The Retired Employee Volunteers-University Program, or REV-UP, was conceived in the late 1980s by Rosalyn Wilkinson, then Director of Human Resources Development in Personnel Services at the University at Buffalo (UB). She envisioned the program as a way for retirees to remain connected to the university while carrying out worthwhile activities in support of active faculty and staff.

The concept and mission of REV-UP, as a means for adding to the quality of life of retired employees while helping UB pursue its goals, earned vigorous support from faculty member Rose Weinstein, who was the catalyst behind the 1977 establishment of the UB Emeritus Center (see the Emeritus Center profile on page 5).

Wilkinson’s vision became a reality in March 1990 with the hiring of Leila (Lee) Baker as manager of REV-UP, a collaborative relationship between the Emeritus Center (EC) and UB Human Resources. “I was very fortunate for the expertise, guidance and support I gained from these women [Wilkinson and Weinstein],” Baker said.

Although Baker now reports to the Director of Wellness and Work/Life Balance, she still uses an office at the Emeritus Center as her base of operations. She was first employed at 10 hours per week and, a few years later, was increased to 25%. Whether working at home or in the Emeritus Center or visiting family out of town, she says “REV-UP never sleeps.” Baker is constantly checking email to see if there is anything that needs her attention. “It is just something I enjoy doing,” she said. “I love what I do and the people I am doing it for.”

“Lee is the glue that keeps everything together for REV-UP and the Emeritus Center,” said EC President Elenora Heffner. “She knows everyone, is always right-on-the-mark when placing volunteers with UB departments, forgets nothing, and does everything possible to make members feel welcome. Her joie de vivre and happy smile brighten everyone’s day.”

**HOW REV-UP WORKS**

UB Emeritus Center membership ($5.00 per year) is a prerequisite for participation in REV-UP for the purposes of liability, recognition, and the enhancement and viability of the program. Baker coordinates all volunteer services through REV-UP, matching retiree interests and availability with volunteer opportunities submitted to her by various university departments.

When UB employees retire, they are given a letter that describes REV-UP and program participation requirements (Emeritus Center membership). They also receive an interest survey to indicate the type of volunteer activity that interests them, their expertise, and the type of volunteer work schedule they prefer (one-time events, spring or fall semester, several hours weekly or monthly). Baker maintains a database which she utilizes to match department need and retiree volunteer. Volunteers are asked to call in or

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email their service hours each month.

Location is no obstacle for Baker’s responsibilities. “I have written REV-UP letters from Colorado, Florida and England,” Baker said, emailing them to the University Print and Mail Service for monthly distribution to the membership. “I actually filled a service request by phone from Sicily after I received an email that a volunteer was needed in the President’s Office.”

Since May 1991, REV-UP has hosted a volunteer recognition program and reception in conjunction with the May meeting of the Emeritus Center. UB Emeritus Center members who have chosen to participate in REV-UP from May of the previous year to April of the current year are recognized for their volunteer service to UB.

**REV-UP BY THE NUMBERS**
- Current average number of UB departments REV-UP assists: **25**
- Current average number of retiree volunteers per year: **75**
- Number of Service Hours from May 2013 thru April 2014: **2,460**
- Highest number of Service Hours for a volunteer (2013-2014): **188**
- Highest number of Service Hours for a volunteer (Total): **2,999** (Given a UB Alumni Association Volunteer Service Award in 2010)
- Total Volunteer Hours from March 1990-May 2014: **70,983**

*Same individual*

“The REV-UP program at UB is a successful model for campuses, here in NY and throughout the country, who hope to initiate a similar volunteer commitment with their retirees,” Baker said. She has received inquiries and speaking requests from the campus and system level.

One of the officials who reached out to Baker about the UB program was Dr. Ram Chugh, the former executive director of the SUNY Retirees Service Corps (RSC), which is based at SUNY System Administration in Albany. He contacted Baker in 2008 about how the REV-UP program works and invited her to speak at the RSC’s inaugural biennial conference in 2009. Baker was not able to accept the invitation but sent Chugh a variety of material.

“Lee quickly understood the importance of what we were trying to do for SUNY retirees through the newly-created SUNY RSC,” Chugh said. “She was cooperative and provided good information regarding REV-UP activities. The thing which impressed me most about her was that she went out of her way, beyond her normal responsibilities, to provide me with the data I requested in a timely manner.”

Chugh added, “Lee has built an impressive program and she can be proud of her accomplishments in bringing UB retirees and departments together in mutually beneficial relationships; UB employees and areas benefit from the services provided by the REV-UP retiree volunteers, and the retirees know they are needed and appreciated while having the opportunity to reconnect with other retirees and remain connected to UB.”

Corinna Krumman contacted Baker when Krumman was forming the Binghamton University Retiree Services Program (BU RSP) in 2007. Campus and community service was to be one aspect of the BU RSP, which was profiled in the April/May 2012 issue of the SUNY Retirees Newsletter. [http://old.suny.edu/retirees/SUNY%20Retirees%20Newsletter%20Vol.%201%20Issue%202.pdf](http://old.suny.edu/retirees/SUNY%20Retirees%20Newsletter%20Vol.%201%20Issue%202.pdf).

“Lee was one of my first contacts when I was in the process of creating the Retiree Services Program for Binghamton University,” Krumman said. “The REV-UP program at UB was on the forefront of focusing on the importance of keeping retirees involved and connected to campus. [Lee and I] talked on the phone several times and she provided me with valuable information on the logistics of how the UB volunteer program worked. Not only was she knowledgeable as well as helpful and prompt,” the BU Retiree Services Program Coordinator recalled, “but I was struck by how enthusiastically Lee talked about the REV-UP program.”

**TRANSITIONS**

After just over 25 years as manager of the UB Retired Employee Volunteers-University Program, Lee Baker has decided to retire after the next REV-UP Recognition and Reception in May 2015.

When asked what advice she would give her eventual REV-UP successor, Baker commented, “Be diligent and stay connected with the retiree volunteers and with the departments requesting service. Keeping in touch with the volunteers is a vital key; when they sense you sincerely care about their lives and volunteer interests, it can be that extra incentive to agree to give some REV-UP service.”

“Lee has been a wonderful asset and I wish her all the best in retirement,” Krumman of Binghamton University said.

For more information on the University at Buffalo REV-UP program, contact Lee Baker at [bakerl@buffalo.edu](mailto:bakerl@buffalo.edu).