



Lifelong Learners

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO

Newsletter

Fall 2012

“Lifelong Learning for Age 55 and Over”

FROM THE PRESIDENT’S DESK

Greetings Members and Friends of Mankato Area Lifelong Learners - Two years ago when I accepted the role of Vice President, the two years of being heavily involved with Lifelong Learners looked like an eternity. I have to admit they have gone by surprisingly fast, but I am glad they are over. I have had fun serving in the roles of VP and President.

The organization has been blessed with a council that has been dedicated to its success and for that I am grateful. It has made my job easier. The term of office for several council members is at an end and others who are in appointed positions feel they have served long enough. David Popowski completes three successful years as VP, President, and Past President. (I think he had near perfect council meeting attendance). Donna Hanke is concluding her latest council role as Secretary and Sandy Mitchell is finishing up as Assistant Secretary. Al Brener took over the role of Treasurer on short notice and is completing his three-year term. Karen Sandersfeld has done a great job as editor of the newsletter but feels it is time to step down. All of these folks have made a significant contribution to the success of the Lifelong Learners organization.

I should add that Patrice Hundstad has done a superb job as our office manager since joining us last January. Her talents are being well used!

At the annual meeting on September 20 a number of new officers were elected. Karen Frydendahl

accepted the presidential role, Curt Martinson moved from Assistant Treasurer to Treasurer, Kay VanBuskirk is Secretary, Dave Janovy is Assistant Secretary, and Rosemary Kinney is Assistant Treasurer. Trish Nienow is the new editor of the newsletter and Paul Gorman was appointed to the Council as a member at large. We are fortunate to have these willing workers in council roles. In the future we will be adding additional members to committee membership in support roles on the Membership, Finance, and Publicity committees. If you are interested in being involved in one of these, please call Karen Frydendahl to learn more about these opportunities.

As I think of the future of Mankato Area Lifelong Learners I have to think of the challenges that it faces. In the member survey we conducted last winter the average age of those responded was 78 ½, that means they are 79 now. The organization was started 16 years ago and some of our current members were charter members and have served in leadership roles. In my view a primary challenge is to recruit younger members who will assume future leadership roles. To my knowledge, our membership numbers has never been lower than they currently are. This has a significant impact on the number of members participating in special events, classes, and programs. Participation is a key to our success. I am confident that we can grow our numbers and that the services we offer our members will be increased.

I appreciate the opportunity to have served.
Thanks! Jack

A 2012 PLAN UPDATE

Last November 1 about a dozen Lifelong Learners council members and other long-time members met to develop a strategic plan for our 2012 actions. It was an all-day meeting conducted by an outside consultant, who volunteered his services. We spent the day talking about our community, our organization and our relationship with Minnesota State University Mankato. The basic product of our efforts was a two-page document outlining a revised mission statement, our vision of what we would like the organization to be in 2014 and the steps we would take in 2012 to help us get there. The action steps were grouped into four areas with one council member in charge of each of them. I would like to tell you about each of these goals and what we achieved. We did not completely achieve all of them, but we have three months left in 2012 to work on them.

Goal #1: Increase membership by 50.

Results: We gained 64 new members but renewing memberships have dropped. In September 2012 we had 180 members; right now we have 160. The gain in new members is attributed to new activities (i.e., Great Decisions), publicity in The Free Press and on Channel 12, a mailing to selected University alumni and increased individual activity on the part of our members. With approval of the members attending the Annual Meeting, we will lower the minimum age to 50 and tailor some of our activities to those who are still employed. We have had greater interaction with and support from University staff. Three Lifelong Learning council members visited a meeting of the Deans of the Colleges and described our purpose and activities. The Deans responded by offering support and suggestions in their areas. We plan to repeat this action at the beginning of each Lifelong Learners quarter to keep them aware of our upcoming schedules. A new brochure is being developed and will be available shortly for new member solicitation.

Goal #2: Increase offerings of services/programs to members.

Results: Great Decisions has been very successful. The computer user group had 20-30 potential participants and we had arranged for future presentations by computer service vendors. The activity failed because a leader could not be found. With a volunteer from our members, this group could go – the interest is there! We will try to offer future two-hour classes in our regular curriculum offerings.

Attendance at Special Events had dropped to the point where several had to be cancelled because of low participation, meaning we could not afford to hire a bus. The Special Events Committee has met this situation with two changes. They have made arrangements with Centenary Church to borrow their van when available, at a lower cost, to accommodate smaller groups. We also permit members to bring a one-time guest, who pays the program fee but does not have to pay dues.

The task force for services/programs brainstormed other ways to branch out in our programming to include such things as tours of local businesses and schools, several session classes in areas such as specialty cooking or handicrafts, all-day tours, meetings on weekends or early evenings and classes pertaining to retirement planning taught by financial planners, bankers, etc., to accommodate our prospective younger members. Some of these are quite complicated and will require great preparation (cooking facilities, for example). Series on great books and classic films are within the dreams of our planners. The Curriculum and Special Events Committees will determine exactly what new activities we will tackle. Thinking of these activities might have been enough for 2012 – actually happening may have to be a “by 2014” or later goal. As always, we look for members to express interest or to step up and say, “I’d like to lead a group on ____.” One activity was “to encourage members’ utilization of University classes.” Senior citizens are able to

audit (attend) classes at state universities for a very small fee. One member did just that this summer, when parking was available and few students were on campus. She was extremely pleased with the experience. Best part: No Tests! We have not started new member orientation. But we are trying to give recognition to new participants attending our classes, so that others can welcome them. Name tags are back! Beginning with the Annual Meeting on September 27, we will again be able to attach a name to the person sitting next to us or speaking to us. We will have special name tags for new members.

We have made contact with Bethany College, Gustavus College, and South Central College, and we look forward to working with them on programs and meeting places.

Goal #3: Eliminate debt and improve overall financial position by 10%.

Results: At the time of the plan development we were about \$1600 in the hole. We are still in the hole, but not as much. We are reviewing our office to reduce our overhead. To lower mailing costs (our major expense) we will utilize email to contact members who opt for it. We are working on developing email addresses in our membership data base along with member participation and other information to indicate which classes and special events are the most successful. We have increased dues. In concert with that, we have changed membership terms to one year from date of joining so that people will not pay dues for part of a year. Our corporate membership program is about to be launched when our new brochures are completed. We have explored the workings of setting up a foundation but have not actively pursued it, nor have we looked into the area of grants to support our program offerings.

Goal #4: Develop and implement a marketing plan.

Results: In preparation for our marketing plan, we conducted a member survey during January

and February to help us determine our members' interests, which also told us that our average age for respondents was 78 ½. We connected with the University's Office of Integrated Marketing, whose role is to develop marketing plans for all departments at the University. They helped us develop our marketing plan and presented the completed plan to us in May. Since then we have been working on implementing the plan. It is a slow process, but we feel it is worth the effort. We will have a new updated web site, a new brochure, a poster and assistance in developing the corporate membership program.

Where do we go from here? We have three months to work on those items that we have not achieved yet IF we determine that they are still appropriate for action. This will be done at a second planning meeting to be held in October with last year's outside consultant. We will be looking at the 2012 plan, evaluate our achievements, develop a Vision Statement for 2015 and for the 2013 Action Plan to help move us in that direction. We think we are on the right course. The October session will provide new council members with the opportunity to participate in the plan development and get better acquainted.

Karen Frydendahl

CURRICULUM COMMITTEE REPORT
Carlienne Frisch, Chair

The Curriculum Committee has scheduled twelve classes during the fall quarter (October through December). Your registration form for the classes is enclosed.

Upcoming Curriculum Committee Meetings:

Wednesday, Oct. 3, 10 A.M.
North Mankato Taylor Library

Wednesday, Nov. 7, 10 A.M.
North Mankato Taylor Library

GREAT DECISIONS 2013 ARRANGEMENTS ARE UNDERWAY

Co-chairs Elizabeth Peters & Carlienne Frisch

With great success in our first year of offering the Great Decisions programs, our arrangements for continuing the program next year are underway. In 2013 we will continue meeting at 2 p.m. the second Wednesday of each month (April through November), but in a new location, the Eide Bailly LLC building. Please see the Great Decisions page inserted in this newsletter for a list of 2013 topics, for directions to Eide Bailly, and to register by mail. We request early registration to facilitate ordering of the 2013 Great Decisions briefing books as soon as possible. Your registration will include one copy of the book, available in January. Couples may register to share one book.

This year's Great Decisions sessions will wrap up in November, with topics Promoting Democracy on Oct. 10th and Cybersecurity on Nov. 14th. The October and November sessions begin at 2 P.M. at the United Church of Christ, corner of Stoltzman and Stadium Roads.

MEMBERSHIP

Elizabeth Peters, Chair

Please help us GROW our membership numbers. Tell a neighbor, friend, or relative about the presentations and activities we sponsor and then call Patrice in the Mankato Area Lifelong Learners office at 389-2011. Ask her to send an information packet to the prospective member.

Reminders are being mailed to those who have not paid membership dues in 2012. If you receive a notice and believe that it is an error, please call Patrice in the office and she will check the master list.

As always, your ideas and suggestions are helpful. Our committee is small. Please join us!

Call the Mankato Area Lifelong Learners office (389-2011) if you want your name removed from our mailing list.

Officers:

President: Jack Kent
Vice President: Karen Frydendall
Treasurer: Al Berner
Vice Treasurer: Curt Martinson
Secretary: Donna Hanke
V. Secretary: Sandy Parks
Past President: David Popowski
Ex-officio: Patrice Hundstad,
patrice.hundstad@mnsu.edu

Committee Chairs:

Admin & Finance: Al Berner
Curriculum: Carlienne Frisch
Membership: Vacant
Publicity: Anita Dittrich
Special Events: Anita Dittrich
Al Wortman

University Relations Coordinator: Dwain Petersen
University Liaison/Ext. C: Jean Clarke and Becky Copper

Pot Luck

Co-Chairs: Harriet Plotz
Jo Schultz
Kay VanBuskirk

Great Decisions Group

Co-Chairs: Carlienne Frisch
Elizabeth Peters

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