

A Tradition of Giving

Free doesn't mean easy

"Students asked me at the beginning what the catch to this free program was," said Emily Auerbach ('76 BA L&S), University of Wisconsin-Madison professor of English and Continuing Studies and project director, referring to the University's Odyssey Project. "I said the catch is hard work. It's hard work to read 'Macbeth,' compare Socrates to Martin Luther King Jr., determine da Vinci's use of perspective and analyze FDR's Four Freedoms speech."

The Odyssey Project is an intensive humanities course designed to give economically disadvantaged students a jump-start on higher education. Students admitted into the Odyssey Project receive free tuition, books, child care, writing assistance and individual educational counseling. Through the Odyssey Project, students living in poverty learn about great works of literature, history, philosophy, art history and music.

"It's a foot in the door and a blessing for our community," one single mother observed.

A key sponsor of the program is the University League, Inc., which provides funds for programming and also brings in a meal for students and teachers to share before class begins each week. The University League was founded in 1901 as an association of wives of faculty members and women faculty, and

today offers membership to all women in the community who support UW-Madison. The focus of the organization is to provide scholarships, service, education and friendship to the University community.

"The University League, Inc., has enthusiastically supported the Odyssey Project, both financially and with member volunteers," said League President Beverly Zarnstдорff. Beverly's husband, William Zarnstorff, is associate professor emeritus in the UW Medical School and in the College of Engineering.

Other project sponsors include the College of Letters and Sciences, the Evjue and Quixote foundations, Wisconsin Humanities Council, the UW-Madison Division of Continuing Studies, Wisconsin Public Radio's Jean Feraca, Early Childhood Learning Center, Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission, members of local book groups and service clubs, South Madison Public Library and the South Madison Health and Family Center-Harambee on South Park Street, where classes are held.

Classes meet every Wednesday evening from September through May. The first group of students started in the program in the fall of 2003, and 24 graduated in May 2004, earning three to six Integrated Liberal Studies credits and college admissions guidance. The graduating class ranged in age from 18 to 55, with 95 percent from underrepresented ethnic minorities.



BOJIE WASHITO

"Our students are profoundly different now," said Emily, "and so are all of us who have worked with them. The humanities cut to the core of what it means to be human, to become full citizens, and to struggle for justice and equality."

Emily Auerbach, director of the Odyssey Project, leads an evening class.

See more information about the University League Inc. at <http://www.wisc.edu/univ-league/> You will find several special programs planned for the year, 26 interest groups ranging from books to bridge to languages and volunteer opportunities on and off campus.