



Founded in 1911, we are a strong and vibrant community, dedicated to helping U of M students achieve their academic goals. We forge lasting friendships by welcoming everyone, caring about each other, and exploring new ideas and places together.

January-February 2025 ~ No. 314

Conversation with a Woman Leader ~

Playing with engineering creates new ways of learning

What happens when a rock band collaborates with preschoolers? Or when a circus school becomes a laboratory? Or when engineering students design props for dancers? Or when singers join a team with computer scientists?

For more than a decade, the Playful Learning Lab at the University of St. Thomas specialized in the intersection of engineering, STEAM, technology and K-12 education. By centering all of the lab's collaborative projects in a place of playful exploration, the undergraduates in the lab were able to create new ways of approaching learning.

Our next Conversation with a Woman Leader luncheon features Playful Learning Lab's founder, Dr. AnnMarie Thomas, who will share her thoughts on how play is a key component of innovation.

Dr. Thomas has spent her career combining knowledge and skills from multiple disciplines to create new products, curriculum and ways of working. While getting her undergraduate degree in Ocean Engineering from MIT, she minored in music composition. Later, while getting her PhD in Mechanical Engineering (focusing on robotics) from Caltech, she spent her evenings teaching (and sometimes working on installation art) at the Art Center College of Design.

AnnMarie spent 17 years teaching at the University of St. Thomas, where she was a professor in both the School of Engineering and the Opus College of Business. She founded and led the Playful Learning Lab (PLL) at UST, where she and her students explored the intersection of art, technology and K-12 education.

Collaboration is at the heart of her work, and her PLL projects involved partners such as OK Go, the Alinea restaurant group, Metro Deaf School, Twin Cities Trapeze Center, and the LEGO foundation. She is the author of "Making Makers: Kids, Tools, and the Future of Education," the co-creator of Squishy Circuits, and the co-founder and executive director of OK Go Sandbox.

Please join us at a new time and location to hear this delightful speaker. We will meet at 11:30 a.m. in the Rainforest Auditorium at the Como Conservatory in St. Paul. The location change is temporary and due to renovations at Midland Hills Country Club. We'll be back at Midland Hills in April.

Remember to register by Monday, January 27, either online or by sending the form found in your directory.



Meeting at a Glance

Conversation with a Woman Leader

Tuesday, February 11, 2025,
11:30

Speaker

AnnMarie Thomas

Founder,
Playful Learning Lab

Location

Como Conservatory,
Rainforest Auditorium, 1225
Estabrook Drive, St. Paul
Free parking available

Menu

Braised pot roast, served with pan jus, glazed carrots and scallion mashed potatoes. (GF). The vegetarian option is vegetable cavatappi, including spiral pasta, artichokes, broccoli, asparagus, tomatoes, red onions, squash and light mushroom sauce. All luncheon entrees will be served with a garden salad, bread and butter, bars for dessert, and coffee and tea.

Cost: \$32

Reservation deadline:

Monday, January 27

Please register and pay online at the UMWC website or send in the reservation form you will find in your directory, along with your check.

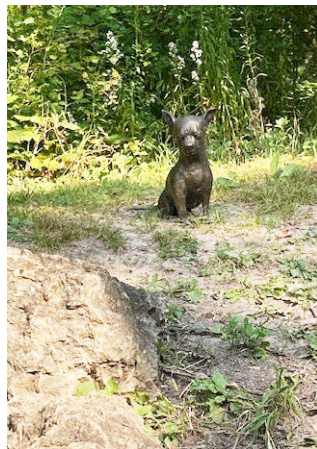
President's Message ~

Starting 2025 with reflection and renewed vigor

Here's to a new year and a new beginning in 2025. Yet, January can also be both a dreary month and a "downer" for some of us. Walking the trails at Silverwood Park with their awesome sculptures, I ran across a small statue of a Chihuahua dog with the title "Every Little Soul Must Shine." Then I saw a quote by Kurt Vonnegut, age 84, that he shared with a high school English class in 2006. "Practice any art, music, singing, dancing, acting, drawing, painting, sculpting, poetry, fiction, essays, reportage, no matter how well or badly, not to get money and fame, but to experience becoming, to find out what's inside you, to make your soul grow," Vonnegut said. Reading both made me wonder if these two messages can be useful for all of us. Maybe January is a "turn inward" month to allow rest after the holidays and permit time to reflect on the coming year. Then we can start the activities of the Women's Club with new vigor.



New member Joan Bulfer, Diane Schweizer and I enjoyed the holiday party.



February's Conversation Lunch should prove to be a new adventure. Come to Como Conservatory for the lunch, give yourself some time to visit the zoo (My favorite animals are the polar bears!), and then we'll be "Playing with Engineering." Now that should be invigorating! Of course there's time to chat with friends, new and old, and share how your January went.

Looking at the section groups, there is some fun coming up, including our own art show as well as the MIA flower show with our members' participation. Some great books are lined up for discussion, and some interesting hikes are planned. What are you going to experience, practice, or try? What are you going to do?

Then, just to share with you some trivia, the word of the year according to Dictionary.com is "demure." I heard this first from Governor Walz, so I had to look it up. Yes, its original meaning is "reserved, quiet, or modest." However, due to a TikTok clip, it now has the broader meaning of "demure and mindful." Yes, that's us! Or maybe some of us are outgoing, speak our mind, and are somewhat forceful — but still mindful.

Also, Cambridge Dictionary announced "manifest" as its word of the year for 2024. It means "to use methods such as visualization and affirmation to help you imagine

achieving something you want, in the belief that doing so will make it more likely to happen." This word is estimated to be 600 years old, yet was one of the most searched terms on the Cambridge Dictionary website last year. And this is the way we as individuals can move out of the January doldrums and into a stunning year with our Women's Club activities and friends.

See you in February!

Nancy Shuster, President

Welcome new members

New members bring welcome change and growth to NUMWC. Please reach out to welcome and get to know our new members, including Jeanne Anderson and Lori Purdham, who are our most recent newcomers.

Please note that if you joined in March-June (2025), your membership is carried forward to 2025-2026.

There have been several directory changes since the last newsletter, including a new phone number for Deborah Alper and a new address for Agnes Wolf. Diane Schweizer has both a new phone number and a new address. We also have five more email address changes: Barbara Edgar, Ginny Hanson, Maggie Hoover, Judy Helgen and Rachel Levitt. There have been 15 email changes this year.

For a current list of new members and their contact information and/or a list of the directory changes, please contact Nancy Myers at nmyers13@hotmail.com. This list is also available at all board meetings.

Celebrating the holidays with generosity and gingerbread

A merry group of 112 UMWC members and guests celebrated the holidays at Norway House in December, where they enjoyed brunch, followed by a visit to Gingerbread Wonderland, an exhibit of gingerbread houses that Norway House has sponsored for 10 years. Janet Graves provided holiday music on the piano while guests mingled and visited with friends.



Members (from left) Georgia Heisserer, Mary Drew and Barbara Cady welcomed the party goers.

In addition to celebrating the holidays, members had the opportunity at the party to contribute to the club's annual gift drive for children hospitalized at the University's Masonic Children's Hospital. At press time, some \$1,400 had been collected for the effort as well as a sizeable number of toys.



Members Diane Iverson, Joy Ballou and Mary Nelson were among the guests.



Janet Graves provided lovely holiday music.

“We are so grateful for the generosity of our members,” said Georgia Heisserer, who spearheaded this year’s effort. “The toys and financial contributions make a tremendous difference to families who are dealing with the difficulties of having their child hospitalized during the holidays.”

New Member Coffee was a hit

Fifteen new members and 10 volunteers from leadership had a wonderful time on November 5 getting to know each other. They gathered at the home of Shelley Horstman and shared donuts, snacks, coffee and a lot of laughter and stories. What a fascinating and impressive group!



New members include (from left, back row) Liz Peter, Linda Keating, Cathy Vanous, Chris Grewell and Valoree Dowell; (from left, middle row) Mary Mohan, Karen Pervo, Juli Kroening and Joan Bulfer; and (from left, front row) Louise Mengelkoch, Paula Lopuch, Monica Oehrlein, Judy Calcote, Renee Valois and Sue Everson. Welcome to all new members. We are so glad you have joined us!

A lifeline with gratitude

In thank you notes and in person at the scholarship luncheon, we've heard from scholarship recipients the many ways in which the UMWC scholarship makes a difference in their lives, providing a "lifeline," the theme of the 2024–25 annual appeal.



Scholarship recipients shared they have more time to dedicate to studies and to develop leadership skills through extracurricular activities. They spend more time with their families, many having children in addition to pursuing a degree. Their expressions of gratitude were heart-warming and inspiring.

With gratitude, I have been thinking about another lifeline — my own. When I went to college, a thousand years ago, tuition and room and board were manageable without having to work one or maybe even two jobs as we heard from the UMWC scholarship recipients. (Well, there was that one stint working in the dorm cafeteria that ended badly.) And while work in food service and hospitality was not to be in my future, high school teaching and development and fundraising were, resulting in two fulfilling careers.



Now, I'm personally grateful for the opportunity to "give back" by donating to the UMWC Scholarship Fund out of gratitude for what the generous people of the State of Pennsylvania made possible for me. Their support made

it possible for me to pay it forward now and make a gift to the UMWC Scholarship Fund. And I hope you will too.

So far, since July 1, the response to the UMWC annual appeal has been generous. At this writing, 78 gifts have been made to the scholarship fund for a total of \$26,250. For comparison purposes, in August 2024, UMWC sent \$115,000 from the UMWC Scholarship Fund to the U of M Foundation (UMF), an amazing total that should make us proud. Gifts of all sizes throughout the year to the scholarship fund made that sum — the largest ever — possible. With \$115,000 added to the total available earnings from endowment funds held at UMF to benefit UMWC scholarships, a total of \$295,500 was made available for scholarship awards. Can we do that again? Yes, we can!

With December a big month for giving, spawned by gratitude, generosity and tax advantage, the number of gifts to the scholarship fund will have increased for sure. The Scholarship Fundraising Committee will meet soon to review year-end outcomes. But there is still time if you just didn't get to it yet. The UMWC fiscal year doesn't end until June 30, so there is plenty of time to throw a "lifeline" with your own donation of any size that is right for you.

Welcome to 2025 and the possibilities it offers. Contact me with your questions and comments.

Diane Young, VP Scholarship Fundraising

Ways to throw a lifeline and make a gift to the UMWC Scholarship Fund*

Make a gift of any size that is right for you.

Set up a recurring monthly gift.

Honor or remember someone dear.

Include the UMWC Scholarship Fund in your estate plan.

Make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from your IRA.

Make a gift from your Donor Advised Fund.

Create an endowed fund at the U of M Foundation to benefit the UMWC Scholarship Fund.

How to give?

Make checks payable to the UMWC Scholarship Fund using the gift form in your UMWC directory. Mail to Jane Glazebrook, whose contact information is in the directory.

Contact Marian Champlin to create a One-year Named Scholarship (OYNS).

Contact Hannah Baines at the UofM Foundation to establish an endowed scholarship; hmbaines@umn.edu

Talk with your financial advisor.

*The UMWC Scholarship Fund is a registered 501©3 with the State of Minnesota.

Newsletter deadline is February 14

The deadline for the March-April 2025 newsletter is Friday, February 14. Please submit articles, information and photos to Nancy Kluver, newsletter editor, at Kluver.nancy@gmail.com.

SECTION NEWS

Hikers walk and party hearty



After a vigorous walk, the Hikers in December gathered in St. Louis Park for a holiday party that included a delicious potluck lunch and lively conversation.

Remembering Former President Joan Rathbun

Joan Rathbun, who served as UMWC President in 2002–2003, passed away November 4 in Golden Valley at the age of 91. Joan is survived by daughters Kathy and Nancy and their families.

Member Barb Cohen remembers Joan very well.

“I first met Joan Rathbun back in the 1980’s, when our husbands worked together, from the Chemistry and Ophthalmology departments at the U, on a drug to combat cataracts,” Barb said. “Although I had joined the UMWC shortly after moving to Minnesota in 1982, I wasn’t really active in the club until after I retired from full-time work in 2006.

“I knew that Joan was President of the UMWC in 2002–2003, but I really got to know her because we were both members of the Metro West branch of the American Association of University Women. We carpoled to several events, and I enjoyed hearing about her family, their cabin in the Northwest, and her many civic activities. Joan was a loving and involved mother and grandmother, a dedicated teacher, and a lifelong learner. We will all miss her friendly spirit and quiet wisdom.”



Taking tea in the woods



The Out to Tea group enjoyed a lovely tea in October at Molly MacBrides in the Woods. Members (from left) are: Monell Jackel, Nancy Haugen, Jill Griffin, Kim Carlson, Jan Graves and Millie Woodbury.

It’s museum hopping for the Art group



Members of the Art section in October visited the Minnesota Museum of American Art in downtown St. Paul for an excellent guided tour of the museum’s wide range of artworks in its newly renovated galleries. In November, members met at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, where they took an interesting tour of artworks related to the book *Personal Librarian*, which is a tale of J.P. Morgan’s personal librarian.

If you’d like to help

The Young in Spirit section is considering starting a small new fund to help those long-standing members of our club who might need some help to pay their annual membership dues, or to attend some of the functions of the club.

If you know of someone who might need a little help to remain active in the club, or if you would like to donate to such a fund, please contact Rolaine Wright or one of the members of the Young in Spirit section.

CLUB NEWS

University of Minnesota • McNamara Alumni Center
200 Oak Street SE, Suite 250
Minneapolis, MN 55455-2002
www.umwc.umn.edu

Have you changed your address, email or phone?

Send correction or new contact information by
email to nmyers13@hotmail.com

Or **Print** new information below.

1. Cut out or copy this form along with the accompanying address label.
2. Mail to Nancy Myers, 1578 Burton St.,
Falcon Heights, MN 55108

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State: _____

Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

In this issue of Online Extra

Few members represent UMWC's scholarship effort better than Marian Champlin, who in 2016 established the One-Year Named Scholarship Program. Her fundraising expertise, like other areas of her life, is the result of talent, hard work and the ability to create and capitalize on new opportunities.



From learning to fly to earning her ham radio call letters to installing hardwood flooring at her cabin in northern Minnesota, Marian is a dynamo. Her many contributions to UMWC are consistent with a life full of achievement and adventure. All of it, of course, is only apparent if you can get her to talk about herself, which we were finally able to do.

You will find the story as an added feature to the online version of our newsletter.

Memorial gifts

- In memory of Flossie Caldwell by Mary Furman
- In memory of Dick Holmsten by Operations
- In memory of Prof. Keith S. Champlin by Marian Champlin
- In memory of Joan Rathbun by UMWC
- In memory of Helen Lorenz by Linda Lorenz

Honoring gifts

- In honor of an Honorable Future by Linda Keating
- In honor of Strong Women Everywhere by Georgia Heisserer

Board of Directors meet in January and February

The Board of Directors will meet Friday, January 17, at noon at the Ramsey County Library on Hamline and County Road B. They also will meet Tuesday, February 11, at 10 a.m. at Como Conservatory, 1225 Estabrook Drive, St. Paul. All members are welcome to attend.

A lifetime of new adventures, hard work and achievement

If you are able to get Marian Champlin to reluctantly talk about herself, she will simply say, “I’m a can-do person.” It’s an understatement if ever there were one.

Born and raised in Grand Rapids, Minnesota, Marian attended the University of Minnesota, funding her own tuition with a number of part-time jobs. While there she met her future husband, Keith, who had recently returned from military service. Both continued their educations. They dated a couple of years before marrying, which is when a true partnership of equals—and achievement—began and one of Marian’s part-time jobs led to full-time employment at the Bemis Company as a purchasing director.



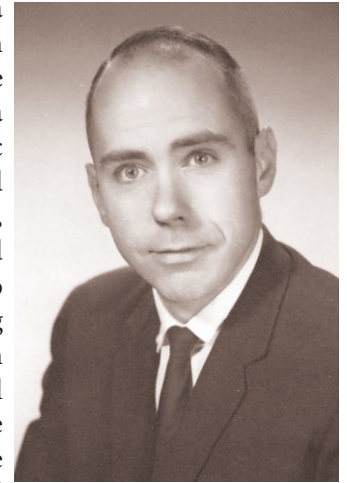
Marian and former President Linda Boss at the welcome event in 2023

Drafted during the Korean War, Keith, a licensed amateur (ham) radio operator who earned his call letters at age 15, taught Morse code and radio operating procedure to soldiers at Camp Rucker, Alabama. Discharged as a Master Sergeant in 1952, he used the G.I. Bill—with Marian’s help—to earn a B.S. degree, followed by an M.S. degree and finally a Ph.D., all in electrical engineering, from the University of Minnesota. He joined the faculty in 1958, and went on to earn a full professorship in 1967.

“He was a fantastic teacher,” Marian said, who used to win contests as the most popular professor among students. She tells a funny story of him bringing home a Polaroid photo he’d taken of graffiti in the men’s room reading, “Vote for Keith.” An introvert, Keith also was a very successful inventor, earning 66 patents, and a

technical consultant to large firms such as Honeywell and Motorola. His most notable invention was the first commercially successful electronic battery tester.

The couple lived for a time in Paris, where Keith was a visiting professor at the Sorbonne. “We lived in a student hotel in a fantastic area,” Marian said. She loved the city’s architecture, especially the churches, and took the opportunity to finish her education. During the summer, she and Keith lived in the International Campground, the Bois de Boulogne, Paris. It was the two of them, their tent and their Volkswagen, which they’d purchased in Germany upon their arrival in Europe. The Paris newspaper *Le Monde* picked up their story for a Sunday feature.



Keith Champlin

And that story was about *both* of them, which became the story of their lives. Not to be outdone by a talented and enterprising husband, Marian jumped into the couple’s adventures with both feet and had a successful career of her own.

Let’s start with that ham radio.

“When we were first dating, I noticed a funny machine in his car,” Marian said. “He told me it was a ham radio. I decided I wanted to do it, too,” and went on to earn her own call letters: WOQZS. She learned a lot about electronics from her husband and even built her own transmitter. In fact, once a friend was lamenting the fact that his battery charger needed new handles and he wasn’t able to solder them on himself.

“I’ll do it,” Marian said, and went on to make the repair. “Don’t discount me.”

Then there was the airplane.

“One day he came home and said he had started taking flying lessons,” Marian said, all the while thinking, “Well, I guess if you can afford flying lessons, so can I. So we both learned to fly.” They had their Cessna for several years and did a lot of flying, until they had children and bought the home in which they lived for more than 50 years and where Marian still resides.

While working and raising a family, Marian also found time to volunteer. In particular, she taught skills such as knitting and woodworking to people with disabilities, which led to a fruitful partnership.

“They were just starting to build Courage Center,”

Marian said of the organization now called Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute in Golden Valley, “and were looking for ways to raise money.

“So we established Courage Auxiliary,” and Marian became its first President. As part of the effort, she and a friend happened upon the idea of creating and selling Christmas cards, secured \$5,000 in seed money from the board and Courage Cards was born. Her first fundraising foray has grown into an effort that has raised more than \$6 million for Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute and features artists from across the nation.

Marian’s professional fundraising career also began with a volunteer effort at Breck, her children’s school.



Marian's family joined her at the scholarship luncheon in October, along with her friend Margaret Rowser. They are (from left, seated) Margaret Rowser, Aleya Champlin and Peter Bergner; and (from left, standing) Margot Bergner, Adelia Bergner, Michelle Champlin Bergner and Marian.

“The school needed publicity, and I had friends in TV and at the newspaper,” Marian said, which furthered the effort. When the school replaced its development director, officials asked Marian to fill in temporarily. “I said yes, but you’ll have to pay me.” It wasn’t long before she had a permanent position, in which she stayed for 10 years. As part of the job, she took advantage of the fact that the school was starting to computerize its operations, allowing her to generate appeal letters and establish new ways to manage the philanthropic funds. Fundraising does indeed take business smarts—but a winning personality doesn’t hurt either.

“I had no trouble talking with men,” Marian said with a characteristic twinkle.

Marian’s tenure at Breck also led to a six-year stint on the Hennepin County Bar Association Ethics Board. A member of the Breck board, who also was a judge, recommended her for the position, which involved interviewing people who were unhappy with their lawyers, including people in prison, and presenting findings to the board.

After leaving Breck, Marian established and served as President of Champlin & Associates, which provided

fundraising consultation to private schools. She also brought her fundraising expertise to UMWC.

“When Keith was first at the U, I joined the Faculty Wives Club but wasn’t very active,” Marian said. In 2011, she rejoined UMWC and took a variety of leadership positions, including Vice President for Scholarship Fundraising, Corresponding Secretary and Chair of Modern Literature. She also served on the Website, Communications and Finance Committees.

Most notably, Marian in 2016 initiated the One-Year Named Scholarship Program.

“A thought came to me,” Marian said, “What if you could for the cost of one of our scholarships name a scholarship for one year for anyone you’d like?” She took the idea to the board and the program was launched.

A very successful effort, the One-Year Named Scholarship Program last year granted 19 scholarships. “Part of the thinking behind the named scholarship program,” Marian said, “is that it builds enthusiasm and segues into an endowment.” With an endowment, the principal amount, which is significant, is invested and the generated income is used to fund scholarships into perpetuity.

Marian did just that in May 2023 when she established the Keith S. and Marian D. Champlin UMWC Engineering Scholarship. “When we talked about it, Keith was very clear that he wanted both of our names connected with it,” she said. The scholarship is for engineering or STEM students, and the recipient this year is Abdisamed Abdullahi, who is majoring in Computer Science.

After dealing for several years with Parkinson’s disease, Keith passed away in February 2023 at age 92. Marian is grateful that her family, including son, Judson, and daughter, Michelle, live close by as she navigates a new path without her partner. Judson, a patent and trademark attorney, is owner and partner at Westman, Champlin, and Koehler, PA. Michelle is Director, Institute for Research in Marketing at University of Minnesota-Carlson School of Management.

Marian also has five grandchildren, three of whom are engineers.

“They had fun talking with their grandfather about engineering,” Marian said. “And I’m so glad that Keith lived long enough to see his daughter become a full professor.”

Life is indeed still filled with joys. The family loves Blackberry Lodge, their vacation home in northern Minnesota that has grown from a one-room cabin to an eight-bed, six-bath family retreat on 160 acres, “with good internet,” Marian adds. And Blackberry Lodge grew in part because Marian on her own installed tile and hardwood flooring and designed additions using a computer-aided drawing system.

She also continues to knit, enjoys cooking, cross-country skiing and vacationing with the family in Hawaii.

All in all, her life’s refrain remains the same. Don’t underestimate Marian. She’s still hanging in there!