“My grandmother always grew perennial plants and also had a vegetable garden. She would take the grandkids across the lake to pick wild blueberries and raspberries so she could make jam. I think that’s when I first became interested in plants. The University of Minnesota Extension Master Gardener program has taught me so much, not just about sustainable gardening but also about how to educate residents in best practices. We’re a wonderful tool for the University. Professors do the research, we get educated in that, and then we go around the state to share that knowledge and promote responsible gardening.”

—Pamela Hartley, owner of Creative Garden Expressions; recently established the Pamela M. Hartley Extension Master Gardener Educational Fund to support continuing education for Master Gardener volunteers
As a member of the U of M’s class of 2015, College of Design graduate Caitlin Dippo is poised to make a difference in the world outside the University. Thanks to scholarship support, she’s heading to Denmark to continue her studies in architecture and urban design. See story on page 18.

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Web extras
For more stories on how donors and the U of M are partnering to address today’s critical challenges, visit give.umn.edu.

On the cover
Scientists at the University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD) are conducting the first-ever comprehensive study of Lake Superior aboard the Blue Heron, the research boat owned by UMD’s Large Lakes Observatory.

Photo: Brett Groehler, UMD
See story on page 12

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What’s in your backpack?

“My laptop computer,” says Max Shinn, ’15. Both his backpack and laptop are soon to become world travelers, as they head with him to Cambridge University in England this fall. As one of 14 U.S. recipients of the prestigious Churchill Scholarship, Shinn will work toward a master’s degree in medical science in the university’s psychiatry department.

Shinn, who is also a recipient of the U of M’s William L. Hart Scholarship, came to the U with an intense curiosity about the human brain, how it works, and how to study it. He graduated this past spring with majors in neuroscience and math and minors in statistics and astrophysics, and was in the U’s Honors Program for two years.

His fascination with the human brain, he says, comes from the fact that there are so many unanswered questions about how our brains function. “If you ask a physicist what electromagnetism is, she can tell you,” he says, “but if you ask a neuroscientist, ‘What is sleep?’ or ‘How do we think?’ we don’t know.”

His undergraduate research at the U—which he’ll continue at Cambridge—focused on building computer models of brain functions and analyzing the resulting data, which gives scientists a better understanding of psychiatric disorders like schizophrenia.

Learning to teach

Assisting in a second-grade classroom deepened a passion Matt Huot, ’16, has long held for teaching. The University of Minnesota Crookston elementary education major, a recipient of the Clara and Efert Fehr Family Endowed Scholarship and Josephine L. Merriam Scholarship, began volunteering at a school near campus three years ago.

Why volunteer in a school?

Everything I learned in the college classroom, I could see being put into action by teachers in the elementary classrooms I have been in. And I’ve been able to put my learning into practice before I graduate.

What has the experience taught you?

A classroom is a family. The teacher sets the tone and the rules right from the start, and as you grow together, you get to know and understand your students. It’s really an art to manage a classroom well.

Why U of M Crookston?

I have a lot of family in the area, so the campus felt like the natural next step. Choosing the Crookston area was in the U’s Honors Program for the start, and as you grow together, you get to know and understand your students. It’s really an art to manage a classroom well.

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His undergraduate research at the U—which he’ll continue at Cambridge—focused on building computer models of brain functions and analyzing the resulting data, which gives scientists a better understanding of psychiatric disorders like schizophrenia.
Citizen Swain

“Part of life’s mission is to keep contributing,” says Tom H. Swain, ’42 B.B.A., whose contributions to education, politics, corporate affairs, athletics, and health care in Minnesota are legendary. “You’re never too old to take risks and serve if there’s a possibility of helping.” It’s a philosophy Swain, now 94, has long embodied. He’s served in a variety of roles, including University of Minnesota vice president, chief of staff to former Minnesota Governor Elmer L. Andersen, mayor, executive with The St. Paul Companies, and member and chair of countless nonprofit and civic boards. Recently, he took on another role—author.

Swain’s just-published memoir, Citizen Swain: Tales from a Minnesota Life (University of Minnesota Press, 2015), provides a glimpse into the inner workings of institutions and their leaders. Proceeds will contribute to the Humphrey School’s Thomas H. Swain Fellowship in Public Leadership, established by Swain’s family and friends.

“Most people who study at the U stay here, and their work is groundbreaking,” says Swain. “By large measure, the U is the most important institution in Minnesota.”

Outdoor lab

A recent real estate gift will allow the University of Minnesota Morris to establish a new outdoor research venue. Graced with ponds and prairie grasses, forest and farmland, the 140 acres provide space for exploration and discovery in areas ranging from ecology to creative writing.

According to Erik and Rima Torgerson, who donated the land, it will serve as both an environmental resource for the campus community and a research platform for the benefit of all. Beginning this fall, students and faculty will use the land to explore growing cycles, extreme weather, and other facets of the changing prairie landscape.

“The younger generation is more environmentally aware than ever before,” Erik says. “However, I am amazed how few of our college-age kids have actually spent time in the outdoors. One can’t learn it all from a book. They need to get out there and experience it for themselves; it will change their relationship with nature.”

In appreciation for Coffman’s support, Gerald established the Gerald H. & Sally A. Friedell Scholarship in 2009 with $50,000 and adds to it annually. The scholarship contributes to the Law School’s Generations campaign, which has raised $73 million to date.

“A state with an educated populace is a good place to live, work, and raise a family,” says Gerald. “I believe strongly in giving to the U.”

Paying homage

Aaron Friedell, ’23 M.D., didn’t have tuition money after being accepted into the University of Minnesota Medical School, but he did have a fortuitous encounter. “One evening, my father walked up and down the halls of the University administration building,” says Gerald Friedell, ’47 B.A., ’51 J.D. “All the offices were dark save one. He knocked on the door and told the man who opened it that he needed help.”

That man was then-University President Lotus Coffman, who gave Aaron a personal check for $250. Aaron went on to become the first of 20 physicians in the Friedell family and practiced medicine until he was 95.

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“A state with an educated populace is a good place to live, work, and raise a family,” says Gerald. “I believe strongly in giving to the U.”

New members

Gophers to the core

Not many couples in their early 30s with a growing family establish a scholarship, but Debbie and Adam Lyche’s affections for the University of Minnesota run deep.

Adam, ’04 B.C.H.E., chose the U because the chemical engineering program was ranked first in the country. Debbie, ’03 B.S., ’07 Pharm.D., liked the opportunities the U provided in the sciences.

The couple met in Honors Program classes as freshmen in the College of Science and Engineering (CSE). “We both loved Gopher Athletics and were actively involved in campus life,” says Debbie, “We got engaged and had our wedding reception at the U, too.”

Since graduating, the couple has given annually to CSE. After learning they were giving at near-scholarship levels, they pledged $25,000 to establish the Deborah and Adam Lyche Scholarship for Honors Program students in CSE who are actively involved in the campus community. Part of the gift will come from matching funds from Adam’s employer, General Mills. “We want to make a habit of giving,” says Adam.

The U of M Presidents Club recognizes donors whose lifetime giving is $25,000 or more, or who have made a future gift commitment to the University. Between April 1 and June 30, 2015, 218 new members and organizations were enrolled in the Presidents Club.

Lifetime of support

Several areas at the U of M received a significant boost in May with a commitment of $17 million from John and Nancy Lindahl, both 1968 U of M graduates.

The gift will help fund the new Athletics Village, including support for facilities and programming in basketball and football; the Carlson School of Management; the College of Education and Human Development; and pediatric cardiology research.

As active University volunteers and donors, the Lindahls have made a big impact on important U of M projects, including the renovation of Northrop, the return of football to campus, faculty endowments, and medical research. The couple also serves on the Department of Athletics Leadership Council, which is currently working to raise $190 million to fund a new home for Gopher sports.

“There is nowhere that we would rather give our time and treasure than to the University of Minnesota,” say the Lindahls in a statement.

Life of adventure

Education and adventure were hallmark’s of Hugh and Elizabeth Thompson’s nearly 70-year marriage. They met in 1940 at Asbury Hospital in Minneapolis, where Hugh was an orderly and Elizabeth (Betts) was a nurse, and married in 1943. During World War II, Hugh served as an army medical officer in the Pacific Theater and Betts worked as a surgical nurse.

After the war, Hugh spent 33 years as a physician at the U of M’s Roynton Health Service. He and Betts, an active volunteer, lived a life immersed in the arts, literature, and travel, “crossing the pond” 44 times, as Hugh would say. “They also dearly loved the U and attended all Gopher events,” says the couple’s niece, Paula Foley.

In 1983, the Thompsons named the U of M as remainder beneficiary of their estate, to be divided equally between faculty and student support. Hugh died in 2013 and Betts in 2014. “The U recently received $700,000 from their estate, and more is coming,” says Foley. “Hugh and Betts would be happy knowing many deserving individuals are benefiting from their generosity.”
Globetrotting across campus

During a bimonthly coffee hour, students break down cultural barriers—and one wins an award established by grateful alumni

In the span of a couple of hours, University of Minnesota students can sightsee around a foreign country—experience its food, art, politics, and culture—without ever leaving campus.

Founded more than 20 years ago, the Small World Coffee Hour hosts bimonthly events and commonly draws a couple hundred students. Its goal, says SWCH coordinator Yaeeun Shin, ’15 M.A., is to spark meaningful discussions, and hopefully new friendships, between international and U.S. students.

“Intercultural skills are really important in our lives as well as in our jobs,” she says.

By partnering with a different student cultural group for every event, SWCH gives students an opportunity to highlight their countries. Students arrange for traditional food, dance, music, and crafts, as well as presentations about the country’s social norms and language.

As an international student from South Korea, Shin knows that it can be intimidating for some foreign students to make friends here, but the coffee hour offers them a comfortable place to interact. It’s also a good learning experience for U.S. students who are interested in international studies or plan to study abroad, Shin adds.

“By experiencing those international, intercultural settings on campus, they can be more comfortable once they go abroad,” she says.

SWCH, which is run through International Student and Scholar Services, is also an opportunity for international students to get more involved on campus and gain leadership skills. Being actively engaged on campus is especially important for students who are far from home, Shin says.

For her work over the last year—which included initiating three new activities and bringing together a team of students that secured more than $20,000 in funding from the Student Services Fee Committee—Shin was named SWCH Best Team Member of the Year, a cash award established by Hee Sung Lee, M.E. ’09, and Jeong Rok Oh, M.E. ’09, Ph.D. ’13. The two decided to give back because of their own positive experiences with SWCH during their time as international students at the U.

“I’m really appreciative that alumni are thinking about us and that they share what they’ve earned,” Shin says. “Almost 10 years after their graduation—and many more—whether he’s teaching students or acting as a science consultant for Hollywood movies, I want to share the pleasure of scientific thinking,” Kakalios says. “The world is a knowable place if you account for a wealth of complex phenomena.”

Visit give.umn.edu/legacy to watch Kakalios’ video about the physics behind the movie Watchmen.
Cure for future generations
A research fund honoring a proud Gopher paves the way for advances in treating prostate cancer

The diagnosis was shocking: an aggressive form of advanced prostate cancer. Phil Semmer’s health was rapidly deteriorating, and he and his family had to make decisions quickly.

Semmer was referred to the Institute for Prostate and Urologic Cancers (IPUC) and University of Minnesota Medical Center by both his oncologist and a friend. For the University of Minnesota alumnus who often wore a Gophers hat and a gray U of M T-shirt, the U was the right choice.

Phil and Karine Semmer had talked extensively about Phil’s wishes before his death. He wanted others to benefit from what he and his family had learned about living with, treating, and fighting advanced prostate cancer. So the couple set up the Phillip G. Semmer Fund for Prostate Cancer Research at the University.

At first, Karine Semmer felt directionless after her husband’s passing. Now she has set out to raise $1 million for the fund in her lifetime. After two and a half years, she’s at nearly 50 percent of her goal, thanks in part to a generous gift matching program Dehm and colleagues, Scott Dehm already is putting the match for them,” he says. “Philanthropy gets those ideas off the shelf and ready for prime time. It opens up completely new avenues of research and thought.”

For Karine Semmer, giving is about making a difference—as big as possible, as soon as possible, and for as many people as possible.

“While it is still about Phil, it is also about my son, my friends, the people I meet along the journey,” she says. “It’s about a cure for future generations.” —Nicole Endres

Safer transplants
U study tests a promising new technique for preventing infections in kidney recipients

Scientists have discovered a unique way to prevent the transmission of dangerous viruses through kidney transplantation, according to a recent University of Minnesota study.

Viral infections are a leading cause of disease and death in patients receiving kidney transplants. Organ rejection was once the main health concern after a transplant, but with advances in suppressing the immune system to better prepare the body for donated organs, today’s patients face a greater risk for serious infections and cancerous cell growth after transplantation. Two common herpes viruses are the primary culprits: cytomegalovirus (CMV) and Epstein-Barr virus (EBV).

In healthy people, these viruses typically don’t cause serious symptoms. But in someone whose immune system is suppressed, such as a person receiving a new kidney, they can be deadly.

The problem arises when a kidney donor unknowingly carries CMV or EBV and the person receiving the kidney does not. Researchers believe the viruses are transferred through the donated kidney. Children receiving a new kidney are at greatest risk for these complications because they frequently don’t carry either virus at the time of the transplant.

The small U of M study—published in the journal Transplantation and funded in part by a research award from an anonymous donor—tested whether giving kidney donors an antiviral drug before the transplant would reduce the amount of virus transmitted to the recipient.

“Just as we prevent transmission of HIV to babies by providing pregnant women with antiretroviral medication before childbirth, we wanted to test the theory that we could reduce viruses transferred through the organ,” says Priya Verghese, a pediatric nephrologist at University of Minnesota Masonic Children’s Hospital who coauthored the study with U colleague and clinical virologist Henry Balfour Jr.

The result? No patient receiving a kidney from a donor who took the antiviral drug contracted CMV or EBV after transplantation. In the study’s placebo group, one recipient developed CMV, and a second recipient had EBV-related cancer (lymphoma) due to posttransplant lymphoproliferative disorder (PTLD).

Genetic tests on the PTLD led the researchers to believe the cancer was caused by EBV from the donor kidney.

The team will look to a larger study to confirm these research results, says Balfour, who directs the Medical School’s International Center for Antiviral Research and Epidemiology.

“If we can find an effective way to prevent the transfer of viruses during organ transplants,” he says, “we can keep patients healthier and avoid the terrible risks of infection.”

Visit give.umn.edu/giveto/ebvcmv to support this research.
Visitors to The Raptor Center (TRC) at the U of M can now see and learn about more birds than ever before, thanks to donors who gave a total of $1.8 million to expand the center’s facility. The new wing, completed in June, includes a larger and safer housing area and more space for veterinary care for the center’s raptors. With 60 percent of TRC’s budget coming from donor support, it’s clear that philanthropy touches everything the center does—and allows new programs to take flight.

The campaign for TRC’s new wing kicked off with a generous $1.1 million gift from Doug and Wendy Dayton to cover capital and programming expenses. It was named the Douglas Dayton Education Wing in their honor.

Sue McCarthy, who has been teaching people about raptors for 11 years, is one of more than 250 volunteers at TRC. Together, they donated 23,900 hours last year—the equivalent of 11.5 full-time employees.

Thanks to gifts that support educational programs, kids have the opportunity to get up close and personal with a peregrine falcon and other raptors. In 2014, more than 150,000 people attended 959 TRC programs and events.

Clinical intern Irene Galán Lecona, whose position is funded by donor support, is part of a team that cared for 753 wild birds last year. Rehabilitated birds are released back into their natural habitats.

Pat Redig cofounded The Raptor Center in 1974. The Patrick T. Redig Professorship in Raptor Medicine and Surgery, created in his honor, supports visiting veterinarians in TRC’s clinical training and research program.

Philanthropy helps Julia Ponder, TRC’s director, continue her work on a Galápagos Islands conservation project to remove non-native rodents and help endemic species like the Galápagos hawk thrive.

Gifts at work: The Raptor Center

See an interactive version of this photo at give.umn.edu.
From fish to physics

The first-ever comprehensive study of Lake Superior will help tomorrow’s scientists better understand climate change

By Amy Sitze

T

he six scientists catching catnaps in the compact bunks of the Blue Heron—the research boat owned by the Large Lakes Observatory (LLO) at the University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD)—don’t need an alarm clock. “We wake up when we hear the engine stop,” says Elizabeth Minor, an LLO professor and researcher. “You all of a sudden get an adrenaline rush and you head out and get to work.”

Minor is part of a two-year research project in which UMD scientists are making eight voyages to collect data at 12 sites in Lake Superior’s western arm. The team collects and analyzes simultaneous data on aquatic ecology, phytoplankton abundance, nutrient distribution, biochemistry, carbon cycling, zooplankton ecology, fish ecology, and biological productivity—what Minor calls a “fish to physics” approach.

The key word is “simultaneous,” says Bob Sterner, LLO director. Never before have scientists studied so many factors at the same time in the same spots on the lake. In the past, biologists might go to certain sites in certain months, for example, while geologists would visit different places at other times of the year. That approach provides valuable data for individual researchers, but makes it tough to determine how multiple factors influence each other. No prior large-lake study has included this project’s breadth of measurements, geographic range, and span of seasons.

Because the Blue Heron is expensive to operate—about $9,000 for 24 hours—scientists in the new simultaneous study cram as much data collection as they possibly can into each four- or five-day voyage, with only a few hours of sleep between research stations.

Round-the-clock data gathering also allows scientists to study how the lake behaves at different times of day. “Night is when the zooplankton come out of the deep and forage in the surface water,” Minor says. “That’s when the lake behaves a bit like a small lake.”

Night is when the zooplankton come out of the deep and forage in the surface water. “You’re interested in looking at the dynamics of the whole lake system, because there are different things happening at different times.”

The study will provide a solid baseline of data to help future researchers—even 20 or 30 years from now—understand how issues like climate change affect Lake Superior. Though the lake seems timeless, it’s changed dramatically in recent years. Surface summer water temperatures have increased by 5°F over the past 30 years, some of the most rapid change observed on the planet. And maximum ice cover on the lake has decreased from almost 40 percent in the early 1970s to about 10 percent today.

“Our mission is to increase understanding of some of the thorniest scientific problems,” says Sterner. “We’re a step or two beyond today’s problems; we’re building a foundation to deal with tomorrow’s problems.”

The LLO is the only institute in the country that’s dedicated solely to researching large lakes around the world, with field programs and collaborators on six continents. That focus is important, Sterner says, because large lakes like Superior are vastly different from the smaller lakes that so many Minnesotans know and love. “We need to understand these huge systems because they’re valuable,” he says, noting that half our planet’s liquid fresh water is stored in just five lakes. “Water is the resource of the future. It’s shaped our lives and it will continue to shape our lives.”

Amy Sitze is editor of Legacy magazine.

What’s next for the Blue Heron?

When Adam Sellheim, a 2008 graduate of the University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD), died tragically during a 2011 boating trip in northern Minnesota, his family decided to honor his memory by establishing the Adam R. Sellheim Memorial for Blue Heron Student Support. The fund allows one UMD undergraduate class each year to learn about Lake Superior aboard the Blue Heron—an experience that Sellheim remembered fondly from his own days at UMD.

Bob Sterner, director of UMD’s Large Lakes Observatory (LLO), would like to see even more U of M students have the same opportunity, but there isn’t enough funding to bring more classes onto the Blue Heron. LLO’s research voyages are supported by federal grants, and only a few graduate and undergraduate students get to participate. “Nobody forgets the experience of being on Earth’s largest body of water on that big beautiful boat,” he says.

He’d also like to raise funds to expand the Blue Heron’s community outreach. About once a month, the boat docks at Duluth’s Great Lakes Aquarium, allowing members of the public to learn firsthand about the research that happens there. (Upcoming dates are August 21 and September 18.) Someday, Sterner would like to sail the boat to ports throughout the Great Lakes system to reach people from Canada to Cleveland.
New game plan
Prepared to travel across the world for treatment, a former Gopher football player and his family find hope in a re-emerging therapy on their home turf

By Nicole Endres

Nothing could keep Gopher linebacker Peter Westerhaus off the football field.
Well, almost nothing. Minnesota’s Mr. Football 2010, who as a kid slept in a helmet while erasing a football, had an unrivaled passion and work ethic. But in 2013, a brutal case of ulcerative colitis took him away from the game he loved.

The disease is caused by inflammation that eats away at the lining of the large intestine, resulting in frequent, bloody diarrhea and sometimes extreme abdominal pain.

“It’s not pretty,” Westerhaus says. “There were times when I thought nails were coming out from inside of me. I lost my ability to eat and sleep. It took away the basic functions of life, really.”

It also took away his normally upbeat personality, says his mother, Sue Westerhaus. “For about a year, he’d sit in a chair in our living room and look out the window,” she says, “looking at life passing him by.”

Ulcerative colitis can be controlled with medication in many cases, but not Pete’s. The linebacker had dropped from 235 pounds to 148 pounds. Desperate to find other options, the family prepared to travel across the world for the right treatment, but their search turned up the possibility of relief in a familiar place: the University of Minnesota.

Finding help—and hope

U gastroenterologist Alexander Khoruts has performed about 300 fecal microbiota transplants (FMTs) at University of Minnesota Medical Center since 2009, primarily for people suffering from treatment-resistant forms of the notorious bacterium Clostridium difficile. Today he’s performing an average of three FMTs per week for C. diff that cannot be cleared with antibiotics.

And he sees much broader potential for the therapy, which essentially restores a healthy composition of microbes in the intestine (see sidebar). It could be used one day, Khoruts believes, to treat obesity, diabetes, eating disorders, autism, and inflammatory bowel diseases such as Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis, among other conditions. However, a lot of research needs to be done to optimize the treatment, he says.

The Westerhaus family sought out Khoruts and pleaded their case. He thought carefully about whether FMT-based therapy would help Pete before agreeing to try it.

“There were anecdotal reports of this treatment working for ulcerative colitis in the literature, and I felt he deserved to have a chance,” Khoruts says.

A lifeline

So Peter Westerhaus started a series of treatments with antibiotics and infusions of gut microbiota. Each round led to improvements in his disease, but one section of his large intestine just wouldn’t heal. Khoruts and colleague Robert Madoff, a University of Minnesota Medical Center colon and rectal surgeon, feared it could go worse without surgery to remove Westerhaus’ large intestine.

In fact, Peter endured three surgeries—the last of which allows the 22-year-old to live his life free of pain and free of a colostomy bag. Throughout the process, Khoruts always found time to talk when Westerhaus was struggling. And Khoruts was one of the first people to check in with him after surgery.

“That compassion was one of the hands that held Peter,” says his father, Jon Westerhaus. “Peter is a brave, unbelievably tough human being. It’s hard to put it in perspective. On those very dark, hard, terrible nights, he had a lifeline with Alexander Khoruts.”

Because of the intense gratitude they felt for their son’s care, Jon and Sue Westerhaus made a gift to the University of Minnesota Microbiota Therapeutics Program, which aims to advance the science behind FMT.

“Peter Westerhaus, with his parents’ help, is setting up a nonprofit organization to keep supporting that research.”

“We believe fully in what Dr. Khoruts is doing,” Peter Westerhaus says. “Ultimately, we want to help get the ball moving. We want to cure ulcerative colitis and all of the other autoimmune diseases that come along with it.”

Today Peter Westerhaus is back to regular life—almost. Though he won’t be able to play football again, he’s on track to complete his finance degree at the Carlson School of Management in the spring. He went skydiving and surfing in Australia and even completed a triathlon this summer.

“I think, ‘Hey, I was hardly able to get out of a chair a year and a half ago, and here I can go run,’” he says. “It’s like having a new life.”

Nicole Endres is a contributing editor for Legacy magazine.

What is fecal microbiota transplantation?

Though the procedure dates back to at least 1958 in Western medicine, fecal microbiota transplantation (FMT) is re-emerging as a therapy with potential to treat a range of challenging conditions. The University of Minnesota is at the forefront of bringing this field into mainstream medicine.

The term “microbiota” refers to the trillions of tiny organisms found in a person’s gastrointestinal tract that help digestion, fight off harmful bacteria, develop the immune system, and maintain general health.

As the name suggests, the helpful microorganisms come from fecal material—donated by volunteers who undergo regular and rigorous health screening at the University. The microbes from the fecal material are separated in the lab and frozen; the rest is discarded. A suspension of microbiota is given to the patient via colonoscope.

The U team recently has developed a pill form as well.
Follow the crowd

The University’s new crowdfunding tool brings together multiple gifts, big and small, to achieve powerful results
By Amy Sitze

When Warren Bischoff faced a bone marrow transplant to treat his non-Hodgkin lymphoma in 2008, he was realistic about his chances of survival. “There was a very good chance I was going to die,” he says.

The senior managing director at RBC Wealth Management in Washington, D.C., decided to do his part to help researchers work toward a cure for his disease. Along with his family and friends, he raised $83,000 for lymphoma research through a fundraising bike ride. “Taking action helped me deal with my cancer,” says Bischoff, who is cancer-free today, “and it helped other people take action on my behalf.”

So when his friend and fellow RBC executive Kevin (whose last name is omitted to protect his privacy) began treatment at the University of Minnesota for pancreatic cancer this year, Bischoff once again took action. He used the U’s new crowdfunding tool to launch a fundraising campaign called Breaking Bald, in which 12 RBC colleagues across the nation will shave their heads in Kevin’s honor.

At press time, the campaign had reached 76 percent of its ambitious $50,000 goal, with funds earmarked for the U’s Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund.

Whether it’s a bike ride like Bischoff’s or a campaign to fund a student-run literary magazine, group fundraising efforts can have powerful results. The U’s new crowdfunding website, launched in November 2014, allows anyone to create a page, set a goal, and begin raising funds for meaningful causes at the U.

Unlike commercial tools, the site doesn’t charge an administrative fee, which means 100 percent of each donation goes to the designated cause.

There are two main ways to raise funds: a team page or an individual page. On an individual page, multiple donors use one page to give to a cause. On team pages like Bischoff’s, multiple users create pages that raise money for the same cause and goal. For example, many participants in the popular Goldy’s Run, which raises money for U of M Masonic Children’s Hospital, choose to create team pages in which groups of people band together to encourage friends and families to donate—often in honor or memory of a loved one. This past year, individuals and teams participating in Goldy’s Run brought in $21,536 through the crowdfunding tool.

For Bischoff, crowdfunding has been more than just a fundraiser—it’s an opportunity to do something positive in the face of a horrible disease. “We often feel helpless when it comes to helping our friends who are facing cancer,” he says. “This gives us a chance to fight back, show we care, and have an impact.”

Amy Sitze is editor of Legacy magazine.

The power of many

Crowdfunding efforts at the U of M range from people raising money through “fun runs” to academic departments fundraising for specific projects. Here are some examples of University crowdfunding pages and what they accomplished:

Eli’s Coming – 26 donors gave $1,003 to the University of Minnesota Masonic Children’s Hospital as part of Goldy’s Run on April 11, in honor of the page creator’s 19-month-old grandson.

U of M Bee Squad – The program raised $30,000 for a new vehicle that will be used to visit and transport hives, with $2,400 raised through the U’s crowdfunding site and the rest through private events.

U of M Morris – UMM exceeded $2,000 goal by raising $3,975 for a music travel fund for students, $1,835 of which came in through crowdfunding.

Carlson School of Management – This year’s M.B.A. class raised $6,422, exceeding the $5,015 goal, with 88 percent of graduating seniors donating. Gifts will go to the Carlson School’s general fund.

U of M crowdfunding by the numbers

$156,877
Amount raised through the U’s crowdfunding platform between November 1, 2014, and July 20, 2015

1,372
Number of gifts in the same time period

$114
Average gift

$102,115
Amount raised through crowdfunding for the U of M during Give to the Max Day in 2014 (this year, it’s on November 12)

Visit crowdfund.umn.edu to contribute to a current crowdfunding page or start one of your own.
Ready to create the future

Three 2015 graduates talk about their U experience and how they plan to work across disciplines to tackle global challenges

By Adam Overland

Every year, about 15,000 students graduate from the University of Minnesota and embark on the next step in their journey, joining U of M alumni around the world. This past spring, the class of 2015 began to make its mark in health care, technology, business, agriculture, and many other fields.

U alumni include founders and presidents of Fortune 500 companies, visionary artists and authors, 55 members of Congress (plus 19 governors and two U.S. vice presidents), and thousands more working to make a difference every day. Who will the class of 2015 become? We spoke to three 2015 graduates talk about their U experience and how they plan to work across disciplines to tackle global challenges.

Muhammad Jiwa
Wildlife science, whole systems healing, and sustainability studies

Muhammad Jiwa created his own academic path through the U’s Inter-College Program, part of the College of Continuing Education. He’s interested in everything from eco-friendly buildings to biomimicry, and has worked for nonprofits and launched multiple businesses. This summer he’s reaching out to Twin Cities mosques to incorporate environmental studies into curriculum for children, hoping to inspire youth in how they approach the concerns of their time.

How do you see yourself having an impact on the world?
I am going to use my skills, along with my world experience, to engage in conversations and make positive change both nationally and internationally.

How has your education prepared you?
The U helped me a tremendous amount with being prepared for the world’s challenges. Everything is interconnected, and reaching across different disciplines can go a long way toward creating changes that are longer lasting and farther reaching. Having a well-rounded education helps in connecting more dots.

What’s most exciting about graduating?
I’m excited to start making a positive change in the world—socially, environmentally, and economically.

Did anything about college surprise you?
I was always told that I was “overthinking it.” I’ve realized that I’m not overthinking it—I’m just a researcher/scientist at heart.

Caitlin Dippo
Architecture

Though eligible to graduate, Caitlin Dippo will continue her studies in architecture and urban design at the Danish Institute for Study Abroad in Denmark, thanks to a Katherine Sullivan Scholarship. She’s looking forward to studying in a nation that, she says, employs a “putting people first” architecture policy.

How do you see yourself having an impact on the world?
Through sensitive architecture and design. Working across professions is key to designing sensitively, as it allows you to attack problems from many different perspectives. In Denmark, I’d like to focus my attention on design that is conscientious of people and place.

Did anything about college surprise you?
An awakening experience happened the first time I set foot in the College of Design woodshop: I realized that I could make anything I wanted with my own hands. I practically live there now!

What’s most exciting about graduating?
Finding my niche in the design community. I’m very curious to see where I end up.

What are you planning to do “just for fun” in the future?
I'd like to focus my attention on design that is conscientious of people and place.

Did anything about college surprise you?
I was always told that I was “overthinking it.” I’ve realized that I’m not overthinking it—I’m just a researcher/scientist at heart.

Ben Ihde
Physics and astrophysics

Continuing Education. He’s interested in everything from eco-friendly buildings to biomimicry, and has worked for nonprofits and launched multiple businesses. This summer he’s reaching out to Twin Cities mosques to incorporate environmental studies into curriculum for children, hoping to inspire youth in how they approach the concerns of their time.

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Rarely does a writer master such diverse genres as fiction, essays, poetry, journalism, criticism, and public policy. But Gerald Vizenor, 60 B.A., a teacher, advocate, and author of more than 40 books, isn’t just any writer. A postmodern intellectual of Anishinaabe descent, Vizenor frequently defies conventional narrative structures and instead uses traditional Native storytelling techniques that draw from oral tradition and myth. With the help of the ancient “trickster” character, Vizenor leads the reader into a shape-shifting landscape that reveals life’s multiplicities, ironies, and paradoxes.

If you’re lucky enough to talk with Vizenor or read his work, you’re likely to come away with more questions than answers—which is precisely the point.

You and your wife, Laura, have endowed the Gerald Vizenor Lectures on American Indian Literature in the College of Liberal Arts. What is your vision for the lectures?

We wanted the U of M to invite Native writers to speak on the subject of Native literature and share their work. We envision both young and established writers sharing their stories with the campus community. It will probably be one lecture every year, with the chance to meet and engage with students.

What was it like to be part of the U’s fledging American Indian Studies program in the early 1970s?

When I began teaching in the department in 1970, there was a potted birch tree in the office, which became an important symbol of the health of the program. Although we had the full support of the University from the beginning, there were radical forces at the time that rebelled against the academy. With Native politics so complex and open to so many different interpretations, it was a challenge back then to establish an academic program that demanded intellectual rigor.

There were protests from faculty who said they should be teaching tradition, and from those who wanted to romanticize Native history or politicize the program. But there is no single monolithic Native literature, tradition, and history. We kept asking, “Whose tradition? Whose politics? Whose history?” The questions couldn’t be resolved.

The birch lost its leaves and started to languish. When the issues became deadlocked, it was clear that the program couldn’t continue as it was. Then the tree died, and we knew it was time to take a step back. It was a painful yet important process of establishing a program that eventually regrouped as part of American Studies and is now the new and stronger Department of American Indian Studies in the College of Liberal Arts.

You’re known for coining terms like victimry and survivance. What do they mean?

From a white, European perspective, Natives are always a problem. “We owe them a lot” is a mantra. This is one example of victimry. But when Natives create art, which includes storytelling, it isn’t from the point of view of the victim. It’s playful, original, expressionistic, and grows out of the visionary power of creative writers.

In my travels, I’ve discovered new ways of writing that connect me to Native traditions. When I was in the military in Japan, I discovered imagistic haiku. In China it was the translation and retelling of classic trickster tales. You helped write the constitution for the White Earth Reservation. What did that mean to you?

Erna Vizenor, the elected leader of the White Earth Nation, asked me to serve as a delegate and the principal writer of the constitution. She has an extraordinary sense of integrity and moral bearing, and promised governmental reform in her first term and a new constitution in her second term. The constitution provides a cultural vision, ethos, and principles of the governance of the White Earth Nation. I was a sworn delegate at four constitutional conventions over two years. The discussions of the 40 delegates were inspired and argumentative, but we were determined to create a new constitution of a democratic government. There were approvals, revisions, and serious issues resolved, and the constitution was ratified and overwhelmingly passed by referendum.

Article 5 says that “the freedom of thought and conscience, academic, artistic irony, and literary expression shall not be denied, violated, or controverted by the government.” Probably no constitution of governance in the world has a specific reference to the protection of literary and artistic irony. For Native stories, protection of this freedom could not go unstated.