INTEREST GROUP ACTIVIES

The Aerobics Group--Claire Mangasarian

Judging by the 35 year tenure of the University League Aerobics Group, a desire for fitness and the pleasure of good company are an enduring combination, both for personal strength and group longevity, and, for that matter, for personal longevity and group strength also.

The University League Aerobics group celebrated its 35th anniversary on Thursday, October 25 with a luncheon at Swagat Indian Restaurant in the Sauk Point Square Mall, on N. High Point Road. Two of the initial founding members, Jeanne Grover and Caroline Liedtke, attended the festivities.

A Short History of the Group

In the fall of 1983, Carol Cary, a newcomer to the League, proposed the creation of a League aerobics group at a newcomers meeting in Eagle Heights. An enthusiastic cohort of about 35 founding members signed up. The group was generously granted permission to use a basement room at Fire Station #2 on Grand Canyon Drive for a 1 hour class, three days a week. At first they just did aerobics – grooving to a Michael Jackson music video. By 1984 they were listed as a League interest group. Aerobics was off and running!

A year and a half later, however, the group needed a new leader but found two. Debi Corradini and Elinor Byrne shared leadership as a team in 1984-85. Within another year or so, other responsibilities prevented them from continuing. Once again, the group searched for a leader. Their search soon focused on Laura Liedtke, a graduate student in exercise physiology and the daughter of one of the founding members. Laura accepted the position and was a capable instructor, but Laura soon graduated and moved from Madison and the perennial search for a leader began once again. The group looked to its membership and focused on one of its founding members, Caroline Liedtke, Laura's mother. Caroline had been involved in sports all her life and was a natural athlete. She ably continued the established program and, over time, added many new elements, including steps, exercise bands and finally weights. The sessions evolved from simply aerobics to include segments of weight-training and floor exercises (abdominals). Caroline accepted the leadership position 30 years ago! She is still doing it today.

In 1994, the group had to find a new home. It moved from a rather tight and dark basement room at Fire House #2 to a brighter larger room at the Kehl School of Dance (later called Madtown Twisters) at the corner of Old Sauk Road and Gammon Road. At this time the group changed from three one-hour sessions a week to two one-and-a-half hour sessions. The move also made possible the addition of steps, exercise bands and weight training, since the Kehl School of Dance generously allowed us storage of equipment on site. In the cooperative spirit of the group, Marilyn Gundermann also collected dues to pay the room rent and filled in occasionally as leader.

By 2008, Yoga and Pilates were well established in fitness programs and there was a desire to add some of these elements to our session. Again, the group looked to its membership for an able instructor and found the right person in Jill Muehrcke, who had trained in Yoga, on and off, for over 40 years. She agreed to lead a 20 minute Yoga segment at each class. We soon began learning the new Yoga positions, some with names of animals like crouching dog, pigeon and frog, and others with more distinguished titles like kneeling warrior, goddess and Chinese resting. Jill had also been taking Pilates for 10 years and added some of those positions, too. The group’s favorite pose is shavasana, in which we do some mindful meditation and welcome relaxation.
The group meets on Mondays and Thursdays throughout the year, from 8 a.m. to 9:30 a.m., at Madtown Twisters at the intersection of Old Sauk and Gammon Roads. On the third Thursday of each month, immediately after the exercise session, we meet for coffee and chatter at the Barnes and Noble Cafe. The present members of the Aerobics Group are Elisabeth de Boor, Friedemarie Farrar, Jeanne Grover, Marilyn Gundermann, Ruth Gundermann, Margaret Kaufman, Carol Kiemel, Elinor Koepeke, Caroline Liedtke, Claire Mangasarian, Linda Mayfield, Jill Muehrcke, Fran Potter, Roma Rowlands and Judy Troia.

We encourage other University League members with a passion for fitness and a pleasure in camaraderie to join our group – as Carol Kiemel, one of our long-time members, describes it, "the best aerobics group EVER."

Spanish Interest Group—Karen Pasch

Hola!/Hello! Once a month, on the 2nd Thursday of the month, from 1-3 p.m., University League Spanish Conversation meets at Madison's Sequoya Library to socialize, enjoy Spanish, read short articles together, discuss and have a little afternoon treat. This photo was taken in August 2018. A new partnership exists this year with the Madison libraries. Sequoya announces the conversation group, allows us to meet without charge and even provides a few photocopies for visitors. We love our UL members who come when available and are excited to welcome new participants from UL and from the public! Intermediate to advanced Spanish is helpful, but beginners may find it helps their Spanish to come listen! Feel free to drop in. Contact Carol White for more information and to be added to the UL Spanish Conversation email list. ¿Hablas español? ¡Visítanos!/Visit us!

Armchair Travelers Interest Group—Mary Jo Willis

The Armchair Traveler's Interest Group kicked off its season with Ken and Claudia Miska, who have vacationed in 47 countries, presenting on their recent trip to Australia, New Zealand, and the islands of Bora Bora, Tongo and other Polynesian islands. Next month, on November 5th, we will travel with the "Snow Birds of Mexico," presented by Charlotte and Jim Burns. They have made many trips to go birding in many areas of Mexico and Central American. On December 3rd, we will welcome Lynn Bosch to discuss her many summers in France, sampling the culture, food and wines of different French areas.

On January 7, 2019, Ken and Claudia Miska will return to take us to a new area for our group, Southeast Asia, including Hong Kong, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore. On March 4th, Joan Peterson, publisher of the Eat Smart Culinary Travel Guidebook series will again share one of her latest country's cuisine--country to be announced later. One of our group members, Mary Ann Reale, will share her exploits in Hungary, a trip this winter with her husband. We have no programs scheduled yet for February or May, but stay tuned.
All are welcome. Save these dates. We meet the first Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at Oakwood West in the Westmoreland room. Please contact Mary Jo Willis to RSVP for any of these programs at mjwillis@wisc.edu. We look forward to seeing more of our members.

Art Interest Group—Diane Smidt

On a rainy day in early November, the Art Interest Group, led by Kathy Knox and Diane Smidt, made a trip to Ephraim Faience Pottery in Lake Mills, WI.

The group of ten listened with interest to the skilled potter and founder, Kevin Hicks. His studio of 15 artists, some part time, is reminiscent of the Arts and Crafts movement.

Hicks is originally from Deerfield and has a business degree, but found an early interest in art as a kid who frequented the school art rooms after hours, enjoying the collaboration of artists working side by side.

As his interest in art grew, he ascertained a goal of creating a ceramic studio where he could merge the more traditional factory-producing company with the more modern individual artist.

On this particular day, we were fortunate to observe Hicks demonstrate the throwing of a pot, standing at a wheel (more ergonomic). He referred to this first procedure as a “growing thing,” the foundation or framework for which collaborating artists then bring life to the piece.

Hicks went on to discuss the chemistry involved in the making of their own glazes, their exploring new trends, their accommodating differences, and so forth. But, most importantly, he stressed the acknowledgement of the artists’ hands.

With as many as 500 seasonal pieces, some requiring three firings with the glazing, Hicks found himself in need of a second store, and found one in Cambria, California.

After 23 years in the business, Kevin Hicks continues to stay busy and continues to venture out as his interests change. Yet, he keeps his artists and keeps his faith in the idea of art as a collaborative effort!
The Antiques Group continues to thrive with a variety of engaging programs and occasional local trips throughout the Fall and Spring. Our long-time leaders, Barbara Pillinger, Norma Magnuson, and the Vogelsangs (Barbara and Bill), have “retired,” and now our members take responsibility for planning and organizing each monthly program.

Such was the case in September; long-time member Karen Goebel organized a delightful “Day in Olde Baraboo.” The circus-oriented trip featured two main venues—the Al Ringling Mansion and the Al Ringling Theatre. The spectacular red stone mansion, built in 1905 for Al and Lou Ringling, is reminiscent of Mark Twain’s home in Hartford, Connecticut. The features include original Tiffany windows and light fixtures, plus elegant period furnishings. Restoration is currently in process by private owners, and the artistry is both praiseworthy and authentic. What a unique opportunity to visit an early Wisconsin home in its original state!

After a tasty lunch at the Little Village Café (circa 1945), complete with red counter stools, we ventured forth to the Al Ringling Theatre to see the meticulous restoration to its original grandeur. Our tour included the golden lobby, the horseshoe foyers, and the grand auditorium. In addition, we had a chance to peek backstage to glimpse the unique historic dressing rooms, which have been host throughout the years to many theatrical groups and even Vaudeville. Later, we enjoyed a brief demonstration featuring the mighty Barton organ. The City of Baraboo uses the Ringling Theatre quite often for community events, movies, plays, and even high school graduation. Needless to say, a good time was had by all!

The next meeting, at Ruth G. Johnson’s home on November 12, featured “folk art.” Aleta Murray showed several of her old caricature dolls. Helen Lackore showed a wooden comical toy. Charlotte Burns displayed a complete set of very old pewter tea service pieces. Kay Jarvis-Sladky brought a painted iguana figurine that had other hidden figures painted on it. Judy Stang brought two long-ago little notebooks she found in a trunk that had poetry and beautiful writings in them. Fran Rall wore and displayed unique jackets made from scrap pieces of fabric. Carol White showed us some Christmas wreaths with a couple of dozen mini dolls in a circle all dressed up in costumes from Guatemala. The above list is only a sample of what our members brought to the meeting. There were 18 enthusiastic members seated in a circle, sharing wonderful conversation about all folk art. Ruth Heinz brought luscious home made tarts and cookies for us to enjoy.