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Dr. Carlos Cortes at the Spring Luncheon

By Mitch Boretz

Dr. Carlos Cortes spent his entire academic career, 1968-1994, as a Professor of History at UCR. He became a distinguished authority in diversity and cultural matters, and after retirement was a sought-after expert, lecturer, and consultant. His experience ranged from establishing a diversity curriculum for UCR's School of Medicine to establishing the Riverside Mayor's Multicultural Forum to serving as an advisor for the Nickelodeon television network.



In the early 2010s, he accepted an opportunity to edit an encyclopedia. "It was a horrendous job," he told an audience of about 70 UCR emeriti and retirees at our spring luncheon May 15. He had to review and edit more than a thousand entries, which he described as a "siege" that lasted two or three years.

After that, he was ready to try something new and attended a local creative writing class. From that, a new career was born.

Dr. Cortes's first book of poetry, *Fourth Quarter Reflections of a Cranky Old Man*, won honors from the International Latino Book Awards. He admits, however, that the poetry is somewhat "retrograde," perhaps not something any active faculty member would produce.

And from there, he embarked on his first novel, *Scouts' Honor*. Growing up in Kansas City, Dr. Cortes was an Eagle Scout. He set the book at a Scout camp in the Ozarks and based it on an actual episode, imaging what would have happened if that event had gone differently.

"How about if one of the people in that incident dies?" he asked himself. But, he admits, that's only "one line on the piece of paper."

Developing the book required him to consider audience expectations (for example, how much profanity to use), authentic representation of 1940s gender and ethnic roles ("what we call today microaggressions"), and pacing (he likes the plot to move quickly). Re-creating the world of his youth for a modern audience is an challenge, he said: "1948 for a 2026 reader is about as distant as reading about the Civil War for someone from an earlier era."

The first-time nonagenarian author was pleased with the result, which was published in August 2025. He even got his granddaughter to design the cover.

What's next? Another book of poetry, *10th Decade*, which he said he couldn't really do until achieving that age.

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Spring 2026 Luncheon R'Pantry Donation Drive a Success!



The UCRRA, UCREA and UCR Retirement Center extends its sincere appreciation to the emeriti and retirees who generously supported the Spring 2026 Luncheon R'Pantry Donation Drive. Thanks to your kindness and generosity, a **total of 140.5 pounds of nonperishable food items** were collected to help address student food insecurity at UC Riverside.

The donated items were delivered to the R'Pantry and immediately stocked on its shelves, where they began supporting UCR students during the next scheduled walk-in hours. Your contributions will make a meaningful difference for students who rely on the R'Pantry for access to nutritious food and essential resources.

This incredible response reflects the continued commitment of UCR's emeriti and retirees to serving the campus community long after retirement.

UCR Retirees' Association

Andy Plumley
UCRRA President



Hello UCR Retirees' Association Members!

I write this summer message getting ready to celebrate Father's Day with my daughter and her two little boys, Cole and Porter! It is that time of year when many participate in trips and family gatherings, although as retirees we can do this all year long!

UCRRA has had a productive and active year, and the following are some highlights of 2025/26:

- Awarded \$15,000 in scholarships to four UCR undergraduate students.
- Participated in two UCR fundraising events, raising almost \$17,000 for our undergraduate scholarship endowment fund. A big thank you to SchoolsFirst Federal Credit Union for providing a large donation of \$12,500.
- Hosted three quarterly luncheons and the annual retiree and emeriti reception.
- Represented UCR at the semiannual meetings of the Council of UC Retiree Associations.
- Continue to work with the campus for a physical space for the UCR Retirement Center.
- Introduce monthly Happy Hours at the Barn Stable, which many enjoyed and we'll continue these next year.

It was great seeing so many at our Spring Luncheon and Business Meeting, where we elected our 2026/2027 Officers. We also adopted a couple of bylaw changes: adding two additional Members-at-Large positions to the board and updating our Events & Programs Committee where it is a joint committee between the Retirement Center, UCR Emeriti Association, and our association.

At our June Executive Board meeting, with the passage of the new bylaws, we appointed two Members-at-Large. These positions will be elected at our business meetings in the future. I am grateful to continue serving as your President, and please join me in congratulating our 2026/2027 Executive Board:

- Sheryl Hayes, Vice President
- Mitch Boretz, Secretary
- Mike Donavan, Treasurer
- Theresa McDonald, Events & Programs Director
- Jorge Sanchez, Communications & Outreach Director
- Patricia Smith-Hunt, Member-at-Large
- Debra de la Cruz, Member-at-Large

In the fall, we will be recruiting members for our standing committees: Nominating Committee, Membership and Outreach Committee, Events and Programs Committee, and Scholarship Committee. If you are interested, please contact Cristina Otegui, the Retirement Center Director.

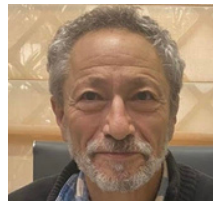
As always, I hope you explore this publication and get involved in anything that interests you. And if you don't find what you're looking for, let us know. Have a wonderful summer!

Sincerely,

Andy

UCR Emeriti Association

José Wudka
UCREA President



Dear UCR Emeriti,

This has been a busy quarter for the Emeriti Association! The Spring Luncheon on May 15 had two parts. The members approved a bylaw amendment that aims at ensuring the Association adequately supports the Retirement Center; our new Vice-president, Professor Byron Adams, was announced; and we also had the pleasure of recognizing the three UCREA Graduate Student Travel Awardees for Winter 2026: Yoheng Ko, Ananya Paul, and Rory Fewer. After this, the business part of the event, we welcomed Professor Carlos Cortes who gave a fascinating talk on his trajectory as a scholar and diversity advocate (see the summary in this issue of TowerTalk).

On April 21 Professor Chandra Varma (Physics & Astronomy) delivered the Spring Dickson lecture. In it, Professor Varma provided a brief history of the discovery and understanding of superconductivity in its various forms, from 1911 to date (see the summary in this issue of TowerTalk for details).

The remodeling of the Cottage is now completed. This is the future home of the Retirement Center, so this news moves us forward in our efforts to provide additional support for our emeriti and retirees. Currently UCREA and UCRRA are working with campus leadership to ensure the Campus provides the Cottage with basic services.

The Council of University of California Emeriti Association (CUCEA), the umbrella association for campus associations like UCREA, held its Spring meeting on April 29-30 at the UCLA campus. In it various RASC officials provided updates on the improvements being made to the services provided to emeriti and retirees: response time has shortened without degrading response quality, and several cybersecurity measures are being implemented. We also learned that the University is reviewing the various health plans open to emeriti and retirees. CUCEA's Joint Benefits Committee published a report where many of the issues of concern common to all the campus associations are described; this is an excellent document which I encourage you to review, it can be found at: https://www.cucea.org/uploads/1/3/9/6/139695957/jbc-report-ucla_spring-2026.pdf.

We are getting ready to move into the hot season, when UCREA pauses its activities, using the time to think of new ideas and programs for the coming academic year. I wish everyone a very happy Summer!

Sincerely,

José



In Memoriam

We recognize and honor those who have passed that have been reported this 2025 - 2026 academic year.



Helen McQueen Alberts, retired in April 1991
Marshall Anderson, retired in November 1993
Jacqueline Beck, retired in November 1992
Bronte Bird, retired in April 2015
Kathleen Jane Blondel, retired in July 2013
Jane Brown, retired in February 1997
Robert Capelo, retired in April 1991
William Carson, retired in March 2015
William Clark, retired in January 2013
Geoffrey Cohen, retired in July 2017
James Conrod
Donna Cooney, retired in July 2003
Lonny Crinklaw, retired in February 2013
Dorothy Dube, retired in November 1993
Donald Farley, retired in December 2006
Arthur Foster, retired in September 2010

Arturo Gomez-Pompa, retired in July 2005
Jose Antonio Hernandez, retired in April 1991
Jodie Holt, retired in July 2015
Jeanie Humphrey, retired in December 1990
Marshall Wain Johnson, retired in July 2013
David Kleckner, retired in July 2018
Marin Ledesma, retired in December 1998
Jan Mccorkle, retired in July 2011
Doris Mcnamara, retired in September 1980
Mary Mersereau, retired in November 1993
Frederic Metcalf, retired in July 1994
Rodney Moreno, retired in April 2008
William Norman, retired in July 2015
Sharon Odenbaugh, retired in November 1993
Sarah Rangel, retired in April 1991
Lonnie Raibon, retired in June 1996

Roger Ransom, retired in July 2008
Patricia Skotty, retired in May 1981
Bobbie Smith, retired in November 1992
Patricia Smith, retired in July 2016
Carmen Stark, retired in October 2020
Fred Strickler, retired in July 2007
Carrie Thompson, retired in July 2011
James Thompson, retired in January 2002
Peter Tsao, retired in January 1993
Anthony Urena, retired in July 2015
Martin Vandenberg, retired in July 2013
Peter Ventimiglia, retired in July 2004
Cherrie Veriato, retired in July 2020
Bobbie Wallace, retired in August 1998
Raphael Zidovetzki, retired in June 2024

Free Use Days: Beat the Heat with a Free Month at the SRC in July



The UCR Student Recreation Center (SRC) is offering complimentary membership throughout July 2026 (July 1–31). UCR retirees and emeriti are encouraged to explore everything the SRC has to offer—from group exercise classes, swimming, lap swim workouts, and rock climbing at The Rock, to chair massages, Outdoor Excursions, MAC gym sports, tennis courts, and more—all at no cost for the entire month. Registration and completion of a liability waiver are required to participate.

Wednesday, July 1, 2026 through Friday, July 31, 2026

Register on the Student Recreation Center webpage at:

https://events.ucr.edu/event/free_use_days_at_the_src_2470

Attracting Birds and Butterflies to Gardens

An expert from the Riverside Master Gardeners Program will be sharing ways to attract birds and butterflies in your gardens.

Thursday, August 13, 2026 from 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. via Zoom

Register on the retiree and emeriti webpage at:

https://ucriverside.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_816MUDJfT0AGEKO



UC Retiree Travel Program Trip Preview

UC Retirees Travel offers worldwide group tours for retired UC staff and faculty as well as their friends and family. UC Retirees Travel volunteers will preview upcoming trips including Greece, New Zealand, Egypt, Morocco and more. This webinar is hosted by the UC Riverside Retirement Center, and everyone, including friends and family are welcome to register. See details about upcoming trips or join the UC Retirees Travel mailing list at <http://cucra.ucsd.edu/travel/>.

Thursday, September 24, 2026 from 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. via Zoom

Register on the retiree and emeriti webpage at:

https://ucriverside.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9ZVjOylrgfcNPDg



Fall Luncheon

Dr. Stephen Kane
UCR Professor of Planetary Astrophysics

Friday, October 9, 2026

11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

In-person at the UCR Alumni & Visitors Center



Register on the retiree and emeriti webpage:

https://ucriverside.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_37zgpTWL5Dr00KG

Emeriti and Retiree Reception

A celebration to honor years of service featuring Chancellor S. Jack Hu.

Friday, November 13, 2026

2:30 - 4:00 p.m.

In-person at the UCR Alumni & Visitors Center



Register on the retiree and emeriti webpage:

https://ucriverside.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_af3obN6aiXqzH5s

Stay Connected: Retiree or Emeriti R'Card



UCRRA and UCREA members may request their R'Card using the Interest Form at:

https://ucriverside.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3F8XtK5dEs9x45U

- 10% discount at the UCR Bookstore
- Updated R'Card design, new UCR logo, and option to upload a new photo
- Ability to validate status when visiting the library and be eligible to purchase UCR Athletics "All Sports Pass"

UCR Osher Program

UCRRA and UCREA members receive a \$20 discount on the Osher Annual Membership. Details on the Osher webpage at:

<https://palmdesert.ucr.edu/welcome-ucr-osher>

Emeriti faculty interested in teaching for the Osher program may contact the UCR Osher Program Director Johnna Norris at johnna.norris@ucr.edu or learn more about teaching opportunities at: <https://palmdesert.ucr.edu/share-your-love-lifelong-learning>



Upcoming Changes to the Newsletter

By Cristina Otegui

You may notice some changes to the format and appearance of future UCR Emeriti and Retirees' Associations newsletters and communications. These updates are part of a University of California and UC Riverside initiative to ensure all digital content is accessible to everyone, including individuals with disabilities.

Recent changes to federal accessibility requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) require all UC campuses to meet new standards for digital content, including emails, websites, electronic documents, and other online communications. To comply with these requirements, UCR has been working campus-wide to update digital content and communication practices. These changes are designed to improve readability, usability, and accessibility for all members of our community.

We appreciate your understanding and support as we make these improvements and remain committed to providing clear, engaging, and accessible communications for all emeriti and retirees.

In Memory of Professor Emerita Dr. Jodie Holt



It is with deep sadness that we share the passing of Dr. Jodie Holt, Professor Emerita, former Chair of the Department of Botany and Plant Sciences, former Divisional Dean of the College of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, and former Director of the UC Riverside Botanic Gardens, who passed away on April 27. Dr. Holt dedicated more than 40 years to UC Riverside, where she was a distinguished scholar, educator, mentor, and leader. Her lasting contributions to plant science, student success, and the growth of the UCR Botanic Gardens have left an enduring legacy on the campus community.

She will be remembered for her collegiality, integrity, generosity, and unwavering commitment to UC Riverside. The UCR Emeriti and Retirees' Associations jointly wish to make a donation in memory of Jodie Holt to the Botanic Gardens and welcome all members to join in on this donation. More details on how to donate will be shared at a later date via email.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to her family, friends, colleagues, and all who knew her. Please visit the CNAS website to view the full tribute for Dr. Jodie Holt at: <https://cnas.ucr.edu/news/2026/05/01/memorial-remembering-jodie-holt-scholar-educator-and-campus-leader>

UCR Botanic Garden Tour

By Darleen DeMason

The tour of UCR's Botanical Gardens on Thursday, May 14, 2026 was guided by Curator Janine Almanzor, who directs the rose garden plantings. Janine told us that the rose gardens were upgraded and reimagined after the late Dr. Jodie Holt became the director of the Botanic Gardens. We walked up to the site of the original garden of hybrid roses where we took pictures. This garden had been weeded and improved. A heritage rose garden was added. Janine told us that she found a rose-lover in Temecula who had a large garden of heritage roses and allowed her to take cuttings and propagate them for this garden. We then walked along a path to see a long row of Miniature Roses. A whole group of volunteers maintains the roses and they are called "Rose Buds." Janine then took us to the iris garden, the scents garden, the Native American Garden and the Butterfly Garden. We ended our tour at the Turtle Pond.

It was a clear, cool day and perfect for a walk through the gardens.



Lawn Bowling at Fairmount Park

By Andy Plumley



On May 29, 2026 we once again gathered at Fairmount Park to play Lawn Bowling. The Riverside Lawn Bowling Club guided us through the basics and then led us in several friendly games. The club members were very generous with their time in providing instruction, strategies and helping us keep score. It was a fun day and all had a great time.



2025-2026 Mary Johnson Outstanding Retiree Awardee

Bart Kats

By Sheryl Hayes



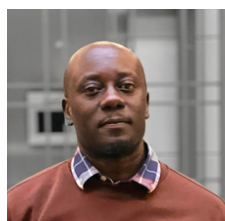
The UCRRA is pleased to announce that the 2025-2026 Mary Johnson Outstanding Retiree Award was given to Bart Kats. Many know Bart as the founder of UCRRA's Tech-tips program. Since October 2020, Bart has provided excellent monthly computer technology presentations for retirees and emeriti. He is highly regarded for his helpful and expert advice. His contributions have made a significant difference in understanding IT technology and UCR's computing systems. Bart's award was acknowledged, in his absence by Bob Daly and Sheryl Hayes, at the Outstanding Staff Awards event with Chancellor Hu on June 11, 2026. Congratulations Bart!

Emeriti Association Graduate Student Travel Awards

Spring 2026 Recipients

By Darleen DeMason

The UCR Emeriti Association gives out Graduate Student Travel Awards every quarter. The Committee, consisting of Byron Adams, Piotr Gorecki, Dallas Rabenstein and me as Chair, reviewed 19 applications submitted in May. There were so many excellent applicants that it was difficult to pick out only two for awards. The two students chosen this quarter were:



Andrew Ssebulime, a Ph.D. student in the Dance Department who will use his award to study the multigenerational national dance practiced and taught in the Ugandan diaspora of Southern California; and,



David Nikom, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Neurosciences, who will use his award to attend an international Alzheimers Association Conference in London to present his work on the role of neuronal endo-lysosomal splicing in the disease.

We look forward to meeting these two students at the Fall Luncheon.

The first UCR Emeriti Graduate Student Travel Award was given out in the Spring Quarter 2022. We have now been giving out these awards for five years. This year we gave out seven awards – the most in a single year. We continue to be excited by the intellectual contributions that our UCR graduate students are making. We thank everyone who has donated to this fund so we can continue to support our talented students.

American Red Cross Tour at Box Springs

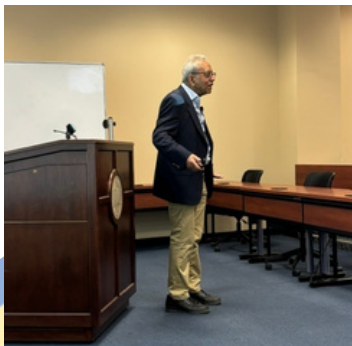
By Cristina Otegui

On June 4, 2026, we had the opportunity to tour the American Red Cross Box Springs location to learn more about their initiatives and how this new location services the Riverside community. Gerald Winkel welcomed a group of UCR emeriti and retirees to learn about their ongoing community initiatives such as Blood Services, Disaster Response, Disaster Cycle Services, Service to the Armed Forces as well as ways to volunteer. The group then toured the blood bank's behind-the-scenes operations, learning how blood, platelet, and plasma donations are collected and processed. Located at 6235 River Crest Dr., Suite A, Riverside, CA 92507, the Box Springs donor center provides a welcoming and comfortable environment where community members can easily make a life-saving blood donation.



Summary of Chandra Varma's Dickson Lecture

By José Wudka



Professor Varma gave a broad historical introduction to the discovery of superconductivity, a tantalizing state of matter that appears in certain materials where all magnetic fields are ejected from the bulk of the material and electric currents can flow with no resistance whatsoever.

The story begins with Dutch experimental physicist Heike Kamerlingh Onnes who was the first to liquefy helium in 1908 by reaching the temperature of -452°F . Using this he investigated the electrical conductivity (the ease with which electric current flows) in pure metals at very low temperatures. At the time some physicists speculated that the conductivity would become zero (that is, electricity would not flow) as the temperature approached absolute zero, but others, included Onnes, believed conductivity would grow as the limit is approached. To Onnes surprise he found in 1911 that the conductivity in

mercury suddenly became infinite when the temperature threshold of -452°F was crossed: current could flow without any resistance at all! Superconductivity had been discovered.

The theoretical understanding of the phenomenon took much longer, brilliant physicists like Werner Heisenberg, one of the inventors of Quantum Mechanics, failed to provide an explanation; others like Albert Einstein did not make the attempt. Advances were made by Fritz and Heinz London in 1935, and by Lev Landau and Vitaly Ginzburg in 1950, who emphasized the importance of the expulsion of magnetic fields in understanding this effect: in 1933 Walther Meissner and Robert Ochsenfeld had discovered that no magnetic fields could occur in the bulk of superconducting materials. Finally, in 1957 John Bardeen, Leon Cooper and Robert Schrieffer provided a full quantum mechanical explanation, the BCS theory (after the authors' initials), with additional predictions that were subsequently experimentally verified.

One peculiarity of the BCS theory of superconductivity is that it disallows the possibility of having superconductors at temperatures higher than about -418°F degrees Celsius. Yet in 1986 Georg Bednorz and Alex Müller found a material that became superconductor at -396°F , whereupon a race began to find materials that are superconductors at as high a temperature as possible. This is because a room-temperature superconductor could have an enormous technological impact. As of 2023 materials have been found that become superconducting at ambient pressure and temperatures around -220°F ; closer to but still quite distant from room temperature (about 70°F) – but the search continues. The new superconducting materials have proven to have only limited practical use, not only because of the low temperatures required, but because of their mechanical properties, being brittle and hard to machine.

Immediately upon the discovery of "high temperature" superconductivity the effort to understand these materials at a theoretical level began. This has proven as challenging as was to understand low-temperature superconductivity. Among the various proposals one of the most promising was put forward by Prof. Varma himself; it is based on a unique quantum effect, known as a quantum phase transition, which has no analogue in everyday, non-quantum phenomena. Though further verification is needed, Prof. Varma was confident that this idea finally provides the long-sought explanation for this new and exciting behavior in matter.



Carl Cranor's New Book Examines the Fight Against Chronic Disease

Professor Emeritus Carl Cranor has published *Vital Lives: Social Responsibility and the Battle Against Chronic Disease* (Oxford University Press, 2026). The book examines the growing impact of chronic disease and argues that improving public health requires not only healthy individual choices, but also stronger collaboration among healthcare providers, policymakers, researchers, and communities to address the environmental and social factors that shape health. View the full Inside UCR article at: <https://news.ucr.edu/articles/2026/05/21/book-lays-out-framework-reducing-chronic-illness>

Retirement Center to Move into Historic Cottage

The UCR Retirement Center will soon have a home in the beautifully restored University Cottage, one of the oldest remaining buildings on campus. The dedicated space reflects UCR's commitment to its retiree community and will provide a welcoming place to connect, gather, and continue the meaningful engagement and contributions that enrich the university. View the full Inside UCR article at: <https://insideucr.ucr.edu/stories/2026/05/13/one-ucrs-oldest-buildings-spruced>