



THE PIONEER CLUB STAY INVOLVED.

CONNECT WITH FORMER COLLEAGUES.

October 2014

This edition of the Oakland University Pioneer Club eNewsletter is chock full of interesting tidbits and features a wonderful piece on fellow retiree Sharon Muir. Please take a moment to browse the latest [campus news](#) and [events](#).

About the Pioneer Club

The purpose of the Oakland University Pioneer Club is to provide social, educational and volunteer service opportunities to OU retirees and their spouses. It is our hope that this group will serve as a way for you to reconnect with former colleagues as well as maintain a relationship with OU. As a retiree, you remain a valued member of the university community.

Group Lunches

The group meets the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 1:00 p.m. at Nick's Country Oven in Rochester (Adams and Silverbell). These lunches are very casual, so please stop by when your schedule permits.

Newsworthy

Former first lady and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton came to OU to rally voters for Democratic candidates. To read more about her recent visit, [click here](#).

Campus Update

Longtime employee Eleanor Reynolds will retire as Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs and Director of Admissions. A part of the OU community for four decades, Reynolds earned her bachelor's degree at OU, and later completed her master's degree, before returning to campus as Oakland's Director of University Housing in 1982. Effective November 3rd, Dawn Aubry will assume the role of Interim Vice President for Student Affairs and Director of Admissions. The campus community is invited to celebrate Eleanor Reynolds on Wednesday, October 29th from 2-4 p.m. in the Oakland Center Gold Rooms. Remarks will be at 2:30 p.m. Please RSVP to tking@oakland.edu.

Pioneer Profile

By Gerry Coon

When Sharon Pray Muir took an early retirement from the Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Leadership in the School of Education at Oakland University in 2001, she set three major goals for herself. She determined to visit personally as many as possible of the cultures and countries that she had been discussing with students during her career as a social studies teacher, she was anxious to devote full time to attending several film festivals each year, and she also wanted to return something to the community in which she had lived for 15 years.

"While I was working," she explains, "I did do some traveling, but semester breaks did not allow for the in-depth kind of experiences I wanted, and I just didn't have the time to do any volunteer work, so I promised myself I would make up for that when I retired."

And she certainly did. Shortly after her retirement she joined the Friends of the Rochester Hills Public Library. Acknowledging her lifetime interest in literature and film, the Friends put her to work in the storage room where donated books were kept. Her first job was to sort materials for the book sales that are held three times a year. She quickly found ways to organize the limited space and volunteers more efficiently and eventually became one of the directors of the program that provides \$80,000 additional annual income for library purchases of new materials.

When donated books began to regularly overwhelm the limited space provided for them, Sharon invented ways to clear them out more quickly, and for a greater profit. She organized a troop of volunteers who agreed to staff a book cart in the library lobby for several hours at a time to sell the newest and best donated books for a slightly higher price than they would sell at the regular sales. Sharon selects the books and makes sure that the selections are updated regularly, and there are currently 35 volunteers who staff the book cart an average of 4 hours per month. Book cart sales contribute annually another \$20,000-\$25,000 to the library's funds.

Considering the depth and scope of the volunteer work described above that others might consider a full-time job, it seems unlikely that she would have found time to do the in-depth traveling that was her other major goal. Not so! The many volunteers carry on the work in her absences and she is always present for the quarterly sales.

Her travels since retirement to over 54 countries have been carefully documented in travel letters, slide shows and Power Point presentations which she has shared with friends, retirement residences and other small groups. Sharon got the travel bug after living abroad four times on sabbaticals and as a Fulbright Scholar. She manages to attend each year the film festivals in Toronto and Palm Springs, where she views and rates over 50 films in 12 days at each festival. This year she was particularly taken with the British film, *Theory of Everything*, about Stephen Hawking.

Sharon frequently travels alone as well as with small groups. "I find that I'm more likely to make a closer contact with the people of the area if I am unattached to a group or another person," she says. She cites an incident when she was invited to follow a Syrian soldier home to meet his family. "I'm always telling them how nice Americans are," he told her, "and I'd like them to meet one." She surreptitiously trailed him out of the bus station so he wouldn't be identified as being with an American, then joined him and his family for a typical meal eaten with fingers while seated on floor cushions. "An experience I'd never have had if I had been attached to a tour," she added.

What's next for this active retiree? A solo trip to Amsterdam to see the many Bruegel paintings on display since the reopening of the Rijksmuseum after a four-year reconstruction, a Danube cruise from Bucharest to Budapest, and next year the Panama Canal and Colombia.

And she hopes to continue to emulate her active 102-year-old mother who still teaches exercise classes to the other inhabitants of her assisted living facility.

Gerry Coon retired from the Reading and Language Arts Department in the School of Education and Human Services. She is a co-editor and writer for the Rochester OPC (Older Persons' Commission) newsletter and a member of the Pioneer Club planning committee.

Pioneer Profile is a new feature that will appear periodically in the Pioneer Club eNewsletter. Anyone interested in writing these brief descriptions or if you have suggestions on fellow retirees to showcase, please email Angie Schmucker at schmucke@oakland.edu.

Upcoming Events

Oakland University Brass Band
Sunday, November 2nd, 7:00-9:00 p.m.
Varner Recital Hall
All Seats \$8
[Click here for more info!](#)

Benefits & Wellness Fair
Wednesday, November 5th, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Campus Recreation Center
Complimentary
[Click here for more info!](#)

Celino Romero, James Lentini, guitar
Sunday, November 9th, 3:00-5:00 p.m.
Varner Recital Hall
Tickets \$30
[Click here for more info!](#)

Osman Khan: "The day after I learned the world was round"
Wednesday, November 12th, 5:00-6:00 p.m.
208 Wilson Hall
Complimentary
[Click here for more info!](#)

Oakland Symphony Orchestra
Sunday, November 16th, 3:00-5:00 p.m.
Varner Recital Hall

Tickets \$20
[Click here for more info!](#)

Arts at OU – A night at Oakland University Art Gallery
Tuesday, November 18th, 5:30-7:30 p.m.
Meadow Brook Art Gallery
Tickets \$15 (includes wine & hors d'oeuvres reception)
[Click here for more info!](#)

History Comes Alive: The Crusades and the making of a medieval French King
Wednesday, November 19th, 7:00-9:00 p.m.
Gold Rooms B & C, Oakland Center
Complimentary, but reservations requested
[Click here for more info!](#)

The Liar
Sunday, November 23rd, 2:00-4:00 p.m.
Varner Studio Theatre
Tickets \$14
[Click here for more info!](#)

Wind Symphony & Symphonic Band
Tuesday, November 25th, 7:30-9:30 p.m.
Varner Recital Hall
All Seats \$8
[Click here for more info!](#)

SAVVY LIVING



How Medicare Covers Outpatient Mental Health Services

Does Medicare cover outpatient counseling or therapy sessions for seniors? My husband has really struggled with depression since retiring and needs help. What can you tell us? [Read More](#)