

!!March Meeting @ NORMAN'S ADULT WELLNESS CENTER!!

NEW ADULT WELLNESS & EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

The next general meeting of the OU Retirees Association is scheduled for **1:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 14th in the multipurpose room of Norman's new Adult Wellness & Education Center, 602 N. Findlay Avenue** (on the Porter campus of the Norman Regional Hospital System). Complimentary snacks and beverages will be available for all members and guests, and a brief business session will take place preceding the program presentation.

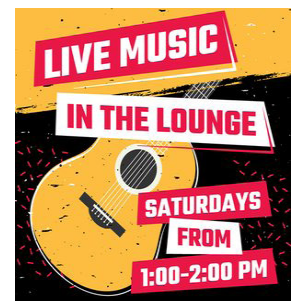
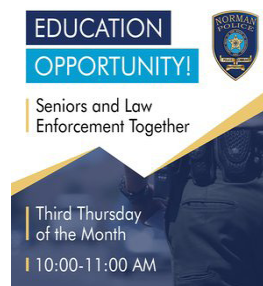
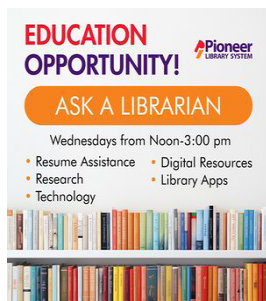
Presenting the program for the non-business portion of the March 14th meeting will be **Katherine Leidy**, the Branch Manager at Healthy Norman Living, which oversees operation of the Wellness Center. Healthy Living Norman's mission is "to promote the health and well-being of adults aged 50 and older by providing opportunities for physical activity, social engagement, and lifelong learning," and the facility bills itself as "a vibrant community dedicated to promoting health, wellness, and an exceptional quality of life for those 50 and above."

In October 2015 Norman residents passed the **Norman Forward** initiative by an overwhelming 72%, and a new wellness center was one of the many projects included in the proposed project. A budget of \$12.4 million was approved shortly thereafter, the groundbreaking took place in November 2021, and the official opening took place in November of 2023. "World-class amenities at the Center include a walking track, a warm saltwater pool, multipurpose rooms for classes and exercise, multiple classrooms for art, a strength training

area, and a teaching kitchen, all housed in an over 30,000 square foot facility." Some of the programs available are "private training, group exercise classes, pickleball, drawing and painting, hand-built pottery, mixed media, floral design, and healthy-cooking classes from beginner to advanced." Regularly scheduled events include movie nights, festivals, and seminars.

The Adult Wellness & Education Center's informational brochure states the following: "The goal of the new wellness center is to embody and provide programs under one roof [and] to improve the quality of life for all adults over 50 in the Norman community ... by connecting adults and creating community through social wellness activities and initiatives, supplying access to professional and recreational physical fitness activities, [and] providing education and support on current adult-related issues."

Katherine Leidy's career has included positions in management, leadership, marketing, and communications with human services, health care, nonprofit, and corporate organizations. Her professional experience also includes teaching a 3000-level writing course in OU's College of Journalism and working as a grant writer at OU's Center for Public Management. Originally from New York, Leidy grew up in Norman, graduated from Norman High School, and earned B.A. and M.A. degrees from OU. She is a member of Leadership Norman's class of 2020 and president-elect of the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art's board of directors. ■



OURA Executive Board, 2023-2024

President: Dan Snell, 821-8752, desnell@ou.edu
President-Elect: Lisa Portwood, 408-8759, laportwood@ou.edu
Immediate Past President: Debbie Blasiar, 664-1914, dblasiar@ou.edu
Secretary: Connie White, 443-6382, choctawlady051@yahoo.com
Treasurer: Beth Gatewood, 306-1771, bethannegatewood@gmail.com
Program: Sonya Fallgatter, 364-6883, sfallgatter@ou.edu
Program: Teri Lodes, 613-9163, talodes@ou.edu
Program: Sue Carlson, 202-2423, sue.carlson@alumni.ou.edu
Membership: Brad Hawkins, 517-5551, bradh48@gmail.com
Benefits: Don Clothier, 408-2145, dclothier@swbell.net
Scholarship: Peter Vail, 364-9307, pvail@ou.edu
Communications: Bill Riggan, 650-6076, williamriggan@gmail.com

Website: www.ou.edu/retirees

Benefits Update

OURA Benefits Committee chair Don Clothier reports the following in the wake of recent discussions at meetings of OU's Employee Benefits Committee, where Don represents the OURA in a voting capacity:

“OU medical plans in general finished the year 2023 15.2% above budget, driven by large claims (>\$100K), high trends, and increased Rx costs. Rx claims in particular were up 24%, and gross medical claims were up 12%. It's certain there will be efforts to address these issues in the future. There will be another Request for Proposals (RFP) process soon, but it has not yet been determined which programs will be affected.”

As more information comes available about this RFP--and about other possible changes/adjustments/updates in benefits matters affecting retirees--OURA members will be notified accordingly by direct notice (to members whose current email addresses are on file with us), on page 2 of *The Banner*, and on the Membership page of the OURA website, www.ou.edu/retirees.

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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA RETIREES ASSOCIATION
Executive Board Meeting
February 8, 2024

Call to Order: The quarterly OURA Executive Board meeting was called to order by President Dan Snell at 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 8th, in the conference room of the Norman Public Library East. In addition to Dan, officers and committee chairs/co-chairs present were Debbie Blasiar, Don Clothier, Sonya Fallgatter, Teri Lodes, Beth Gatewood, Brad Hawkins, Lisa Portwood, Bill Riggan, and Connie White.

President: Dan asked for approval of Connie's minutes of the December 2023 general meeting for inclusion in the March 2024 issue of *The Banner*.

President-Elect: Lisa stated that she would begin a search soon for a 2024-2025 President-Elect.

Secretary: Connie's December 2023 meeting minutes were approved for publication in the March 2024 *Banner*.

Treasurer: Beth's budget report dated 31 December 2023 was submitted a few days after the meeting and was quickly approved for publication in the March 2024 *Banner*.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Program: Sonya announced that the OURA's March 2024 general meeting will be held in the multi-purpose room of Norman's new Adult Wellness & Education Center, 602 N. Findlay on the Porter Campus of the Norman Regional Hospital System. The meeting will begin at 1:30 p.m., and Katherine Leidy, Manager of the Center, will be our speaker.

Membership: Brad reported that there were 51 new OU retirees in early January 2024, all of whom were sent informational packets about the OURA and offered complimentary one-year memberships in the Association.

Benefits: Don informed the Board that the University's campus-wide Employee Benefits Committee would meet soon to discuss new Requests for Proposals for 2024. At the EBC's January meeting it was reported that the OU medical plan's end-of-year numbers were up substantially from what had been expected. As a result, there will probably be a clamp-down on pre-approvals in 2024.

Communications: Once the minutes of today's Board meeting have been completed and then entered on page 3 of the March *Banner*, the issue will be ready for submission to OU's Printing Services for publication and distribution. OURA members should receive their copies of the issue by March 1st at the latest.

Scholarship: In Peter Vail's absence, there was no Scholarship Committee report. For a list of the 12 recipients of the OURA Endowed Scholarship 2013-2023 and photographs of several recent recipients, see the Scholarship page of the OURA website (www.ou.edu/retirees) and page 7 of the March 2024 *Banner*.

Book Club: OURA Book Club member Debbie Blasiar announced that the club's next meeting would be held at The Well, commencing at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 20th. Details about future meeting dates and sites as well as about the books to be read and discussed at forthcoming meetings will be posted on the Calendar page of the OURA website (www.ou.edu/retirees) as they become available.

Excursions: Grettie announced that the next OURA Day Trekkers adventure is set for Thursday, March 21st, and will take participants on a tour of OKC's *Centennial Land Run Monument* installation, conducted by sculptor Paul Moore. Arrangements for this trek are detailed on page 7 of the March 2024 *Banner* and on the Calendar page of the OURA website (www.ou.edu/retirees).

Old/New Business: No old business. Under new business, it was announced that Fran Ayres had withdrawn from the OURA Benefits Committee; a search for her replacement as co-chair will begin right away. Also, as noted above, a search for 2024-25 President-Elect candidates will begin immediately as well, led by current President-Elect Lisa Portwood, who will assume the presidency following the June 2024 general meeting. That general meeting will be held on Thursday, June 13th, at the First Baptist Church's Family Life Center on West Comanche Street in Norman, beginning at 1:30 p.m.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Connie White, Recording Secretary

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA RETIREES ASSOCIATION

Treasurer's Report -- December 31, 2023

Condensed version. Complete report available from the Treasurer upon request.

General Fund Balance as of 06/30/2023	\$ 14,700.51
Deposits:	
Dues Income, July2023-Dec2023	1,530.00
Advertising (OLLI)	200.00
Total Deposits	\$ 1,730.00
Expenses:	
Meeting Room Rental	200.00
Printing + Postage	595.00
Catering/Entertainment	250.00
Miscellaneous	24.79
Total Expenses	\$ 1,069.79
Ending Fund Balance as of 12/31/2023	\$ 15,360.72
Less: Prepaid Dues for FY26-FY31	(1,890.00)
Less: 2-Year Expense Reserve	(3,000.00)
Total Reserves	(\$ 4,890.00)
Operating Balance as of 09/30/2023	<u>\$ 10,470.72</u>

Scholarship Fund Principal Balance 06/30/2023	\$ 20,287.52
Deposits to Fund Principal	
Gifts July2023-Dec2023	\$ 1,030.00
Interest Income	30.17
Total Deposits to Principal	\$ 1,060.17
Principal Balance as of 12/31/2023	<u>\$ 21,347.69</u>
 Source & Use of Scholarship Funds	
Spendable Balance as of 06/30/2023	\$ 511.26
Interest Income	\$ 959.59
Internet Charge	(\$ 2.65)
Scholarship(s) Disbursed	(\$ 1,000.00)
Ending Spendable Balance as of 12/31/2023	<u>\$ 468.20</u>

The OURA Endowed Scholarship Fund

The OURA Endowed Scholarship Fund supports an award of at least \$500 each year to an outstanding OU undergraduate with ties to the state of Oklahoma. The scholarship was established in 2013, and for the first five years was supported through the Association's general fund. By late December 2017, donations from OURA members, officers, and committee chairs and co-chairs, with the invaluable help of a matching challenge contribution by former OURA President Grettie Bondy, had surpassed the \$10,000 mark, allowing the Association to establish in January 2018 the UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA RETIREES ASSOCIATION ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FUND at the University of Oklahoma Foundation. From that point forward, the annual interest earned by the Endowed Fund has been used to underwrite each year's award.

Although the OURA Scholarship Fund is now securely established as a Permanent Endowment, the Fund's Principal Account continually needs additional donations in order to ensure its ability to generate sufficient annual interest and support at least one award each academic year. Contributions by check or credit card in any amount are gratefully accepted at any time and are fully tax-deductible. Checks should be made payable to the OU Foundation, and the memo line should indicate that your gift is intended for the OURA Endowed Scholarship Fund #42197. Please mail all checks to: Treasurer, OU Retirees Association / 201 East Lindsey / Norman OK 73019. Credit card contributions may be made online at <https://giving.oufoundation.org/OnlineGivingWeb/Giving/OnlineGiving/OURetireeSchol>, and the memo line should indicate that your gift is to be applied to the OURA Endowed Scholarship Fund #42197. Thank you. --The OURA Executive Board--

THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA RETIREES ASSOCIATION
Norman Chapter
December 14, 2023

Call to Order: The regular quarterly meeting of the OU Retirees Association was called to order by President Dan Snell at 1:40 p.m. on Thursday, December 14th, at the First Baptist Church's Family Life Center on Comanche Street in Norman. Snacks and beverages were provided to the approximately 56 members and guests in attendance.

Program: After welcoming everyone to the meeting, including new retiree Margaret Vennochi, Dan turned the podium over to Program Committee co-chair Teri Lodes, who introduced Audrey Oden, an OU doctoral student in guitar performance in the College of Fine Arts' School of Music. Following Audrey's well-received renditions of several seasonal and classical selections, Dan commenced the business portion of the meeting, calling first on the OURA officers for their reports.

President-Elect: Lisa Portwood had nothing new to report.

Secretary: Connie White's minutes of the OURA's September 2023 general meeting and the November 2023 Executive Board meeting were approved as published in the December 2023 issue of *The Banner*.

Treasurer: Beth Gatewood's financial report dated 30 September 2023 was approved as published in the December 2023 issue of *The Banner*.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Program: Co-chairs Teri, Sonya, and Sue announced that work on plans for future general meeting programs were ongoing and that an announcement of the program for the March 2024 meeting would appear on page 1 of the March 2024 issue of *The Banner*, which should reach all members around the 1st of March.

Membership: Committee chair Brad Hawkins indicated that he will receive a list of new OU retirees after January 1st and then will send information packets about the OURA to each one by mid-January.

Benefits: Committee chair Don Clothier reported that an issue with Humana's Group Medicare Advantage plan had arisen in Michigan and that the plan had consequently not been accepted there. The issue is expected to be resolved soon. Under OU's Humana Group Medicare Advantage plan the Silver Sneakers fitness program will be accepted at Norman's new Adult Wellness Center and covered for all OU retirees who have chosen the plan.

Communications: Committee chair Bill Riggan reported that all continues to go smoothly both with the publication of the OURA newsletter and with frequent updates to the OURA website, www.ou.edu/retirees. He also announced the recent receipt of emails from the Sam Noble Museum of Natural History and the Fred Jones Jr. Art Museum seeking retirees interested in becoming docents at either of these campus treasures.

Scholarship: Committee chair Peter Vail announced that *two* OURA Scholarships in the amount of \$500 had been awarded earlier in 2023. The two recipients were Lauren Williams, a junior Chemical Engineering major from Warr Acres, and JaLynn Yoakum, a junior Chemistry major from Hinton.

Book Club: OURA Book Club founder and chairman Peter Vail, noting that the club now has 19 regular members, announced that the group's next meeting would take place at The Well on Tuesday, December 19th at 1:30 p.m. Detailed information on the club's meeting dates and the books to be read and discussed can be found on page 7 of each *Banner* issue and on the Calendar page of the OURA's website (www.ou.edu/retirees).

Excursions: OURA Day Trekkers founder/director Grettie Bondy announced that no outing was planned for the 2023-24 winter months and that the group's next excursion would take place in mid-March of 2024, when participants would be joined by retired Muscogee (Creek) sculptor and former OU Artist in Residence Paul Moore for a personal guided tour of his monumental award-winning *Oklahoma Centennial Land Run* installation near Bricktown in Oklahoma City. Details for this adventure will be available on page 7 of the March 2024 *Banner*, on the Calendar page of the OURA's website (www.ou.edu/retirees), and on flyers to be distributed at the March 2024 general meeting.

Old/New Business: There was no old business. Under new business, it was announced that the next OURA general meeting will commence at 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 14th, at a location to be announced on page 1 of the March 2024 *Banner*.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned around 2:35 p.m., after which Grettie led a raucous, freewheeling 45-minute series of Bingo games, with every member and guest present being guaranteed at least one win. A grand time was had by all.

Respectfully submitted,
Connie White, Recording Secretary

Images from the December 2023 General Meeting

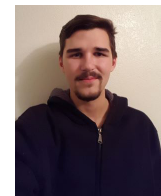
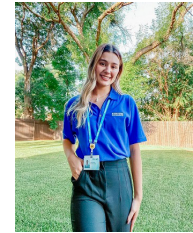


Top, l-r: President Dan Snell calling the December meeting to order; Program Committee co-chair Teri Lodes introducing OU doctoral student in guitar performance Audrey Oden; Audrey Oden performing several classical, seasonal, and original selections. **Center, l-r:** Attendees at the December meeting, including (l-r) former OURA presidents Grettie Bondy, Sue Carlson, Peter Vail, and Debbie Blasiar; audience members following the meeting's business session, including OURA Treasurer Beth Gatewood (back to camera), Program Committee co-chair Teri Lodes, and Secretary Connie White. **Bottom, l-r:** December meeting attendees during the business session, including current Benefits Committee chair Don Clothier (left) and former Benefits Committee co-chair Dan Hough (right); meeting attendees during the business session, including Diane Rubin (front left), David Williams (center), Herman Curiel (front right), and former OURA President Charles Gilbert (behind Herman).

OURA SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS 2013-PRESENT

- 2013 **THERESA ASHLEY**, OKC, SENIOR, INTERNATIONAL STUDIES/SPANISH
 2014 **SARAH BRIMMER**, TULSA, JUNIOR, VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS
 2015 **MACEE BEHELER**, BLANCHARD, JUNIOR, BROADCAST JOURNALISM
 2016 **PHILLIP SWART**, EDMOND, SENIOR, LETTERS & ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES
 2017 **JOSHUA HUGHES**, EUFAULA, JUNIOR, ENGINEERING/MICROBIOLOGY ⁴
 2018 **KARA BROWN**, SENIOR, PSYCHOLOGY & SOCIOLOGY
 2019 **DAVIS MITCHELL**, BROKEN ARROW, SENIOR, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS
 2020 **EMILY TANNER**, ENID, JUNIOR, ADVERTISING
 2021 **ADRIANA GONZALES-VEGA**, YUKON, SENIOR, ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING³
 2022 **HAYLEIGH CARRILLO**, OKLAHOMA CITY, SOPHOMORE, BIOLOGY/PRE-MED²
 2023 **LAUREN WILLIAMS**, WARR ACRES, JUNIOR, CHEMICAL ENGINEERING
 2023 **JALYNN YOAKUM**, HINTON, JUNIOR, CHEMISTRY¹

¹Photo top left ²Photo lower left ³Photo top right ⁴Photo bottom right



OURA DAY TREKKERS

Our spring adventure, scheduled for Thursday, March 21, 2024, includes an informative guided tour of the monumental *Oklahoma Centennial Land Run* installation, 200 Centennial Avenue in OKC. The tour begins at 10:00 a.m. We'll walk along the path, view the works of art, hear the stories behind the figures, and learn the history of the monument from the artist himself, renowned Muscogee (Creek) sculptor and former OU Artist in Residence Paul Moore. More than a dozen years of work were needed to complete this massive project, which spans a distance of 365 feet in length, is 36 feet wide and over 16 feet high, and consists of 46 lifesize-and-a-half bronze elements, making it one of the world's largest bronze sculptures. The City of Oklahoma City, in conjunction with the U.S. Government and the State of Oklahoma, commissioned this massive monument commemorating the spirit and determination of the men and women who rode in Oklahoma's five land runs.

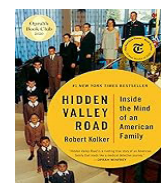
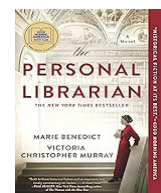
For those in Norman who wish to carpool, we'll meet on the north side of the parking lot of Homeland Supermarket at I-35 and Robinson at 9:30 a.m. and caravan up I-35, exiting at 125C on the left and merging onto Oklahoma Blvd., then turning right onto Oklahoma Avenue and right again at S. Byers Avenue. You'll end up in a large free parking area near the start of the monument. For lunch, we'll head over to Charleston's at 224 Johnny Bench Drive in Bricktown and plan to eat around 11:30 a.m. As always, the March 2024 outing will be open to OURA members, their families and friends, and to nonmembers as well. Everyone is welcome. An RSVP by March 19th will be appreciated, especially if you plan to join us for lunch.

---Grettie Bondy, gbondy@ou.edu, 405-447-8818 (h), 405-537-2642 (c)

OURA BOOK CLUB

Norman's Central Library, where the OURA Book Club normally meets each month, closed for 4-5 months in mid-November as remediation procedures for widespread mold began. The club continued its in-person meetings on **November 21st** at Norman's eastside library with a discussion of Indian-American journalist Thrity Umrigar's 2022 work, *Honor*. On **December 19th** the group met at The Well in Norman, and club members' attention turned to the 2022 *NYTimes* bestseller *The Personal Librarian* by Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray, a work which "illuminates the extraordinary life of an exceptional, intelligent woman who had to make the impossible choice to live as an impostor or sacrifice everything she'd achieved and deserved." On **January 15th**, again at The Well, the book originally scheduled for discussion, Norwegian author Fredrik Backman's 2020 blockbuster *Anxious People*, was replaced by Robert Kolker's *Hidden Valley Road*, a post-WW2 nonfiction story about a Colorado family with 12 children, half of whom suffer from schizophrenia, a situation which sparks serious genetic and neurological studies by the National Institute of Mental Health to discover possible causes of and treatments for this condition. On **February 19th** the club again met at The Well, and the book selected for discussion in February was Tembi Locke's *From Scratch*, "a captivating story of love lost and found, set in the lush Sicilian countryside" and now a limited Netflix series starring Zoe Saldana. Sites and selections for club meetings in March, April, and May 2024 were not yet available when the March 2024 issue of *The Banner* went to press. As that information comes available, it will be posted on the Calendar page of the OURA website, www.ou.edu/retirees.

Unless otherwise announced, all Book Club meetings begin at 1:30 p.m. on the third Tuesday of the month and are open to OURA members and nonmembers alike. For further information about the club, about obtaining the selected books, and about future meeting dates, times, and locales, contact club founder and chairman *Peter Vail* by phone at 405-364-9307 or via email at pvail@ou.edu.



*OU Retirees Association
University of Oklahoma
201 East Lindsey St.
Norman, OK 73019*

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POSTAL SUBSCRIBERS: Look at your mailing label above. If the date atop your name is **06/30/2024 or later**, your dues are paid and current. An earlier date indicates that your membership has expired or will soon do so. If that is the case, simply fill out the coupon below and send it with a check for the amount due (\$10/yr per person) or renew online with a credit card at: <https://giving.oufoundation.org/OnlineGivingWeb/Giving/OnlineGiving/OURetiree>.

E-SUBSCRIBERS: You will receive an email notice if your membership has expired or will soon do so.

Clip and mail:

To: Treasurer, OU Retirees Association
201 East Lindsey, Norman, OK 73019

Name: _____

Street, City, State, Zip: _____

New member: **Renewal:** **E-mail:** _____ **Phone:** _____

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Enclosed is a check for \$_____ (\$10.00 per person per year) payable to "OU FOUNDATION"

