

Psychologist Examines the Value of Friends

Friends play a vital role in our lives from a very early age, yet friendship remains one of the least recognized—and least studied—of close relationships. Now Beverley Fehr, associate professor of psychology, has written a book that examines how we make, maintain and lose friends, and how they give meaning to our lives.

Funded by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and by the University, Fehr spent five years researching and writing *Friendship Processes* (Sage Series on Close Relationships, 1996). She was able to find enough literature on the “fairly neglected” subject by reading across disciplines.

Fehr was surprised to discover just how important and influential friendships are in people’s lives. “We tend to think of romantic and familial relationships as the important ones,” she says. “Yet in the literature on what gives people meaning in their lives and what brings them happiness, friendship is consistently near the top of the list.” Friendships provide critical emotional support—especially, she adds, during difficulties in other relationships.

While no rigid definition of friendship exists, Fehr has compiled a list of its key characteristics. These include a sense of trust and caring, mutual support and respect, shared interests and values, a freedom to speak freely and enjoyment in being in one another’s company.

Fehr says the process of becoming friends is one of gradual revelation.



A reciprocal increase in the depth and breadth of disclosure is critical to establishing trust. “It’s important to reveal a little and then wait to see if the person can be trusted with the information,” she explains, adding that she doesn’t advise rushing into a friendship. “There is some risk and vulnerability involved.”

Fehr indicates that gender differences in friendship styles are distinct and well-documented. Men and wom-

Travelling? Check Out These Great Deals on Accommodations

Before you make your travel plans, you may want to consider taking a quick journey on the Internet, and taking advantage of some great deals on accommodations.

The Canadian Association of Business Officers (CAUBO), and the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada (AUCC), have developed a Corporate Hotel and Car Rental Directory.

The directory lists those companies which offer significant savings to employees of CAUBO/AUCC member universities who are travelling in Canada. These rates are also available worldwide with some of the hotel chains. And many hotels extend these excellent rates to employees of member institutions travelling on personal business as well.

The Corporate Hotel and Car Rental Directory can be found on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.purchasing.ubc.ca>.

en have similar definitions of friendship, but their contact with friends can be very different. Women tend to form one-on-one alliances and focus primarily on introspective conversation, while men’s friendships are more group-oriented and activity-focused. Men who disclose more to their friends report higher levels of satisfaction, but despite the prevailing notion that women are “better” at relationships, Fehr argues that both genders can learn something from the other’s style: “For women, there is a benefit to going out and doing something fun, rather than always intensely discussing personal matters.”

Fehr says potential friendship candidates are usually found at work or school, or in the neighbourhood—wherever we spend our time. “We are drawn to those who are physically

continued on page 2

While writing a book on friendship, Bev Fehr was surprised to discover just how crucial these relationships are to people.

COMING EVENTS

"Coming Events" is compiled by University Relations. Planning a campus event? Please let us know. Send written information to Lois Cherney, University Relations, 10 days in advance of the event. Basic details are required: what, when, where, sponsor, price of admission (if any) and the name of a contact person.

THURS., APR. 25

• **Course add/drop day** for those who have registered for Spring Term, but want to make a change.

• **Club Dialogue Series**—French Professor Carol Harvey and Psychology Professor Doug Williams will each present a 30-minute lecture on their current research interests. This is the second in a series that allows faculty members to become familiar with their colleagues' research. The event takes place in the Faculty and Staff Club dining room from 4-6 p.m. All members of the University community are welcome

to attend. Free coffee and reduced drink prices will be offered.

FRI., APR. 26 - SUN., APR. 28

• **Science Symposium** in Duckworth Centre. Questions regarding entries should be directed to Carol Advice and the Department of Education, Science Division, at 661-0567 (FAX 661-5507). Other queries should be directed to Harold Hutton, chemistry, 786-9733.

FRI., APR. 26 & SAT., APR. 27

• **Marrying Well**—Inter-

faith Marriage & Family Institute's annual marriage preparation conference will begin Friday evening and run through Saturday. Several concurrent seminars will be held on a wide range of topics. The cost is \$85 per couple. For information or to register, contact Pat Power at 786-9251.

MON., APR. 29

• **Board of Regents** meets at 5:30 p.m. in the north half of Riddell Hall.

• **Lectures begin** in Spring Term.

FRI., MAY 3

• **Tribute Roast to Carl Ridd**, hosted by The University of Winnipeg Alumni Association—Friends, colleagues and former students will gather to honour retired Religious Studies professor, former basketball star, and social activist "King Carl"

Ridd. The event will be held in Riddell Cafeteria beginning at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$10 and can be purchased through the University Relations Office, 4th floor Wesley Hall. For information or tickets, call 786-9122.

Friendship

continued from page 1

attractive and have good social skills, and who we perceive are similar to us," she explains, "but the best predictor of friendship has always been proximity."

This may change dramatically, however, with the advent of the Internet. On-line friendships can form, sight unseen, between people thousands of miles apart. Fehr says she will watch with interest to see how technology will alter the age-old process of making friends.

Collegiate Writers Publish Anthology

The 1996 volume of *Mindscape*, produced by students of The Collegiate, is hot off the presses. The ninth annual literary anthology offers 68 pages of poems, stories, monologues, dialogues and plays, as well as drawings and photographs.

If you'd like to see a copy of *Mindscape*, contact Phyllis Webster at 786-9423.

Mindscape 1996 opens with the following poem:

The Legacy

A letter, a word, a phrase, a sentence, a thought.
Such is the hierarchy.

And each of us is at its mercy.
You will turn the pages and see this for yourself.

It is the mosaic we create,
built with our words and thoughts.

The pictures, paintings, and photographs
are just words in disguise.

So the cycle is complete:
words are art, and art is words.

But we will use these words, these thoughts;
they are our gift to you.

And our peace comes from our secret
knowledge
that the words need us too.

So we journey through our minds,
over the highest mountaintops,
into the deepest canyons,
to find the priceless treasures.
Hunters succeed only when they hunt,
writers when they write and others read.
The treasure is only of value
when it is treasured.

-The Mindscapers of 1995-96

in edition is published every week during the regular academic session by University Relations, The University of Winnipeg, 4W16-515 Portage Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 2E9. Fax: (204) 783-8983.

Editor: Lois Cherney
Associate Director
(Alumni & Communications)
(204) 786-9134
cherney@wesley.uwinnipeg.ca

Managing Editor:
Leslie Vryenhoek
Communications Assistant
(204) 786-9172
vryenhoek@wesley.uwinnipeg.ca

Comments, suggestions and submissions are welcome. (All material is subject to editing.)

in edition is printed on recycled paper. After you have finished with this issue, please pass it on to a friend.