Greetings from Our President

The UWC board is considering plans for the 2021-2022 programs and activities for our club. It has been a difficult year for all organizations as we continue to function via email and Zoom meetings. However, the board has met regularly via Zoom, and as you know, we have had and will continue to have great membership programs through Zoom until we can resume luncheon meetings. Our scholarship contributions have been great this year, and Big Orange Give matching added to our contributions.

Our Holiday Event on Zoom was fun as we shared recipes, favorite traditions, and laughter. As you will see in this newsletter, we had an excellent membership program on February 12 and will have another on March 12. We are tentatively planning an “in person” picnic meeting at UT Gardens in May; there will be space for social distancing outside. Perhaps most of us will have our Covid-19 immunization by then!

I have appointed a nominating committee for next year’s officers; however, they are working against several concerns.

While we continue to operate within the guidelines of the pandemic, promoting the club to new members is difficult. Those who have been members for many years have served in various offices of the club and are ready to slow down. Others who have served several years as officers of the UWC are taking on new responsibilities in other very worthwhile organizations and groups. Our younger members are combining work, continued schooling, and family responsibilities—busy lives! The final concern is that officers in today’s world must be fairly computer literate as communications and records are increasingly electronic.

We have lost several members this year either by death or attrition. To the families and friends of those who died, we send our sympathy. To those who have decided not to renew for whatever reason, we will miss you and your friendship. To those who are staying, we will look forward together to a new year of fellowship and fine programs, hopefully in person by next September.

Dava

Introducing Sue Hamilton, Our 2021-22 President

Dr. Sue Hamilton is the retired director of the University of Tennessee Gardens, the State Botanical Gardens of Tennessee. Sue retired at the beginning of 2020 after 37 years as a professor of horticulture. She taught and advised students and was the founding director for UT’s Public Horticulture undergraduate and graduate program, one of just a few such programs in the country.

Sue has co-authored the book The Best Garden Plants for Tennessee, contributed to such magazines as Tennessee Home, Tennessee Gardener, and Fine Gardening magazine, and coordinated the UT Gardens’ monthly newsletter and bi-annual magazine. Sue co-hosted a weekly “Garden Talk” radio show for 15 years and wrote a monthly gardening column for the Knoxville News Sentinel for seven years. She has also led garden tours throughout the United States and Europe.
She is the recipient of several awards including the UTK Chancellor’s Honors Women of Achievement Award, UTIA William T. Miles Memorial Award for Community Service, UT Herbert College of Agriculture W.S. Overton Faculty Award for Outstanding Student Development, Gamma Sigma Delta Teaching Award, and the Perennial Plant Association Academic Award.

On retirement, Sue moved to a cabin in the Smoky Mountains where she has enjoyed establishing a new garden and being immersed in the mountains’ beauty and tranquility. Sue enjoys shopping for the newest and best plants to add to her garden. Sue’s husband still works and travels extensively so they bought an RV where, along with their three dogs, macaw parrot, and bearded dragon, they can travel together. Traveling with such a menagerie sure makes for fun and a great way to meet people! Did you know that this is how Ringling Brother’s Circus got started? National parks, presidential libraries, botanical gardens, and historical homes and landmarks are her favorite places to visit.

Sue has attended various UWC programs and events over the years and has given at least one presentation at a UWC luncheon meeting. She has enjoyed the fellowship with women connected to UT. As our next president, Sue hopes we can soon move past Covid restrictions and looks forward to once again having in-person programs and events.

She wants to continue the club’s legacy of offering outstanding programs, which highlight UT’s diverse and excellent research, teaching, and outreach. Growing our membership and engaging women, especially those new to the university community, are on the top of her list. And so is advancing the continued growth of our scholarship support. It is exciting that the UWC was able to offer two scholarships this past fall, and Sue wants to see this trend grow. Sue looks forward to serving as the next president and forging new connections and friendships.

**UWC Scholarship Fund Flourishes**

The Scholarship Fund added $4,795 this fiscal year. Over the year generous members sent $2,340 with their dues. During the Big Orange Give in November 2020, members contributed another $1,715, and we received $740 in matching funds for a total of $2,455.

With the funding so strong, the Board voted to raise the amount given per scholarship in the 2021-22 academic year from $1,500 to $2,000.

The two women who received scholarships this past year have both overcome many barriers and much adversity to complete their education. Their quite different, but equally moving, stories (below) remind us of the value of our scholarships to UT adult students:

**Jennyfer Figueroa** made her way to UT on a path filled with challenges. She was born in Mexico City, and, after her father was killed in an auto accident, her mother brought her and two sisters to the United States. None of them spoke English, and her mother had to work very hard. By the time Jennyfer graduated from high school, her English was good, but not yet college level. She says, “this made me very insecure about my own potential,” as did the fact that she was not an American citizen and did not have the money for tuition.

Jennyfer started working to pay for community college classes so she could, she says, “get my diploma fast and for cheap.” It took additional time because she was also employed. Once she received her associate degree, she began helping victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking by working for such local organizations as the YWCA and the Knoxville Police Department. Through it all, she says, “I never gave up the dream of being the first female college graduate in my family.”

In October 2019, Jennyfer became a citizen and was now able to go to school full time thanks to financial aid and her savings. But even as a full-time student working toward a degree in sociology, she also works part-time with the Boys and Girls Club and donates plasma twice a week. Because she has medical expenses but no medical insurance, she says she cannot stop looking for work opportunities. But Jennyfer says, “I will graduate no matter what it takes.” After graduation she hopes to work for the FBI so she can continue assisting crime victims.

**Heather Shipley** is attending UT as a mother who has faced great tragedy. Heather has three children, two of whom were ill: one is doing well, in remission from acute lymphatic leukemia, and the other has died. Caring for her children through illness and financial constraints halted Heather’s education for
several years. But this Knoxville native, now in her late 30s, has “wanted to attend the University of Tennessee all of my life,” adding that “attending is a dream come true for me.”

Heather is pursuing a bachelor’s in social work because, she says, “after going through all of the treatments with my children, and other trials and tribulations that I have been through as a result, I developed a passion for helping others.” She would like to go on to a master’s in social work.

She says she “has been fortunate so far to attain financial aid and secure loans to work toward that goal.” Despite the difficulties of returning to college as a mother with financial obligations for her children, Heather is determined to complete her degree. She also wants her children to get college degrees, saying “the odds of my children completing college is far greater if they have a parent with a degree. I’m even hopeful they will follow my footsteps right here at UT. This is my home, and I’m very proud to call myself a Vol.”

2020-21 UWC Board Members*

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Hospitality: Jennifer Benton 423-408-4070 jbento11@utk.edu; Co-Chair (table decorations): Kathy Lasater 966-5009 drkathyl@aol.com

Holiday Reception: Stacey-Ann Palado 974-2143 spalado@utk.edu

Spring Luncheon: Debbie Woodiel 603-0407 woodield@utk.edu

*All phone numbers are in area code 865 unless otherwise indicated.

In Memoriam

Margo Akerman
Lida Barrett
Bee DeSelm*
Martha Lee Osborne
Paula Stewart
Jo Yeomans*

*Past presidents of the UWC

Our 2020-21 Programs So Far

Accommodating Covid restrictions, UWC has held its monthly programs via Zoom, offering members a wide variety of enjoyable and educational experiences. In September, retired Ambassador Margaret Scobey, a UTK alumna, recounted her impressive diplomatic career in the Middle East and shared her observations on current Middle East politics.

In October, the UWC provided a yellow rose bush, the symbol of women’s suffrage, to the UT Gardens with a plaque honoring the suffragists. We viewed a video of retired UT Gardens director and UWC president-elect, Sue Hamilton, showing us the rose and the plaque. Then Knoxville attorney and founder of the local Suffrage Coalition, Wanda Sobieski, described how one night in our city became pivotal to the suffrage movement in her talk, “Showdown in Knoxville: November 27, 1917.” The coalition under Ms. Sobieski’s leadership has raised the funds for two Knoxville statues honoring women’s suffrage and currently has a grant to digitize the papers of Lizzie Crozier French and Harry Burn.

In November, retired law professor Carl Pierce described his deep dive into his family history. Professor Pierce is a twelfth-generation descendant from two of the Pilgrim families who reached Massachusetts on the Mayflower in 1620. One line begins with Elder William Brewster and his wife Mary Wentworth, and the other with Stephen Hopkins and his wife Elizabeth. He has joined the Mayflower Society, a group for descendants of the Mayflower
passengers, with more than 150,000 members around the world. After a life in the law, Carl Pierce has made ancestry research an absorbing retirement hobby and shared his enthusiasm for the search as well as his observations on the relationship of the Pilgrims with the Native Americans they encountered in New England, from both historic and current perspectives.

On February 12, Dr. Enkeshi El-Amin, a UT sociology lecturer and the first candidate to earn a UT Ph.D. in Critical Race and Ethnic Studies, spoke to us about her studies of African Americans in Appalachia, a region often neglected in accounts of black history. Dr. El-Amin is a producer and co-host of the podcast, “Black in Appalachia.” The team, which also includes William Isom and Chris Smith, developed the podcast with a grant given to East Tennessee PBS.

She described their research and the resulting programs that span the southern Appalachian region—Big Stone Gap, Virginia, Mountain City, Tennessee, Asheville, North Carolina, Corbin, Kentucky—as well as the Knoxville area. She hopes that bringing these previously hidden stories to light will help young people, especially young black people, to see their hometowns as places they can stay, fight injustice, and thrive. Dr. El-Amin also runs a center in East Knoxville, The Bottoms, where children can learn skills, such as sewing, which give them a way to start little businesses and earn money.

**Our March Program**

**On Friday, March 12, at noon,** via Zoom, we will learn how pediatric nurse practitioners and speech-language pathology students can identify and refer children at risk for communication disorders in rural Appalachia using an electronic tool. Our speakers will represent the three disciplines working on this project:

**Nursing:** Dr. Rebecca Koszalinski, formerly of the UT College of Nursing and now an Associate Professor at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center

**Audiology and Speech Pathology:** Dr. Jillian McCarthy, Associate Professor at the UT Health Science Center

**Mechanical Engineering:** Dr. Eric R. Wade, Adjunct Associate Professor of Mechanical, Aerospace, and Biomedical Engineering at UTK, and Assistant Professor, California Polytechnic State University

This team developed a software tool to use in screening children for speech and language disorders and referral for management of those with delays. They have designed and tested wearable devices to identify speech and language delays and are developing interventions for these children.

**Women’s Athletics at UT**

*By Audrey A. Duncan, UWC Historian*

Earlier I looked at the coming of the coeds to the University of Tennessee; this time I have looked at how women’s athletics came into being at UT.

Socially acceptable physical activities for women were introduced to America shortly after the Civil War, when women begin playing what were considered “ladylike” sports. Croquet, archery, and tennis came first since they did not require specific attire or undue exertion, thus enabling those who played to maintain their image of “true womanhood.” By the 1890s, bicycling became popular, and women cyclists wore bloomers so they could straddle a bicycle in a ladylike way. Then came swimming and golf, followed by hockey and basketball. Women participated for the first time in the 1900 Olympic games in five sports: tennis, sailing, croquet, equestrian events, and golf.

UT followed the national lead. Women came to campus in 1893, and by 1899 the Department of Women’s Physical Education was established with Anne Gibson as its head. It stated its goal was to “strengthen weak ankles and increase lung capacity,” but there was really little difference in the male and female programs, which shared the goals of “the establishment and development of the physical foundation of students for a vigorous, useful life.”

Women’s competitive team sports quickly followed around 1900, despite reservations that they were too demanding for the delicate female condition. Basket-
ball became the women’s first varsity sport. The UT team played against such teams as Maryville College, the University of Chattanooga, and Carson-Newman.

Women athletes soon began reflecting the new social movements we saw with suffragists, demanding equal treatment with men in collegiate competition. At a mass meeting in March 1920, the coeds asked for a single athletic association for men and women, varsity letters for women athletes, and a women’s representative to the University Athletic Council.

The women won the first two requests, but by the late 1920s a new philosophy of women’s athletics denounced intercollegiate sports as elitist. The Women's Division of the National Amateur Athletic Federation downplayed competitiveness and promoted universal participation with a new motto, “a game for every girl and a girl for every game.” Women’s varsity basketball ended with the 1926 season, and other intercollege sports followed. Seeking outlets for their desire to play sports, women began participating in intramural competitions between classes, sororities, and dormitories.

It would require a new social mood, the feminist movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and federal legislation in the 1970s to revive women’s intercollegiate sports at UT, which then caught up and sometimes surpassed the men’s programs in achievement. There were many firsts for UT women athletes during these decades:

In 1959, the volleyball team was the first UT women’s team to win an intercollegiate trophy. In 1964-65, the UT golf team was briefly coed in NCAA competition with Ann Baker Furrow as a member. In the 1980–82, season in doubles tennis, twins Peta and Paula Kelly were the first UT women to earn all All-American honors; and in 1989, the Lady Vols won their first national championship in track and field.

Joan Cronan became the Lady Vols basketball coach, in 1968. The team went on to participate in the first ever National Invitation Collegiate Basketball Tournament. Cronan served as Women’s Athletic Director from 1983 to 2011 when UT merged the men’s and women’s programs under a new AD, Dave Hart. Director Cronan continued her service through early 2012, then became a senior advisor to Hart and Chancellor Jimmy Cheek.

Although the first UT women’s intercollegiate basketball game was played in 1903, the Lady Vols became the star team we know today during the long career (1974 – 2011) of Coach Pat Head Summitt. Over her tenure the women’s team won 1,098 games and eight NCAA championships and never had a losing season, giving Coach Summitt one of the best records in women's basketball history.

"Success is a project that is always under construction," as Coach Summitt used to say, and women’s athletics has come through many challenges over its long history. Helped by the increasing acceptance of equal rights for women and the formation of Title IX programs, and despite the loss of some women’s jobs and salaries with the combined athletic department, and the ups and downs of winnings and losses both in finances and games, UT women athletes have come into their own. Today, all teams are simply called Volunteers except for women’s basketball, which remains the Lady Vols.
Mark Your Calendar for the UWC Spring Picnic

On Friday, May 7, 11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m., we will gather for a box lunch picnic at the Friendship Pavilion in the UT Gardens. This in-person, Covid-compliant event will also be available via Zoom and replaces our usual spring luncheon, which we typically hold in April. Since we must meet outdoors, we delayed the luncheon to early May with the hope of better weather. Parking will be free in lots adjacent to the Gardens. We will install our 2021–22 officers during the picnic. Other details of the program will be announced soon.

For more information about the University of Tennessee University Women’s Club, including past newsletters and membership forms, please go to our website:

https://universitywomensclub.utk.edu/

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