

A New Site in Golden Valley **Thinking Picnic? Sign up Now !**

MARS/Retirees get to try a new picnic site, the first change in its 31 year history, coming up at noon June 15 at Brook View Picnic Shelter in, Golden Valley.



The place is different, but the menu remains the same: tasty fried chicken, cole slaw, biscuits and potato salad. Cost is \$6 per person. Reminder: Bring your own utensils, plates and beverage. A registration blank is on page 8. Retirees may bring
(continued on page 6)



Volunteers of the Year Alice Bray, left, and Elli Fisher were named MARS Volunteers of the year at last month's MARS Recognition Luncheon at the Earle Brown Heritage Center. Story on page 6.

Doing it Quicker

CNP Launches New System for Recording Volunteer Activities

By Bob Riley, MARS programs chair

CNP has launched a new system, *CNP Cares*, for employees and retirees to manage their volunteer activities and enter their volunteer hours. For retirees, the main use will be to enter their hours for the various volunteer activities they are involved in.



To begin using the system, MARS members will need to log into the system on their computer. The system address is: www.cybergrants.com/cnpcares. You will need to have your 8 digit CNP employee number. You will see a link for *New Users* that will take you to a screen that allows you to set up the password that you will use each time you log on to the system. The password is permanent, unless you choose to change it.

Once into the system, you can search for the volunteer organization you wish to enter hours into. If the organization doesn't exist in the CNP Cares data base, it will need to be established by you. This may require you to gather some information about the organization, such as its name, address, contact person, and 501 (c) 3 number. Once this is done, that organization will be available each time you log on to enter hours.

Any MARS members who are unclear as to how this new system works or who are having problems getting into the system or entering hours are welcome to call the MARS Office, 612-321-5376 leave a message (including your name and phone number and/or your email address) and we will respond to you as soon as possible.

Six Are 1st Quarter GIVE Grant Awardees; Ceiling Raised for Accumulated Grants

Minnesota CNP retirees earned six GIVE grants in this year's first quarter, including an initial one by recent retiree Bill Stegemann, Luverne, for his work with the city's restored Palace Theater. (See page 3 story)

The six retirees volunteered for 40 hours or more in the year's first quarter and had their



organizations awarded a \$200 grant through CNP's Grant Incentives for Volunteer Employees (GIVE) (also retirees) program,

now in its 11th year.

Five Minnesota retirees were repeat awardees and for their same organizations where they have volunteered for several years. They are: Tom Emdy, VEAP; Mary Ellen Dower, AARP Foundation Tax aid; Don Follett, Shoreview Historical Society; Todd Peterson, Vine in Faith; and Richard Swing, Emergency Community Help Organization, both of Mankato. In the first quarter, 2016, only two retirees--Dower and Swing---recorded 40 hours, as they have also done in 2017.

GIVE grant coordinators are re-emphasizing that retirees must volunteer with organizations who are identified as 501, (c), 3, organizations by the U.S. Tax Code to be eligible for the GIVE grant program.

Also, volunteering with a local or national political organization does not apply unless the activity contributes to the community's overall good. Church groups volunteering at Feed My Starving

Children would be acceptable; singing in the church choir or doing church repair work is not.

Grant Recipients Level Raised to \$5,000

CPE has announced that an eligible organization can now receive up to \$5,000 in grants per year; that's up from a previous \$1,000 per year.

As before, retirees and employees are limited to earning one grant per year and credited volunteer hours must be performed by the retiree, not friends of family.

2017 Volunteer Rewards Schedule

Quarter	Deadline to enter hours	Points deposited into accounts
1 st Quarter	Mar 31, 2017	Apr 24, 2017
2 nd Quarter	June 30, 2017	July 24, 2017
3 rd Quarter	Sep 30, 2017	Oct 24, 2017
4 th Quarter	Jan 5, 2018	Jan 31, 2018

2017 GIVE Grant Schedule

Quarter	Application deadline	Grant awarded by
1 st Quarter	Mar 31, 2017	Apr 30, 2017
2 nd Quarter	June 30, 2017	July 31, 2017
3 rd Quarter	Sep 30, 2017	Oct 31, 2017
4 th Quarter	Jan 5, 2018	Jan 31, 2018

MARS Puts AARP Safe Driving Classes in 'Park' for Now

Due to continued low turnouts for the MARS/Retirees' Safe Driving Classes, future sessions scheduled for July 12 and Nov.14 this year have been cancelled.

Butch Gammon, the MARS AARP Safe Driving class instructor for nearly the past five years, said recent turnouts have attracted only three or fewer persons, making for an inefficient use of personnel and promotion of the classes which have been taught by MARS volunteers to retirees and spouses for the past 30 years.

Retiree Howie Haeg preceded Gammon for 15 years, while other past instructors have included Tom McCutchan, Don Thomton, Ted Yehle, and Dick Greenlund. Alice Bray has handled class registrations.

Gammon said the door isn't permanently closed; should renewed interest arise in the future, the safe driving classes could be offered again. Thanks to Butch and Alice for a job well done.

Retiree Bill Stegemann Helps Keep His Town's Entertainment Alive

Retiree Bill Stegemann is selling popcorn now—and for a good cause. It's one of his many volunteer tasks he does at the restored Palace theater in Luverne, Mn.

The 102-year old theater (right photo) has been restored and is maintained by an organization of volunteers (Blue Earth Area Theater) including Stegemann, a former Center Point Energy employee for 38 years who helps out with cleaning the theater, selling tickets and concessions---and even climbing a ladder to keep the theater's marquee current.

At CPE, Bill's career was primarily as a Customer Service technician covering the homes and businesses in and around Luverne, a town of 4,700 deep in the southwest corner of the state, 12 miles from the South Dakota border, the furthest western point of CNP's Minnesota's service area.



Bill Stegemann

A helper at the Palace.

"That technician background came in handy," says Bill, "--- fixing the theater's vacuum cleaners was one of my first jobs at the theater."

Stegemann has been volunteering at the theater since last October, putting in about 40 hours per quarter and he earned a \$200 Give Grant this year to pass on to Palace operations

"My wife, Gayle and I appreciate the theater. It's something nice to have in town," he says. "You don't have to leave town for movies or other entertainment."



Luverne's beautiful Palace theater was built in 1915.

Along with other townsfolk, the Stegemanns also helped support a \$1 million capital campaign in 2007 to restore the theater. Gayle, who works at a local bank, helps with the volunteering as well.

The couple presently live just 10 blocks from the theater; however, they plan to build a home on the land they own that was once Bill's father's farm outside of Luverne.

The theater usually shows movies on weekends, but is also a venue for traveling show acts and plays, and also features the local Green Earth players.

Seating about 450 persons now, it originally staged vaudeville acts in its early days. A restored Geneva pipe organ inside was installed in 1926 for silent movies and is said to be the only one of its type in the U.S. The theater is on the Registered List of U.S. historical sites. It was restored in time for the 2007 fall preview of renowned producer Ken Burns' PBS-TV documentary "The War," about the U.S. Civil War (*MARS News, Winter-2007*).

Bill advises MARS travelers to "look me up and I will give you a personal tour."

Among MARS' many volunteers, several are interested in preservation of sites and buildings and historical records in their communities and work to retain them, just as the Stegemanns do.

Retirement Means Pleasant Times for These Two Retirees

Bob Mastous---Focus on the Family

Q: What was your primary job at the company? When I first came to the company in 1978 I was taught to be a service technician and later was field supervisor in Home Service Plus and in Dispatch. My last 17 years I was in the training department. I first learned about the company job through an ad in a suburban newspaper.

Q: What part of the job did you enjoy the most? I very much liked meeting customers and the public as a service tech and probably learned the most then, but



I would say I most enjoyed my years in training at the Cedar Bldg. Prior to coming to the company, I had managed an electronics store and had also worked for a local heating and cooling company installing ductwork.

Q: What were the changes you witnessed at the company in Customer Service? Improved communications with data terminals in the service trucks, then to laptops; improved tools for repair work. More efficiencies.

Q: What's taking much of your time now in retirement? As always, my wife and I have our attention on our family---we have three adult children living in the area and five grandchildren as well. We also help care for a grandson with special needs and who has a physical disability.

Q: If you hadn't worked at the company, what might have you done? Probably photography. But strangely, while I wasn't in the military, I thought I would still like that life. My father had been in the U.S. Army Air Forces in WW II.

Q: Where will you go on your next vacation? We haven't been much for vacations, we have a nice home we enjoy (in Prior Lake) and we are usually working on projects to improve it. We have lived here for 30 years.

Q: How about any special interests? I have always liked photography and at one time my wife and I operated a small photography studio for portrait work. I still take a variety of photos for enjoyment. I am an accredited photographer of Special Kids Photography of America. In addition, I have gotten interested in flying recreational drones during the summer, for a couple of hours a week. (See page 5)

Nina Zellmann---Liking it in Norwood

Q: Where were you born and raised? I was born in Vienna, Austria, of Ukrainian parents and after living in Munich, Germany, we migrated to the U.S. when I was five years old. I remember it was on a big ship--- and I saw the whales in the ocean. You needed a sponsor then to migrate to the U.S. and ours was a church in the Waconia area.

Q: How long did you work for the company? It was more than 49 years, including the first 10 years with Minnesota Natural Gas Co., and the remainder with the merged companies. Much of my work was in Property Accounting Dept., keeping records of all of our gas mains, meters, our gas storage and more, primarily for tax purposes. I don't miss the 40-mile commute, but I do miss the other employees.



Q: Do you enjoy living in a smaller community like Norwood? Very much. You get to know so many people; I have a small garden, and I can also see the turkeys walk by.

Q: What are your special interests? I do a lot of craft work with many different materials, glassware decorations, centerpieces and other items that I give away as gifts.

Q: Do you and your husband travel? We have, but now we spend much of our summers in a small place we have on a chain of lakes northwest of Norwood.

Q: What's your idea of a perfect day? It would be fishing from our pontoon boat up at our lake place and having a nice pan of sunfish.

Q: What would you order at a restaurant? A steak. I cook some, too, and my favorite dish to prepare is prime rib for special occasions.

Q: Who would you like to have lunch with? It would be Elvis Presley, I was always a fan of his.

Q: If you won the lottery. I would pay my bills, my children's bills and then invest in an RV and go to places I always wanted to go, even Hawaii.

Q: Mother's Day is coming up, what memories do you have of your mother? Mostly she was a hard worker and made us work as well; she was always there for her children.



Bob Mastous, retired CNP employee, took this photo using his drone operating 400 feet over the community of Prior Lake (the lake in the background) in Scott County. MARS News did a little



reading about drones, and learned they also known as unmanned aerial vehicles or unmanned aircraft systems. They are more advanced versions of the model airplanes hobbyists have flown for decades. They come in airplane and helicopter varieties, sometimes with eight or more spinning rotors. While drones are typically piloted from the ground by a person with a radio controller, many

are also capable of autonomous flight along programmed coordinates. Estimates by the Federal Aviation Agency say there are more than 1.5 million recreational drones operating in the U.S. now, with a total of seven million, including commercial drones, expected by 2020. They are for sale in most large stores, specialty shops and craft stores at all price levels, depending upon the level of sophistication. A typical drone with a camera is shown above.

MARS/Retiree Phone Directory Additions, Changes

- + **Chuck Becker**, 7860 Garland Lane N., Maple Grove, MN 55311
- + **Ron Churchill**, 6715 Dudley Ave N., Crystal, MN 55428
- + **Susan Hynes**, 521 E. Main St., Apt. B, Mankato, MN 56001
- + **Katherine LaCoy**, 6260 N. Viewpoint Drive, Prescott Valley, AZ 86314 Tel: 928-460-4652
- + **Scott Mengelkoch** , 2345 Lupine Ln, Wickenburg, AZ 85390
- + **Richard and Ramona Steele**, 708 Mound Ave., # 5210, Mankato, MN 56001 Tel: 507-385-4284
- + **Orville Steffen**, 2301 Village Lane, #305, Bloomington, MN 55431

Note: If you have changes in your home mailing address or phone number, let the MARS Office (612-321-5376) know if you want those changes to be published in the MARS News.

Elli Fisher, Alice Bray Named MARS Volunteers of the Year

Elli Fisher and Alice Bray are MARS 2017 Volunteers of the Year. Like previous retirees receiving the award, their volunteer efforts have been over several years and with several programs and organizations.

Elli has volunteered extensively both as an active employee and later as a retiree. Part of her role in the Community Relations Department at Mankato was to organize and coordinate volunteer and related activities which got her interest.

Most recently she helped promote the school children's Backpack Food Program wherein needy children in Blue Earth County received food over the weekends.

Elli has been awarded Give Grants for both Vine in Faith, Mankato, and Catholic Charities, Winona. "Volunteering gives me a purpose," she says. "I look forward to helping out."

She also serves as a MARS board member, driving from Mankato for meetings and other activities.

Alice, also a MARS board member, has been a long-time volunteer with MARS' baby blanket production program and in recent years has handled administration for the AARP Safe Driving Classes. In addition, she has also volunteered at Bridging, Inc., and Feed My Starving Children. "I believe it's important to give back to the community," she says.

Alice has been awarded three GIVE grants for her work with the St. Francis Middle School.

Minnesota--- a Center for Philanthropy

Minnesota is emerging as a center for international philanthropy, with foundations and individuals in the region donating millions of dollars and thousands of volunteer hours every year to hundreds of nonprofit organizations involved in projects from Mexico to Madagascar, the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* reported recently.

According to the Minnesota Council on Foundations, the state's top hundred foundations donated at least \$24 million to global causes in 2012, up from about \$5 million a decade earlier. Some of the statistics for Minnesota-based nonprofits are just as impressive. The American Refugee Committee, for example, employs 1,800 staff who help nearly three million people a year, while Books for Africa shipped 2.4 million donated books to the continent over the past year and Feed My Starving Children distributed nearly 300 million meals in more than fifty countries.

Minnesota Philanthropy---continued

High-profile corporate initiatives based in the state include the Land O'Lakes International Development Fund and Partners in Food Solutions, a consortium of companies such as General Mills and Cargill that works to link the technical and business expertise of volunteer employees to small food processors and farmers in developing countries.

Minnesota consistently ranks near the top among states in terms of volunteerism, civic engagement, and corporate giving, while non-governmental organizations often are born of the overseas experiences of ordinary Minnesotans.

MARS, now marking its 31th year, has been a part of boosting Minnesota with its retiree volunteer programs, including volunteering with Feed My Starving Children as noted above.

MARS/Retirees picnic--- continued

their own picnic lunch if they choose. Also, there is no parking fee at Brook View.

The MARS board voted last year to change the picnic site, hoping the new centrally-located Brook View Park would be convenient to more retirees' homes; the group had held all its previous picnics at Minnehaha Falls Park in south Minneapolis. Board members want to hear from attendees about this year's site choice.

Directions to Brook View Picnic Shelter

MARS folks, driving from the north, south or east can locate the park by driving west on Hwy 55, from the intersection of Hwy 55 and Hwy 100, until they reach Winnetka Ave N., take a left, southward, on Winnetka Ave. until you reach



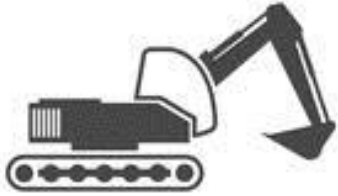
Brook View Parkway, then take a right, proceeding a block-plus to Bldg. 200 the large picnic shelter, our picnic site.

MARS folks driving from the west on Hwy 55 from US 169, for example, should proceed to Winnetka Ave N. and take a right, southward on Winnetka Ave. (remainder route: same as above.)

Around the Company

Massive CNP 73-Mile Beltline Project Target Completion Date is 2023

The massive beltline upgrade project started by Centerpoint Energy in the greater Minneapolis area five years ago is expected to be completed in 2023 at a cost of about \$400 million.



Workers have replaced the 24-inch diameter pipe line at the rate of four to seven miles annually, depending upon the location. The project basically replaces installations made in the 1950s. The gas lines being replaced are 20 and 24 inches diameter.

“The project was undertaken to modernize the transmission system to current standards and to meet more stringent federal regulations,” says John Wiinamaki, director of Engineering, Minnesota Operations.

The entire area near downtown Minneapolis has been replaced, Wiinamaki added. Pipe along 2nd St. N has been replaced from well north of downtown

through the segment by the company’s River Building, across I-35 through the University of Minnesota and south of the Franklin Ave.

One of the line’s overall benefits is to ensure the long term reliability of the pipeline infrastructure. The project also offers significant economic development to the communities. The beltline will supply gas to hundreds of thousands of customers in the Minnesota area. The new system’s upgrades are designed to facilitate a cost-effective, ongoing inspection process required for all natural gas transmission pipelines, the company said.

Projects of this size are generally done by contractors with CPE providing on the ongoing inspection and engineering support functions. The company has done extensive communications in informing citizens and governmental bodies in communities affected by the project; much more information about the beltline project is online.

CNP Honored in Residential Customer Study



CNP achieved top tier rankings among U.S. natural gas utilities throughout 2016 in the Midwest and South regions, designating the company a 2016 Residential Customer Champion by *Cogent Reports*.

The Customer Champions list was compiled from year end Engaged Customer Relations scores and ratings from consumers surveyed by the annual “Utility Trusted Brand & Customer Engagement Study”. The results are based on responses from more than 52,000 residential ratepayers for 130 leading gas and electric utilities throughout the U.S. The study measures and tracks brand trust, customer engagement, satisfaction and relationship strength among residential customers.

CNP Announces Three Executive Changes

CenterPoint Energy announced three executive changes in March, including Joe Vortherms---who leads the company's growing unregulated natural gas sales and services business as vice president of Energy Services (CES)---was named Senior Vice President of Energy Services.

Vortherms has been with CPE for more than 28 years. He was former vice president of of Gas Operations for Minnesota from 2012-15, where his responsibilities included gas utility operations and the company's Home Service Plus business. He has led the recent acquisitions of two retail energy services companies,

which increases CES's scale and geographic reach and expanded its capabilities.

Scott Doyle has been named senior vice president of Natural Gas Distribution, responsible for financial and operational results in the company's six state utility footprint including Minnesota. Doyle has been with the company for more than 20 years and has held senior leadership roles in gas operations in Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas.

Jason Ryan was named vice president of Regulatory and Government Affairs.



Jan - Scot McKenzie, 35 yrs; Daryl O'Brien, 37 yrs; and Donald Pinz, 18 yrs.

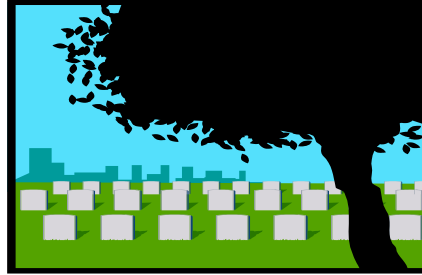
Feb - Richard Chouinard, 22 yrs; Susan Spannaus, 35 yrs; Gary Swedeon, 31 yrs; Raymond Gomez 37 yrs; and Stephen Akkerman, 22 yrs.

Mar- John McNally, 29 yrs.

Apr- William Fadden, 47 yrs.

MARS NEWS is a publication of the Minnesota Active Retiree Service (MARS) organization printed quarterly for CenterPoint Energy Minnesota Operations retirees, other retirees upon request, and Friends of MARS. Inquiries directed to: Don.Follett@CenterpointEnergy.com
Tel: 612-321-5376; Fax 612-321-5442; or write to MARS at CenterPoint Energy, 700 W Linden Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55403

In Memorium



(Listed below are retirees or their surviving spouses whose deaths have been made known since the last *MARS News*.)

Dec-- Roselyn Pommerening.

Jan -- Marvin Stromberg.

Feb -- Larry Peterson; George Dye; Orland Johnson; and Bernadette Thomas.

Mar-- Orville Thurs; Warren Hagfors; George Mullenberg; Gerald Christensen; James Manning; and Aloysuis Boever .

Apr-- Edward Swetman, Jr.; Tom Emdy; and Harvey Andresen.

A Mother's Day Thought

A mother is a person who seeing there are only four pieces of pie for five people, promptly announces she never did care for pie.--*Tenneva Jordan*

MARS

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

+ **MARS BOARD MEETINGS**-
-- 9:30 a.m., May 18, Linden Bldg.

+ +
VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES
with other retirees

+ **Feed My Starving Children**-
9:30 a.m. First Wednesday, at Coon Rapids site; Third Wednesday at Eagan site.

+ **Bridging, Inc.**
Third Monday afternoon at Bloomington site; & Second Tuesday afternoon at Roseville site.

+ **Making Fleece Blankets**
Selected Monday mornings. See Bev Maas for details.

+ **Robbinsdale School District Volunteers in Partnership**
-- Check with Cindy Zachmeier for activity choice and time.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

+ **MARS/ Retirees Picnic**
New Site---Brook View Picnic Shelter, Golden Valley, noon start after 11 a.m. social hour, June 15

✂ Please cut along this line

I'LL BE COMING TO THE MARS/ RETIREES' PICNIC

June 15 , 2017
Brook View Park,
Golden Valley

Name _____

Guest(s) _____

+ I can help serve: Yes ___ No ___



+ Enclosed is my check for \$_____ to cover ___ meals at \$6 each.

+ I understand that I will bring my own plate/utensils, and beverage.

+Sorry,no refunds after June 7

+ Questions? Call Bev at 763-504-9331

+ Make checks out to MARS and mail to:

Bev Maas,
6308 Douglas Drive
Brooklyn Park, Mn 55429

