The Social Committee is responsible for planning events that provide opportunities for our members to come together to have fun, meet new friends, and network with colleagues. It’s apparent that UWRA members want to be sociable, but most of them don’t turn to UWRA for their social lives. What they seem to like best is a variety of ways to engage their minds, while having a good time. When we gather people to talk about the kinds of programming they’d like to see, and whether we should have more purely social events, the ideas about programs just bubble up—lots of them, much more than can fit into our current roster of luncheons, seminars, day trips, and lectures.

The Social Committee sponsored the breakfasts at Sofra (average attendees 6-10 every other month). In conjunction with the Special Projects Coordinator, additional activities were conducted including a Making the Most of Your Retirement reception cohosted with the UW Division of Continuing Studies (January 10, 2013 attended by 66 people), a reception following a reading of Robert Skloot’s play “If the Whole Body Dies” April 10 (about 50), and a Thank You Reception for Committee Members (May 29; attended by about 30 people). We will also be cohosting the chancellor’s reception for new retirees June 5, 2013.

Other than the ongoing breakfasts at Sofra and activities spearheaded by the Special Projects Coordinator, the Social Committee has been dormant in recent years. As a result, this past year has been one of beginning the process of rebuilding.

Realistically we know that if we want to do more, we need more people to help do the organizational work. Members of the existing committee were polled and only one was interested in continuing on the committee. In recruiting new members, most were reluctant to commit to serve on the committee because of time constraints, but several people volunteered to work on an event-by-event-basis. Since then, two other people have agreed to serve on the committee.

A new board member agreed to co-chair the committee and convened a focus group April 2, 2013 which was made up of some board members and others who had expressed an interest in participating. It met to identify activities of interest to members to help structure the Social Committee’s planning for 2013-14. It was felt in so doing the Association could better target its time and resources to provide the best experience and activities of most interest for members. The focus group discussed piggybacking on existing activities as one of the most viable approaches the Social Committee could take.
Events that provided additional time for social interaction and refreshments were well attended and received positive feedback. Examples include the Italy 101 presentation, Robert Skloot's play reading, the November ETF session, and January 10 reception, and the May 29 thank-you reception for committee members.

The focus group also generated a list of ideas that was shared with the UWRA board at its April meeting. In order to confirm whether the membership would find these activities desirable, the group finally settled on doing mini-surveys at Association events. The focus group also discussed whether the Association should sponsor more summer events thinking some members leave the area during the colder months of the year, but would return as it got warmer.

The board has had continuing discussions about expanding programming and, in so doing, constituted a programming task force at its April meeting. It is hard to draw a line between what a programming task force might do, what the Social Committee would do, and how they would do it. With this in mind, there will be a representative from the Social Committee on the task force to help coordinate and maximize the time and efforts of both groups.

The Committee plans to meet this summer and set about developing a plan for the upcoming year in conjunction with the activities of the Programming Task Force.