

UMRA Cares Committee Annual Report: July 1, 2024 June 30, 2025

Submitted 9/1/25 by Jeanne Markell, chair
(jeannemarkell@gmail.com)

Purpose: From the Office of Human Resources (OHR) reports, public obituaries, and surviving next of kin, the committee honors deaths of all U of MN retirees with personalized messages to family (when contact information is available). If deceased were UMRA members, we inform membership via our newsletter and provide a memorial gift in the member's name. The committee's original charge included a "care guide" function to support members with serious illness. That role is now minimal, mostly in form of personal notes of well wishes when we become aware of the situation.

2024-25 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 Mortenson: liaison, UMRA newsletter editor
Kristy Frost- Grief: liaison, UMRA treasurer
Katie Goodin : liaison, Office of Human Resources
Lynn Praska: liaison, UMN Foundation
Julie Wallace: liaison, UMRA Archivist

Protocol

- OHR's cooperation is greatly valued, however since these records cover only retirees whose benefactors reach out about death benefits, this is not comprehensive in scope. Often there is no information on next of kin or contacts for the condolence cards. We try to find names to send notes to by checking online obituaries, relevant colleges/departments and networks of colleagues. We attempt to assure accuracy and respect privacy, thus don't publish names without either permission or evidence via a public obituary.
- **All** known retiree deaths (not just UMRA members) are acknowledged after verification. Jeanne sends names to Nancy & Kathleen. If a contact address is available we send cards expressing, on behalf of UMRA, condolence and appreciation for career contributions. Feedback from families is frequent and heartwarming. These expressions are forwarded to the UMRA archives chair annually.
- In the cases of death of past of retirees who ever joined UMRA, we additionally:
 1. List notice of death in the UMRA newsletter *In Remembrance* column . UMRA members are identified with their department and year they joined UMRA, making a deliberate attempt to honor everyone in the list equally. No titles, no degree abbreviations after names. When available we provide links to obituaries. In respect of privacy, names are only listed when either there is a public obituary available or we have permission to do so from family. The committee chair prepares and sends the list by deadline to the newsletter editor.

2. Jeanne mails a \$30 designated donation in memory of the deceased URMA member and asks those sources to notify families of the UMRA gift. If no suggested charity is named the donation goes to the UMRA Research Grants Program (U of MN Foundation fund # 4867). Frequently families express appreciation to the committee for UMRA's recognition of loved ones and these notes are kept in UMRA archives. *(Note: see below for committee proposal for a change to memorial protocol)**
- 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 statements of tribute to the *Journal of Opinions, Ideas and Essays (JOIE)*.

Committee activity: 07/01/24- 6/30/25

- URMA sent 58 condolence cards in memory of retirees; 26 were members of URMA. Of member memorial donations, 10 were made to the U Foundation for our *UMRA Research Grants Program, fund # 4867* (*the lists are attached as addendum for the UMRA archives*)
- Notice of member deaths appeared in the *In Remembrance* column of our newsletter
- All committee activity 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. To that end, we forward to the board the following recommendations for change in protocol regarding UMRA member memorials. (See below)

2024-25 Expenses and FY26 budget increase request

Memorial donations comprise the most of the committee budget, with some additional expenses like postage and condolence cards. Sometimes committee members absorb incidental out-of-pocket costs (computer supplies, postage, check blanks). More significant committee expenses are submitted to and reimbursed by the UMRA treasurer. Total FY25 Cares Committee expenditures reported by treasurer Kristy Frost-Griep: **\$1052** . *Given the increase in costs for postage and notecards to families and also the greater number of memorials given each of the past few years, our committee requested via treasurer Frost-Griep a budget increase for FY26 from the current \$900 to \$1000.*

***Committee Requested Change in Protocol:**

Cares committee recommends a change in donations at time of member death.

We propose that all future memorials be dedicated to the *UMRA Research Grants Program fund #4867*. This would benefit UMRA in several ways: 1) More financial boost to the #4867 fund each year; and 2) a less cumbersome process for the committee the treasurer to monitor and process checks to a wide variety of charities. The process now used is more costly and time intense. If the board supports this change we will implement immediately and make note of it in the next UMRA newsletter.