

UMRA Cares Committee Annual Report: July 1, 2023- June 30, 2024

*Submitted August 11, 2024 by Jeanne Markell, chair
(jeannemarkel@gmail.com)*

Committee Charge: Using reports from the Office of Human Resources (OHR), published notices, and surviving next of kin, this committee acknowledges deaths of all University retirees with personalized messages to family members. If deceased were UMRA members, we inform our membership via the newsletter and make a \$30 donation to the family's suggested memorial. If none is named the donation goes to the Professional Development Grants for Retirees (PDGR) program, UMF fund #4867. The committee's original charge included a "care guides" function to support members with serious illness, but that role is now minimal.

2023-24 Committee Members & Liaisons:

Jeanne Markell: chair, delegator, and donation oversight
Nancy Helmich: author, condolence - Twin Cities campus
Kathleen O'Brien: author, condolence - Coordinate campuses, ROCs, UM Extension
Virgil Larson: liaison, membership database manager
Kris Mortensen: liaison, UMRA newsletter editor
Kristy Frost- Griep: liaison, UMRA treasurer
Jessa Voloun: liaison, Office of Human Resources
Lynn Praska: liaison, UMN Foundation
Julie Wallace: liaison, UMRA Archivist

Protocol

- We intake data on retiree/member deaths to the best of our limitations, working to assure accuracy and respect privacy. OHR's cooperation is greatly valued, however these lists include only retirees whose benefactors reach out about University death benefits. Our goal is to acknowledge as many retiree deaths as possible. Thus, our committee efforts include checking for obituaries online, contact with colleges/departments and tapping networks of colleagues who hear about retiree deaths. **All retiree deaths** discovered are acknowledged by the committee after verification, whether UMRA members or not. Jeanne sends the list to Nancy & Kathleen. If a contact address is available they write cards expressing, on behalf of UMRA, condolence and appreciation for the person's career contributions. Feedback about this committee practice is very positive. In many cases family members send notes of appreciation for UMRA's efforts to reach out in time of loss. **UMRA members** who are deceased trigger additional committee effort. In addition to sending condolences cards:
 1. We inform our membership of the passing of all UMRA retirees /member spouses via the *In Remembrance* column of our quarterly newsletter. Jeanne compiles a list of deceased members with relevant data and submits that to newsletter editor Kris Mortenson by deadline for the newsletter. We identify deceased UMRA members by department and the year they joined UMRA, making a deliberate attempt to honor

everyone in the list equally. No titles, no degree abbreviations after names. However, we also include (in the PDF version of the online newsletter) links to published obits. Names are only listed in this column when we have either an official public notice of death or if permission is granted to us by next of kin. This practice grew out of several instances where family members requested privacy about their loved ones' deaths.

2. Jeanne mails a \$30 designated donation in memory of the deceased URMA member and asks those sources to notify families of the gift. Frequently families express appreciation for UMRA's recognition of their loved ones.
3. Because the *In Remembrance* listings are brief, and in a spirit of further honoring contributions of retirees, this year our committee agreed to invite our members to submit personal statements of tribute to the UMRA-sponsored ejournal, the *Journal of Opinions, Ideas and Essays*. The contact for this is JOIE editor Kris Bettin.

Committee activity: 07/01/23- 6/30/24

- URMA sent condolence cards in memory of 53 retirees; 20 were members of URMA (*the list is attached as addendum for the UMRA archives*)
- Notice of member deaths appeared in the *In Remembrance* column of our newsletter
- Of the memorial donations, 9 were made to the U Foundation for our *UMRA Research Grants Program, U of M Foundation fund # 4867*
- Most committee business was accomplished by meeting virtually via phone/email/texts.
- In addition to task completion the committee (and helpful collaborators) regularly interacted to strengthen our efforts. This included ways to work more efficiently and effectively, improve accuracy and to be mindful of the meaningful work which involves loss and grief. It is the committee's intention to strike a balance of mission, timeliness and respect for family wishes as we carry out this work. We will continue to assess and modify.
- Our ongoing challenge is to know when there are retiree deaths, but we do what we can.

2023-24 Expenses

Expenses (donations, cards, postage) are reimbursed by the UMRA treasurer with appropriate receipts provided. Sometimes committee members absorb incidental out-of-pocket costs (computer supplies, postage, etc). Reports from UMRA treasurer Kristy Frost-Griep indicate these committee expenditures from 7/1/23 to 6/30/24:

- \$55 for condolence cards
- \$46 for condolence cards and postage
- \$600 for memorial donations

Total FY24 Cares Committee expenditures: \$701.00