



We hope you are enjoying a relaxing and restful summer! College campuses are typically quieter this time of year. Oakland University, however, is bustling with activity. Faculty, staff and students enthusiastically welcomed Dr. Pescovitz to OU earlier this month as she began her tenure as Oakland's 7<sup>th</sup> president. Construction projects are progressing nicely across campus, including the much-anticipated expansion of the Oakland Center and the new 750-bed student housing complex. It is truly an exciting time as the University embarks on a new chapter in its 60-year history. Please take a few minutes to peruse the latest [campus news](#) and [calendar of events](#)!

### Pioneer Club Events On the Horizon

These fast approaching Pioneer Club events are open to ALL retirees and their guests. We hope you will join us for the following:

- **Books, Bites and Bells** - Friday, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 a.m. ~ Special OU Chronicles and history presentation, followed by lunch and concert by the Elliott Tower Carillon. You should have received your invitation in the mail! RSVPs were due July 25<sup>th</sup> to (248) 370-4389 or [oupioneerclub@oakland.edu](mailto:oupioneerclub@oakland.edu).
- **OU Night at Comerica Park** - Wednesday, August 9<sup>th</sup>, 7:10 p.m. game time. Group transportation from OU to Comerica Park to watch the Tigers take on the Pirates.

**Special reserved section for OU retirees!**

**RIDE THE BUS**

MEET US IN PARKING LOT P-1 IN FRONT OF THE OAKLAND CENTER  
331 MEADOW BROOK RD. IN ROCHESTER

BUS LEAVES PROMPTLY AT 5 p.m.

GAME STARTS AT 7:10 p.m.

**\$60 PER TICKET INCLUDES:**

ROUNDTrip BUS FARE FROM OU'S MAIN CAMPUS TO COMERICA  
PARK

COVERED SEATING IN RESERVED SECTION WITH EASY ACCESSIBILITY  
(LITTLE TO NO STEPS)

Contact Cindy Hayward at (248) 370-4389 to reserve your tickets.  
Tickets are limited, so please contact us quickly if you'd like to attend!

**Save the Date**

- **Homecoming 2017 Pioneer Club Brunch** - Friday, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 a.m. in the Oakland Center. Watch for your invitation to arrive by mail in August!

**Group Lunches**

The group meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

### **Golden Opportunity**

Do you have a great idea for a future Pioneer Club event? The planning committee needs your help! The group meets on a monthly basis to discuss campus happenings as well as organize activities for Pioneer Club members. If you are interested in joining the planning committee or would like more information, email [oupioneerclub@oakland.edu](mailto:oupioneerclub@oakland.edu) or call (248) 370-4325.

### **Newsworthy**

#### **Required Summer Reading**

Dominique Daniel, associate professor and Humanities Librarian for History and Modern Languages at OU's Kresge Library, has authored an intriguing new book entitled, "Oakland University: The Campus History Series." The recent release contains iconic images depicting OU's rich history and is available for purchase at the access services desk in Kresge Library. For more information, [click here](#).

#### **OU Among Top Ranked Colleges in Michigan**

According to Bestcolleges.com, Oakland University came in at No. 5 on a 2017 list of the 25 best four-year colleges in Michigan. The website based its rankings of both public and private universities on various factors, including academic quality, affordability and online competency. [Click here](#) to read the full story.

### **MTD News**

For current news on students and faculty in the department of Music, Theatre and Dance (MTD), [click here](#) . To read about MTD alumni working in the arts, [click here](#).

## **Pioneer Profile**

By Gerry Coon

### **Kathleen (Kay) Zdroj**

Kay joined OU as head of telephone and communications in August of 1968. She had previously worked 14 years for Michigan Bell Telephone, so she was well prepared for the job. But she had no idea how wide her responsibilities in the infant institution would reach. At the time, University Services was housed in North Foundation Hall along with the administrative offices, including the President's office. Thus, she was often the "go-to" person in an emergency.



**Kay at work in the**

In 1969, in the midst of the national student rebellion, she was called at home by President O'Dowd to come to his office to restore his communication system. Someone had set fire to his office and he was without telephone service. She later had a "red phone" installed in her office with an underground connection independent of the university system in case someone was able to cut the main telephone connection.

Dean Lowell Ecklund came to Kay in 1971 with a special request. "Come with me to Meadow Brook Hall," he said.

"The hall has been closed for four years," she replied.

"I have the key and an attorney, but I need you to come with me," he insisted.

And that was when Meadow Brook Hall was reopened, refurbished and turned into a tourist attraction and conference center. Kay has a special place in her heart for the Hall, where she sometimes was called on to don a costume for a special program and participate in a little historical reenactment.

In 1980 she was told to martial the local fire and police departments because the old club house that was being remodeled was on fire. At that time, fire service came from Auburn Heights. "Later," she adds, "Rochester and Auburn Heights split the responsibility for the campus, but then it was just Auburn Heights." Those old buildings, including several barns and the creamery (remember the old Barn Theater for student productions?) were fire hazards. Now a special person has been hired to ensure the safety of the rest of the buildings, and due to her diligence there have been no fires recently.

"Knowing all the people I was privileged to know, faculty and staff, was very interesting. I got to meet people from all over the world in a diversified environment. It was a great journey from day one," says Kay. "And I got to know this place inside and out. There isn't a place I haven't been—through all the tunnels and basements and everywhere, following the telephone lines."

The year 2001 was a tough one for Kay. Her husband, Jerry, had a fatal heart attack in his sleep. Then her son, David, divorced and with the custody of a young daughter, came to live with her. This was also the year she retired,

after 33 years at Oakland University. It was a difficult time of adjustment for someone used to being very busy, and she looked to Oakland University for volunteer opportunities. Her first stop was at the Greenhouse on campus.

The greenhouse was Matilda's favorite place on the grounds," says Kay. "In fact, when her husband John Dodge wanted to build himself a golf course, she told him only if he built her a greenhouse." Today that tiny greenhouse and its small crew of employees and volunteers supply and tend to all of the greenery on the campus and in all of its buildings. The greenhouse crew of 23 volunteers also prepares a yearly plant sale to help support the operation, and Kay is there every year, working as their cashier.

As we walked from the Greenhouse to Finnegan's restaurant on campus, Kay recalled another interesting incident. "Mr. Karas (George Karas, head of Campus Facilities and Operations at the time) asked me to sit at his desk while he was away on an errand. While he was gone, Mrs. Katke came in and said, "I have something for you." She then handed me a check for \$250,000 dollars for the start of the new golf course. When Mr. Karas came back I told him I had received a very nice gift while he was gone."

Not many people on campus get to know the person who manages the all-important phone services, but perhaps you met Kay in her job as head of the mail room. If you ever mailed or received a parcel, or perhaps received a threatening letter or suspicious package, you certainly would remember her smiling face and helpful attitude. After 11 years with the telephone communications, Kay moved to the mailroom and spent the next 22 years working with OU and Uncle Sam. She has interesting stories about that, too, especially about the local confusion over the location of OU in regard to its postal service. Although the original plans for Foundation Hall were to build it where Hole #1 of the Katke-Cousins golf course now lies, it ended up being built on the pasture land for the Belgian horses—partly in Pontiac Township

and partly in Avon Township. Mrs. Wilson declared in a meeting that she "liked the address of Meadow Brook Hall," so it was decided that the university mail would be addressed to Rochester, Michigan.

Since her retirement, Kay has kept busy by becoming a docent at Meadow Brook Hall and working with the garden club there as well. "I'm a pot-lucker," she says, explaining that five times during each summer she and a crew of four others arrange and clean up a pot-luck luncheon for the gardeners who come to work each Tuesday morning. She continues her work at the Greenhouse, and in her spare time, she likes to sew home décor items. In accord with that interest, she has managed to collect over 200 sewing thimbles from all over the world.

Our gardens will have to do without Kay's help from now on, however. She has sold her house and is moving with her son to Granger, Indiana. Her daughter, Mary Zook, who works for OU in Campus Facilities, will remain in Michigan. But I'm sure Kay will find a garden or two in Granger that could use a little help.

*Gerry Palmer Coon served as administrative assistant and adjunct faculty member in the School of Education and Human Services from 1971 to 1991. She retired after eleven years as co-editor of Rochester OPC's (Older Persons' Commission) quarterly publication, Vintage Views, and is a member of the Pioneer Club.*

Pioneer Profile is a feature that appears monthly in the Pioneer Club eNewsletter. If you are interested in being profiled or sharing suggestions on fellow retirees to showcase, please provide your contact information and details to us at [oupioneerclub@oakland.edu](mailto:oupioneerclub@oakland.edu).

### **Upcoming Events**

### Campus Farmstand

Thursdays, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., July 13<sup>th</sup> - October 12<sup>th</sup>

Outside Kresge Library

Produce available for sale from the Campus Student Organic Farm

[Click here for more info!](#)

### Summer Concert Series: Ben Sharkey

Thursday, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 - 9:30 p.m.

Meadow Brook Hall

Tickets \$30 per person or \$27 for MBH members

Reservations required, contact (248) 364-6252 to make a reservation

[Click here for more info!](#)

### Dodge Brothers: Detroit's Automotive Geniuses

Lecture by Madelyn Rzadkowolski, MBH Director of Curatorial Services

Tuesday, August 15<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m.

Meadow Brook Hall

Admission is \$15 per person or \$13.50 for MBH members

Reservations required, contact (248) 364-6252 to make a reservation

[Click here for more info!](#)

### Summer Concert Series: Dave Bennett

Thursday, August 24<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 - 9:30 p.m.

Meadow Brook Hall

Tickets \$30 per person or \$27 for MBH members

Reservations required, contact (248) 364-6252 to make a reservation

[Click here for more info!](#)

### Free Fridays - Meadow Brook Hall

Friday, August 25<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. (self-guided tour)



Self-guided garden scavenger hunt with ice cream treats

Meadow Brook Hall

Free admission, reservations not required

[Click here for more info!](#)

Pioneer Club Event: Retiree Homecoming Brunch

Friday, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 10:00 a.m.

Oakland Center

Invite coming via mail in August!

### **About the Pioneer Club**

The purpose of the Oakland University Pioneer Club is to provide social and educational 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.