeting: discussing the future of UMRA**



*Jeanne Markell*

At our October 24 luncheon, the UMRA Board will host a town hall meeting about your organization. We hope to engage everyone in a discussion of the purpose of the organization, current programming, and the future of UMRA in light of the growing number of retirees. President Chip Peterson will provide some global background information about UMRA (number of members, current programming, and current organizational structure), and board member Jeanne Markell will facilitate an open discussion focusing on what we can do to improve and expand your experience. While we think we have a solid foundation and structure, we want to make sure that UMRA addresses things that matter to you. In preparation for the luncheon, please be thinking about the following questions:

- What do you value or gain most from your UMRA experiences? Or, if you are a new member, what do you hope most to gain from your participation in UMRA?
- What could UMRA members and other retirees be doing for the University? Do we appropriately encourage support for and advocacy of University proposals, legislative priorities, and campus policies? How can the University better take advantage of retiree knowledge, expertise, and wisdom?
- What more would you like to see the University do for UMRA and its retirees?
- What additional opportunities for social or intellectual engagement might UMRA develop? Should UMRA more aggressively promote programs and events sponsored by other organizations (e.g., alumni association events, Campus Club, OLLI activities)? UMRA members have initiated groups focusing on special interests, e.g., photography, book club. What other areas would be of interest to you (cycling, hiking, travel)? Should activities/programs be spread more broadly across the Twin Cities?
- With the aging of baby boomers, the number of University retirees is likely to increase. What would be the pluses, minuses, and implications of significant UMRA growth?



*Chip Peterson*

— Jerry Rinehart, Program Committee Chair

**UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA**

**OCTOBER  
LUNCHEON MEETING**

Tuesday, October 24, 2017  
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

**Featured Speakers**  
**UMRA Board and Members**  
**Town hall meeting: discussing the future of UMRA**

**Location**  
Conference Room ABC  
Campus Club, Fourth Floor  
Coffman Memorial Union

**Menu**  
Frittata with caramelized onion, mushrooms, and U of M cheddar, with mixed green salad, coffee and tea. For vegetarian or gluten-free options, please request when making your reservations.

**Reservations Deadline:**  
**Thursday, October 19**  
Prepayment of \$16 per person; annual prepayers must also make reservations.

To reserve your place(s) and parking, send your check payable to UMRA to UMRA Reservations c/o Judy Leahy Grimes, 1937 Palace Ave., St. Paul, MN 55105-1728

Or, contact her before the deadline at 651-698-4387; e-mail: jleahy4654@aol.com.

Please honor the reservation deadline; if cancellations are necessary, please call by Oct. 19.

**Parking**  
Ramps and East River Road Garage with UMRA's discount coupon — \$6 for the day.

## Welcome reception and orientation for new members, October 24

Recently received members of UMRA are invited to the Welcome New Members Reception in the Campus Club Lounge, from 10 to 11:15 a.m. on Tuesday, October 24. (You are considered a new member if you joined UMRA since November 1 of 2016.)

UMRA committee and board members will be on hand to meet and greet you. Get acquainted with other new members and find out about activities and groups sponsored by your organization. This event will take place just before the monthly UMRA luncheon so you can plan to attend both with one trip to campus. Please RSVP to [ander049@umn.edu](mailto:ander049@umn.edu) if you plan to join us for the Welcome Reception.

The UMRA Membership committee initiated this get-acquainted event five years ago. It was so well received that it has become an annual welcome session for those who join UMRA. We do hope you will attend.

More information will be forthcoming in an e-mail invitation directed to those who have joined within the past year.

— John Anderson, chair, UMRA Membership Committee

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*Thank you to the University of Minnesota Bookstores for helping to sponsor the October Newsletter. The bookstores also provide UMRA Members with a generous 20 percent discount on apparel, gifts, general books, and supplies. New this year, UMRA members are eligible to purchase tech products at special educational pricing.*

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## October 24 Workshop: Health plans for University Retirees

Retirees who purchase supplemental health insurance from the University of Minnesota, and any new U of M retirees who are considering doing so, will surely want to attend the Health Benefits Workshop following the UMRA luncheon on October 24.

A representative from the University of Minnesota Office of Human Resources will give an overview of the benefits offered by the University and provide comparisons between the different plans available for retirees. A representative from each of the health plans will also be available to answer specific questions.

All pre- and post-65 retirees should receive the 2017 Benefits Enrollment guide from the University in the mail by mid October. The 36-page guide includes new rates for the coming year and open enrollment periods.

Our workshop on October 24 will give us an opportunity to compare the benefits offered by each of the plans and address any concerns or questions we may have. Similar workshops provided by HR in previous years have been well attended, and many participants thought the information provided was helpful to them in selecting plans best suited to their personal circumstances.

Join us after the UMRA luncheon on Tuesday, October 24, for this important workshop beginning at 1:30 p.m., and encourage your fellow U of M retirees to attend, too. UMRA workshops are free and open to everyone.

## Come at 10:30 before luncheons for social time

Thanks to the Campus Club for making its Bar and Lounge available to UMRA members for coffee and visiting before our luncheons. Come early and catch up with friends and acquaintances. Come early in October and help greet new members who will be gathering for a Welcome Coffee and orientation that day.

## Parking reservations available for UMRA luncheons

Combine your reservation for the UMRA luncheon with a reservation for parking, and ensure your parking space. Plan to arrive between 10 a.m. and noon. Pay when exiting, using your UMRA parking coupons as usual.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

### *UMRA BOARD NEWS*

When some members mentioned that they would like to hear more of what goes on behind the scenes, the Executive Committee thought it would be a good idea to have a report from the Board of Directors. I plan to devote many of the president's columns this year to such news.

The Board always meets in the morning immediately preceding the monthly luncheon day. Our first meeting was September 26. A few highlights:

- Follow-up to MOU. The long-sought Memorandum of Understanding agreement with the University became official with the Provost's signature in early April. A major focus this year will be to make it a living document, and the Council of Past Presidents is spearheading this effort under co-chairs Jean Kinsey and John Adams. What more can retirees do for the University and vice versa? You will have the opportunity to answer that question at the UMRA "town hall" meeting at the October luncheon (see article on page 1).
- Recruiting breakthrough. A University ruling more than a year ago that privacy rules impeded release of new retiree contact information to UMRA posed a serious threat to our recruiting. Despite ongoing efforts, it was not until UMRA member and former General Counsel Bill Donohue went to bat this summer that we finally were able to regain access to the lists. Membership Committee chair John Anderson reports that the recent emailing to four months of new retirees has already yielded responses.
- Issues of growth. With projected retirements steadily increasing and most luncheons already filling up well before the registration deadline, the Board will look at strategies for accommodating growth, from a new luncheon venue or schedule to the creation of a wider range of activities for member involvement.
- Open positions. We are still seeking a Discount Coordinator (to confirm or renegotiate annually discounts for UMRA members, e.g., for parking, bookstore purchases, etc.), as well as additional members for the UMRA Cares Committee (supporting spouses/partners and family grieving a death or facing extended hospitalization, planning monthly workshops, and assembling care-related resources).

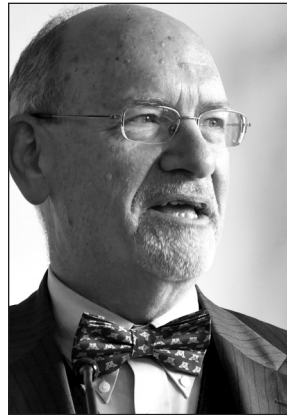
- New members and ideas are also needed for the newly established Social Activities Committee (options for member involvement beyond the monthly luncheons), and the History Committee (organization of UMRA materials for the U Archives and research on UMRA's history).

Please contact me if you are willing to serve.

— Chip Peterson, UMRA President 2017–18  
c-pete@umn.edu

### **September program recap: Health disparities affect all of us**

Minnesota Commissioner of Health Ed Ehlinger spoke at the September luncheon, telling us that although Minnesota is ranked No. 1 in healthiness and No. 2 in life expectancy, we are ranked last among the 50 states in the disparity in life expectancy between whites and our American-born black population. Dr. Ehlinger believes this inequity is a threat to our collective health and to our nation's competitiveness in the world.



*Health Commissioner  
Ed Ehlinger*

We are all affected by these inequities, he said. The high cost of medical care is sapping resources from investments in public health and social services, investments that can promote wellness and reduce inequities. He challenged us, as individuals, and UMRA as an organization to help change the narrative around health care. We need to strengthen communities so that healthy choices are

possible and health policies are designed to increase equity, he said. The slides Dr. Ehlinger presented are posted on the UMRA website, <https://umra.umn.edu>. They include many disturbing statistics and important messages.

—Jean Kinsey

#### *Food for thought*

“The problem with retirement is that you never get a day off”

—Abe Lemons

## Planning for a meaningful retirement

One way to decide how you will spend your retirement is to think of it as a question of the meaning of life. Think back on your life and what made it meaningful. Make a list of your values and your options for retirement and then brainstorm. Write down goals and likely scenarios of what might happen after your retirement, and what life will be like in five, ten, or twenty years.

### Looking to the future

As you look ahead, two important scenarios to consider are that someday (1) you might need a caregiver to help you deal with the normal tasks of living, and (2) someone you love may need you to be a caregiver.

### Are you ready to be a caregiver?

How can you best plan for the possibility of entering a life of care giving or care receiving? One route would be to spend time with couples you already know who are in a caregiving/receiving relationship and help them out as needed. Another good way is to join the UMRA Cares Committee. You will learn a lot while offering to help others when the need arises.

In our committee work, we especially need people to help with workshop planning. This year we hope to establish connections with the Wilder Foundation Caregiving Program to provide more support for our UMRA members who are caregivers.

In my opinion, being a caregiver in some way is the most meaningful way to use your time in retirement. Helping others offers more reward and appreciation than just about anything else you can do. Caring for the environment is a close second in terms of yielding gratification.

Some people may think that a retirement filled with golf games, going to dinner with friends, and winning the lottery is the quickest path to a meaningful retirement. However, if you read the research literature on happiness, you will find that deep happiness, also called true happiness, comes, not from pleasure-seeking, but from helping others with things they need done.

### Join UMRA's Cares Committee

To get started with learning about caregiving, and working with others who are following paths to greater meaning, join the UMRA Cares Committee. For more information, please contact me at [rea@umn.edu](mailto:rea@umn.edu) or 612-963-6660.

—Ron Anderson, chair, UMRA Cares Committee

## Campus Club invites UMRA members to October wine tasting

Join fellow UMRA members on October 19 at the Campus Club as Jason Kallsen hosts another fun wine class. Taste wonderful examples from the Willamette Valley in Oregon and the Walla Walla region of Washington and learn about the different wines of these regions. All participants will leave with a list of Jason's current favorite wine producers and instructions for finding those wines.

But that's not all! The cost of \$38 per person includes appetizers from the Campus Club kitchen: Seared Wild Salmon with Cranberry Relish; Pear, Rosemary and Hazelnut Frangipane Crostini; Mississippi Grilled Oyster Mushrooms; Vietnamese Spiced Pate Platter with Spicy Aioli and Pickled Vegetables; and a Platter of Cheeses with fresh and dried fruits.

Although this event is for Campus Club members only, the Campus Club has invited Cherie Hamilton, chair of the UMRA Social Committee, to sponsor UMRA members. All reservations should be sent by October 12 to Cherie Hamilton, 3151 Dean Ct., #1003, Minneapolis, MN 55416. For those who are not Campus Club members, please include a check for \$38 per person; those who are members will be billed directly by the Campus Club.

This is the first event the new UMRA Social Committee has planned. We welcome any suggestions from members for future events. Also, please let us know if you would like to join in the fun by becoming a member of the Social Committee.

—Cherie Hamilton, chair, UMRA Social Committee

## Welcome new members to UMRA

Please give a hearty welcome to six new members who have joined UMRA since the last newsletter. Greet them at luncheon meetings and help introduce them to others:

- Catherine B. Asher, Art History, Faculty
- Frederick Bertschinger, Dentistry-Development, P&A
- Mária Brewer, French and Italian, Faculty
- Deanne L. Magnusson, OLPD, P&A
- Bonnie M. Marten, Human Resources, Civil Service
- Timothy and Mary Nantell, Carlson School-Finance, Faculty

*For contact information, see Member Directory at <https://umra.umn.edu/membership>*

## Book Notes

In this new column, members of the UMRA Book Club will share their discussions.

### George Orwell's *1984*

At our September book club meeting, we had a lively discussion about George Orwell's dystopian novel *1984*. Some people found the book so depressing, they watched the movie to help them get through it.

The book is set in "future" London when "Big Brother," via telescreens, can see and hear everything that's said and done. Even thoughts are monitored. Vocabulary is being eliminated so that peoples' thoughts can't be expressed. History is rewritten and past history is destroyed. "He who owns the present, owns the past." Life is grim; everyone in the party is controlled. The "proles," or common people, have a bit more freedom, but are expendable and considered too ignorant to protest.

### Discussion

Our book group was divided as to whether or not our country and society are going the way of the novel. Those who found the book a reflection of our time noted the overwhelming presence of computers in our daily lives. If we look something up on the computer, we start getting messages about that product or topic, that lead us to buy similar products. Some felt that Big Brother is watching us through computers. The new iPhone even has facial recognition. The question was asked, "What are we missing by looking at our cell phones all the time?"

In *1984*, language was under control of "Big Brother" so that thoughts couldn't be expressed. An example of this in our past was the government-run Native American boarding schools that insisted students learn English and not use their native language. Another is the seeming universality of the English language around the world because most information on the Internet is written in English. This strips people of their native tongue and along with it, their culture.

In the book, war is a constant, but who is being fought always changes (and in the process, previous wars are deleted). The object of war is always to be in a better position in which to wage another war. War eats up any surplus that might go to the people and profits go to the party of Big Brother.

Those who did not feel that our country was going the way of *1984* noted that there are the people fighting against all the problems explored in the book. We are the proles. We have scientists and educated people who are trying to overcome the dangers of our society becoming like the one in *1984*.

## UMRA grant brings magnificent textile collection to light

Joanne B. Eicher's collection of more than 500 African textiles, primarily Nigerian, can now be viewed through an online database at the University of Minnesota, thanks to a grant from UMRA's Professional Development Grants for Retirees (PDGR) program. The Eicher African Textile Collection site features nearly 3,000 color photos. It also includes a link to her article, "Reflecting on Collecting: My Romance with African Textiles," in which Eicher, a Regents Professor Emerita at the Department of Design, Housing and Apparel, describes how she turned her passion for collecting textiles into an academic pursuit.

One specialty of the collection is *pelete bite*, a type of cloth worn by the Kalabari. They use a base of imported Indian madras on which they impose another design by subtracting threads to leave a shadowy pattern. A link to a video demonstrating the centuries-old technique for making this cloth is embedded in the first photo on the site: <https://umedia.lib.umn.edu/taxonomy/term/96>



*Amonia Akoko, a leading fabric artist in Nigeria, showing a pelete bite cloth she made.*

Eicher used a 2015-16 PDGR program grant to create an image bank with descriptions of her African textile collection for uploading to the U of M's UMedia Website. A 2016-17 grant extension enabled her to complete the project, which included organizing an edited volume of published and unpublished materials from her fieldwork undertaken with the Kalabari people over nearly 30 years. She is now working with the University of Indiana Press, the premier press for African Studies, on publication of a manuscript.

The PDGR program is open to all University retirees who will be fully retired by July 2018. The deadline for grant applications is December 15, 2017; approved grants will begin in April 2018 for the period ending in June 2019. This year the application process will be entirely online; no email or paper applications will be accepted. Instructions for applying will be posted on the UMRA website by mid October.

## UMRA launches e-Newsletter in September

In September, UMRA's new e-Newsletter began reaching all UMRA members who have email addresses. The e-news provides direct access to articles posted on the UMRA website as well as a link to the traditional, print newsletter for those who prefer to read or print out a copy of the newsletter for themselves. For those who prefer to have a printed copy mailed to them, that is still available upon request.

We hope you are enjoying the new UMRA e-Newsletter. Feedback has been mixed depending mostly on preferences for print or web-based news. We value your input as we refine and upgrade UMRA's communications.

Why did we do this? In January 2017, when the Communications Taskforce was meeting to discuss how to better our communications, Ginny Hanson, UMRA's long-standing newsletter editor, announced that a newly discovered health issue could interfere with her producing the newsletter as she had been for the past 13 years. The taskforce decided that this change opened the way to try developing a new form of communication – electronic news.

“Being the only editor for content and production is rewarding, but it is somewhat precarious for the organization to rely on one person for this position,” Ginny said. “A team is more prudent.”

So the new newsletter team consists of Ginny Hanson, as coordinator, and an assembled team of content editors who solicit and edit articles. The volunteer content editors are Becky Anderson, Kris Mortensen, and Julie Medberry. The edited content goes to the new production editor, Sadie Brendalen, who is working under contract with UMRA to produce the UMRA e-newsletter, interface the news with the web page, and also produce a printable newsletter. A full-time employee at the U of M, Sadie is the communications and program associate in the Department of Applied Economics and currently pursuing her master's degree in Strategic Communications. UMRA member Cathy Gierke manages the UMRA website and works closely with the production editor.

Thanks to the determination and diligence of the new-content editorial team, our web master, and a new professional production editor, we now have an e-newsletter and print version newsletter. This was no small feat, but the team performed what some called a transition, others called a summer miracle. They should be congratulated for this extraordinary effort and a polished result.

—Jean Kinsey, chair, Communications Taskforce

Task Force Members: Ginny Hanson, Dave Naumann, Cathy Lee Gierke, John Anderson, with advice from Scott Elton, Julie Medbery, and Sadie Brendalen



*Pictured L to R: Kris Mortensen, Becky Anderson, Ginny Hanson, Julie Medbery and Sadie Brendalen.*

## Show us your favorite pix at photo club

The UMRA Photo Club will meet on Tuesday, October 10, from 1 to 3 p.m. at the St. Anthony branch of the Hennepin County Library. The library is located in the small shopping center at New Brighton and St. Anthony Boulevards in Saint Anthony Village. Come at noon for lunch and camaraderie at the Great Dragon Buffet, which is across the parking lot from the library. Ask for the senior discount.

If you enjoy taking pictures, consider coming to one of our meetings. We welcome photographers of all abilities. Most of us are struggling amateurs who like to take pictures and want to get better. We all benefit from the help we get from each other. For more information contact Sheri Goldsmith May, golds009@gmail.com, or Craig Swan, swan@umn.edu.

—Sheri Goldsmith May, co-chair, Photo Club

## Volunteer Opportunity: Become an AARP tax-aide

Do you enjoy working with numbers and with people? Here's a chance to join the nation's largest volunteer-run tax preparation and assistance service—the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide program, in conjunction with the IRS—to help seniors, low-income, disabled, and other disadvantaged taxpayers at sites across the metro area.

Positions needed are Preparers/Counselors, Document Facilitators, and Technical Supporters. You don't need experience with accounting or tax preparation, and you don't need to be an AARP member. AARP supplies training, computers, IRS-approved software, and reference materials. Volunteers may be reimbursed for qualified program-related expenses.

Preparers/Counselors receive six days of free training the first two weeks of January (32 hours of tax law and software use). Volunteers who pass the test are certified by the IRS, Minnesota Department of Revenue, and AARP to help taxpayers with Federal and Minnesota state income and property tax refund returns. The certification guarantees preparer's protection.

The role of Document Facilitators is to greet clients and help them organize their required documents before meeting with the preparers. Facilitators receive a half-day training in January.

Technical Supporters are expected to manage computer equipment, ensure taxpayer data security, and provide technical assistance to volunteers. No training is needed, but an AARP tax-aide supervisor will interview potential tech support specialists.

Working activity will begin in February. You may attend a site in your home area. The commitment is a weekly three-to four-hour shift for 10 weeks (although consideration given for special circumstances that prevent this schedule). Shifts are mornings and afternoons Monday through Saturday.

Online application is required by December 1 for preparers and by January 1 for facilitators. An AARP district tax-aide supervisor will interview you by phone. For further application information, contact University Retirees Volunteer Center at 612-625-8016 or [URVC@UMN.EDU](mailto:URVC@UMN.EDU).

—Alan L. Kagan, Project Director, URVC

## Recapping workshop on fraud, scams and identity theft

The September workshop presentation by AARP speaker Jay Haapala was entertaining, frightening, and most informative. The latest trends in scams include imposters (hello, Grandma), identity theft on the web and in the real world (credit card numbers and dumpster diving for your mail), and fake debt collectors.

We can protect ourselves by knowing that there are consumer protections for credit card fraud and bank account fraud. So, monitor your credit card accounts for any suspicious activity, monitor your credit reports for accounts you do not recognize, and operate within the banking system where you have consumer protections.

Avoid using public Internet networks for emails and transactions that might reveal your private information—social security numbers, bank account access, etc. Even if you get a password for a WiFi network, remember that hundreds of other people get the same password and can tap into your email. Cell phone transmission is encrypted and therefore safer as long as you are not on a public Internet server.

Stay alert.

—Jean Kinsey



*Jay Haapala, associate director of Community Outreach with AARP, discusses avoiding fraud at September Workshop.*

# UMRA University of Minnesota Retirees Association

University of Minnesota  
McNamara Alumni Center  
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\_\_\_\_\_

UMRA's phone: 612-626-4403  
Website: [www.umn.edu/umra](http://www.umn.edu/umra)

*Thank you to the Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing for helping to sponsor the UMRA October Newsletter. BCSH also offers UMRA members a 10 percent discount on some of their programs. Contact BCSH for more information.*

### THE BAKKEN CENTER FOR SPIRITUALITY & HEALING IS OFFERING MANY EXCITING UPCOMING EVENTS!

#### INTRODUCTION TO MINDFULNESS:

Join us for this new, 4-week course. You'll learn about mindfulness through direct experience and discussion. Each week, we will investigate a different aspect of mindfulness and its implications for your life.

**WELLBEING LECTURE** featuring Emily Esfahani Smith - Nov. 6. Why are we the way that we are? How can we find grace and meaning in a world that is full of suffering? In this lecture, Smith will explore how the search for meaning can deepen our lives.

**MICHAEL POLLAN** will present a Wellbeing Lecture on March 29, 2018. Pollan is creator and star of the Netflix series "Cooked" in which he explores how cooking transforms food and shapes our world. The bestselling author frequently discusses food and the intersection between human constructed environments and the natural world.

Learn more and register at  
[Z.UMN.EDU/CSHEVENTS](http://Z.UMN.EDU/CSHEVENTS)  
UMRA members receive a 10% discount  
by using code: **UMRA**

  
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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

## UMRA Cares Committee is here for support

For assistance and support in the event of the death or serious illness of an UMRA member or family member, please e-mail us at [umracares@umn.edu](mailto:umracares@umn.edu) or call 612-626-4403, and leave a message for UMRA Cares.

Also, if you learn of someone who is facing a difficult life challenge, please contact the UMRA Cares Committee.

## Care Guide program is suspended

Care Guides are a small group of volunteers who were trained by the late Dr. Robert Kane, director of the U of M Center on Aging. The guides were started to assist UMRA members in locating resources to manage unexpected long or short hospital stays or the challenges of providing caregiving to family members with serious health problems.

Dr. Kane was our advisor and supervisor. Due to his unexpected death last spring we are unable to provide Care Guide services at this time. We hope to resume as soon as we secure a new advisor and supervision for our services.