

# DARE Newsletter

Vol. 18, No. 1

Dictionary of American Regional English

Winter 2015

## Epiphany in South Texas

Donald M. Boyd

*Since the Fieldworker reminiscences that have appeared in these pages have been among our most popular features, we were delighted to discover the following article in our files. Written during Donald Boyd's DARE fieldwork stint in Texas, it was originally published in the July 1967 issue of Bias, An Opinionated Gazette and is reprinted by permission. In a recent letter to Chief Editor Joan Hall, Donald mused, "I don't remember the Bias publication at all. . . . I myself will be interested to see what I wrote then." We're certain our readers will also be interested in this account of time spent with two memorable informants.*

When you go to make wine," the old man said, "you got to put your grapes or berries or whatever and your sugar in an old crock. You cover 'em up—I forgot to tell you, in the bottom of the crock you put some straw, up to about where the spicket is; then you fill up the crock with your berries and your sugar, and then you put a board across the top with a rock on it.

"You better put the whole thing out in the barn, someplace where it's cool and dark, where if the preacher comes he won't smell it! Then after about three or four weeks you go out and taste it to see how it's coming along. Whenever it's ready, then you bottle it.

"Now when you go to bottle the wine, make sure you don't drink too much! And when you go to throw out the hulls and seeds and what-not, make sure you don't throw 'em where the pigs and chickens and such can get at 'em. My wife done that once—she'd siphon the wine out of the crock

*Continued on page 2*

## From the Chief Editor's Desk: Sobering News

Joan Houston Hall

Most of you know that DARE has endured numerous financial crises over its fifty-year history of soft-money funding. More than once, we have been forced to reduce our staff and cut back expenditures to keep the project afloat. Two years ago, when launch of the digital version was threatened, many of you gave very generously to ensure that the goal of publishing it would be met. We are exceedingly grateful for your help then and your ongoing support over many years.

As you may have read in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* (<http://tinyurl.com/MJS-DARE>), *Time Online* (<http://tinyurl.com/Time-DARE>), or the *Boston Globe* (<http://tinyurl.com/BG-DARE>), DARE is facing what could be its final financial battle. Without significant new funding, our staff will disband almost entirely after June 30 of this year. With what remains of a generous gift given by the UW–Madison Office of the Provost and Vice Chancellor two years ago, we will retain one editor's position—that of Associate Editor George Goebel. Roland Berns will retire; Beth Gardner, Julie Schnebly, and Vanessa Smith will seek other opportunities; and I will officially retire, continuing in an advisory capacity.

We realize that the current economic climate makes fundraising increasingly difficult. Federal agencies are asked to support many more projects than their budgets allow; foundations are similarly stretched; the UW–Madison faces seriously reduced funding from the state; and individuals have felt the impact of the economic crises of the

*Continued on page 3*

into a bottle, and when it would get full, she'd stick the siphon hose down in a glass while she corked the bottle. Then while the next bottle was filling, she'd drink off what was in the glass. That evening when I come home, me and the old dog was the only sober ones on the place!

"She come down to meet me, and she hit both gateposts! And the old sow, she come a-runnin' to see what was the matter, and the little pigs was just a-squealin'. The guineas, they run along behind, going 'Ku-klux, ku-klux' and the old ducks would go down to the bottom of the pond and we thought they never *would* come up! And that night, when the hens went to roost, they was so drunk they fell off the roost!

"And my wife, why, every time after that for a week when she'd take a drink of water she'd get dizzy again!"

When the old fellow who told me this story in the course of a dialect interview went home afterwards, his wife ordered him, "You get that young fellow out here; I've got a thing or two to say about that!" And so, bearing notebook and tape recorder, I went as bidden down dusty roads, past brown-backed Mexican laborers in fields of spinach and carrots, to the farmhouse: half kitchen, with a stove big enough to produce food for twenty or so, and a few feet away from it an enormous round oak table.

The old lady, slightly stooped, stood nearly six foot tall. As a concession to her maiden sister who was visiting her, she had abandoned her husband's cigars (her preference) for Garrett's snuff, which she managed with a deftness and delicacy incongruous with her gnarled hands, her weather-furrowed face, her angular frame. She set a mug of steaming coffee before me, the token that I was welcome, that I was accepted, and my eyes lit on the faded blue eagle tattooed on her forearm.

Bringing her own coffee to the table, she joined the sister, her husband—a big-bellied old raconteur whose dentures whistle when he talks, and whose stories are punctuated with high-pitched "hee-hee-hee"s—and me. I switched on my tape recorder, and a solemn pall descended upon the banter around the table. The sister couldn't stand to see that reel turning, turning, turning with nothing being said; it's wasteful, and waste is a sin. She turned to the old lady and cried, "Well, go on!"

"Now, don't you go telling me to do this and do that. I'm a-going to tell this in my own way!"

I half expected her to deny what her husband had told me, but she began, "He never does get

that recipe right," and proceeded to correct some details in the wine-making procedure—the proportions of sugar to grapes; and it was grape leaves instead of straw; and it was the cellar, not the barn, because we didn't have no barn then, and so on. The record straight, she concluded, "And that's when I got drunk!"

We went on to talk about her cure for ulcers, and for snakebite, and for dropsy; about how to make biscuit properly, and a pecan pie for which she is justly famous in that country.

When she mentioned "biscuit" the old man couldn't keep still: "Well, you put a little lard in the top of the flour sack—" he began, and she cut him off with "I never done any such thing!"

"I'm talking about the way you do it in camp, if you don't have any mixing bowl," he said lamely.

"You! I've been livin' with you for right near fifty years and you haven't made me a biscuit yet!"

Pacifically, I inquired why she should eat *his* biscuits if he could get her to make hers for them both. Acknowledging the superiority of her own product, she continued airily, "Yes, but he's always a-braggin' about 'em. I don't believe he ever *did* make biscuit!"

—And by that time having consumed nearly a dozen of hers, light and flaky, dripping with butter ("real cow-butter, not that dern oleo") and strawberry preserves from their own strawberries I think I know why. ♦

*After completing his DARE fieldwork, Donald Boyd taught English linguistics at the University of Missouri–Columbia and at The University of Texas at Austin. Undergoing a midlife career change, he took graduate degrees in psychology and then ran a psychiatric rehabilitation unit at the Texas State Hospital in Austin for twenty-five years. Now retired, he lives with his wife of forty-four years in Austin.*

## Honors for DARE Staffer

Congratulations to our Social Media Representative, Erin Leary, who was recently awarded a Presidential Honorary Membership in the American Dialect Society. Chief Editor Joan Houston Hall accepted the honor on Erin's behalf at the Society's 2015 Annual Meeting in Portland, Oregon.

Erin, who is responsible for DARE's Facebook page and Twitter account, received recognition of another kind last spring, when @darewords appeared on *Time* magazine's list of the 140 best Twitter feeds of 2014. ♦

last few years. Why, then, are we so determined to keep going? Because our work is not finished!

In addition to adding entirely new entries and improving existing entries in our digital database, we have been busy with several projects that will make *DARE* materials more widely available:

1) Creating an API for *DARE* so that developers can make apps utilizing its wide-ranging materials (imagine an app for doctors, defining the thousands of regional and folk names for ailments and diseases; an app for regional foods; one for travelers in each region of the country; one for bird-watchers, with all of our regional and folk names for birds; one for writers who want their characters to use appropriate regional words and phrases; and one for makers of word games; the possibilities are limitless). Ultimately, such apps could bring the lexical treasures of *DARE* to millions, while at the same time generating a small stream of income.

2) “Bleeping” the personal or sensitive information in our collection of 1,843 audio recordings made between 1965 and 1970 so that they can all be posted on the University of Wisconsin Digital Collections Center website. We are more than half-way through this project, which is being carried out by graduate Project Assistants and undergraduate interns.

3) Posting short segments and transcripts of audio recordings from each state in the English Dialects section of the *American Languages: Our Nation’s Many Voices Online* site (<<http://tinyurl.com/AmLangs>>). So far, thirty-four states and the District of Columbia are represented.

4) Posting results of our Online Survey of Wisconsin English (see Julie Schnebly’s article in the next column).

If there is any positive news to offer, it is this: although the *DARE* project must retrench dramatically, it will not entirely disappear this year. Any support you can provide to help sustain the addition of entries to the digital database and the development of the *DARE* API will be gratefully received. Please consider using the coupon on page 8 to make a tax-deductible contribution to *DARE*. Your assistance has never been more vital to our survival. ♦



## The New Online Survey of Wisconsin English

Julie Schnebly

We’re still working our way through the data we collected from the 2013–14 Online Survey of Wisconsin English, but thought we’d take a moment to answer a few of your questions and share some early findings. We also want to express our sincere gratitude to every *Johnny-on-the-spot* who participated. The survey and telephone interview participants volunteered their time and effort with no expectation of compensation of any kind. Their contributions to linguistic scholarship are beyond measure. So to all *you guys* who were *freehearted* enough to help us out, we say *thank you kindly, danke schoen, gracias, much obliged, appreciate it, and merci*.

### Frequently Asked Questions

1. When will the results be available? What will be available?

*DARE* is currently working with a graduate student, Evan Applegate, at the UW–Madison Cartography Lab to create maps highlighting particular Wisconsin words or regional patterns. We have already posted a few of these to our website (<[dare.wisc.edu/surveys/OSWE-maps](http://dare.wisc.edu/surveys/OSWE-maps)>). We intend to add a small sample of maps, the full set of all official responses organized by question, and all the telephone recordings by June 30, 2015.

2. How many participants were there, and where were they from?

Although over 4,000 visits to the survey were recorded, only 1,730 participants actually answered at least one survey question; 1,663 were from Wisconsin. Of these, 622 met the official survey’s eligibility requirements and 245 will be used for official data. (If two respondents from the same community met the requirements, only the first was considered an “official” participant.) The map on page 5 shows the number of individuals who participated by community. Madison had the largest number of participants with 298, and La Crosse, Milwaukee, Appleton, and Portage each provided over fifty participants. All told, there were participants from 318 different communities in Wisconsin, representing all but one of Wisconsin’s seventy-two counties.

3. What “Wisconsin words” are alive and well today? What are some that might be dying out?

Wisconsinites still eat *brats*, *lutefisk*, and *tiger meat* (or *cannibal sandwiches*) and love a good *fish fry*, but nobody claimed to be eating *German po-*

*tato salad* or a *kolacky* anymore. (Maybe they just don't want to share.) If you ask for a *slippery jim* in Juneau or Algoma, there might be a few people who'd respond with something other than a strange look. (It's a pickle.) Most Wisconsinites are *grilling out* when the snow melts, but others are *cooking out*; in Belgium and Manitowoc, some folks are even having a *fry out*.

We still celebrate *golden birthdays* and play *schafskopf* (you might already know this complicated card game by its other name, *sheepshead*). Most of us take food to a *potluck* nowadays, but you might still get an invitation to a *covered-dish meal*. And while many of you will bring *casseroles*, others will be contributing a *hot dish*. What to drink? Well, you'll have to consult the map before you decide whether you want a *pop* or a *soda*. Or you can just get a drink at the *bubbler*, which seems to be overflowing in popularity. Of course, those of you who prefer sipping *suds* may need to ask for a *brewski* or a *barley pop* instead. Just don't get too *plastered*, or you might end up in a *squad car*.

4. Pop or soda?

It appears that *pop* is fizzing out and *soda* is here to stay in Wisconsin, but there are still a few holdouts around the state clutching their *pop* and not letting go. Check out the maps on our website (<[dare.wisc.edu/surveys/OSWE-maps](http://dare.wisc.edu/surveys/OSWE-maps)>) to see the change over time.

5. What's in the telephone interviews?

Forty-three Wisconsinites from twenty-four different communities engaged in a loosely scripted fifteen-minute conversation with trained UW Survey Center staff. They also read "The Story of Arthur the Rat" and a list of one hundred words chosen for their different pronunciations in various parts of the country. We are still in the process of preparing these for posting, and haven't done any actual linguistic analysis. Still, it is safe to say that they will be exceedingly valuable from a linguistic standpoint, in addition to providing a fascinating oral history of life in Wisconsin in the early twenty-first century. These interview participants share wonderful details about the places they live, not to mention their educational backgrounds and working lives, hobbies, political viewpoints, and even the books, movies, and television shows they enjoy. (*Breaking Bad* and *Parks and Recreation* seem to be Wisconsin favorites.) The interviews are compelling for many reasons. We hope they will inspire future research in a wide variety of fields.

6. Was the survey successful?

Yes! We received a tremendous amount of usable data—over 400,000 responses (from all over

the state) to 1,764 questions, as well as recordings of forty-three telephone interviews. Our partnership with the UW Survey Center was integral to the pilot study's success. They conducted the telephone interviews, administered the online survey, and provided regular data deliveries, progress reports, and ongoing support above and beyond the call of duty. *DARE*, at its current staff and funding levels, simply would not have been able to conduct this survey without the UWSC.

Of course, because it was a pilot study, we learned much along the way. There were technical problems and difficulties recruiting participants. It became clear that the survey was much too long. The "digital divide" probably prevented us from collecting some important regional language that still thrives in out-of-the-way places and among less-represented social groups.

Still, the amount of data we were able to collect in a relatively short amount of time compared to the original survey is phenomenal. We had more respondents, more responses, and more questions answered. Nice job, Wisconsin!

COMPARISON OF SURVEYS		
	1965–70 (WI only)	2013–14
Official respondents	78	245
Official responses	52,096	53,667
Questions answered	1,624	1,764

7. Could this model be used for a nationwide survey?

With some adjustments, we think so. Unfortunately, there are no plans for a regional or nationwide survey at this time. Despite the efficiencies gained from technology and a partnership with the UW Survey Center, it would still be a massive undertaking requiring significant funding, staff hours, and nationwide interest. *DARE* will preserve the methods and suggested modifications gleaned from the Wisconsin pilot survey for anyone who wishes to pick up the baton in the future.

8. Can I still take the survey?

The survey has closed, but the questions will be available on our website. (The 1965–70 questionnaire is already available at <[dare.wisc.edu/surveys](http://dare.wisc.edu/surveys)>.) Conduct some research of your own at your next family gathering! As always, we want to hear from you if you have questions, comments, or suggestions concerning *DARE* words. ♦

# Online Survey of Wisconsin English (2013-14)



# 1,730

total survey participants

MINNESOTA

W I S C O N S I N

MICHIGAN

### Places & Participants

WI	1,663
MN	13
CA	5
IL	4
OH	4
WA	4
TX	3
IA	2
MA	2
NC	2
NY	2
VA	2
CO	1
GA	1
ID	1
KY	1
MI	1
NE	1
NM	1
OR	1
SC	1
TN	1
WV	1
Canada	1
Spain	1
Unknown	11

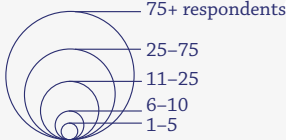
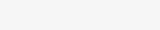
Legacy communities



New communities

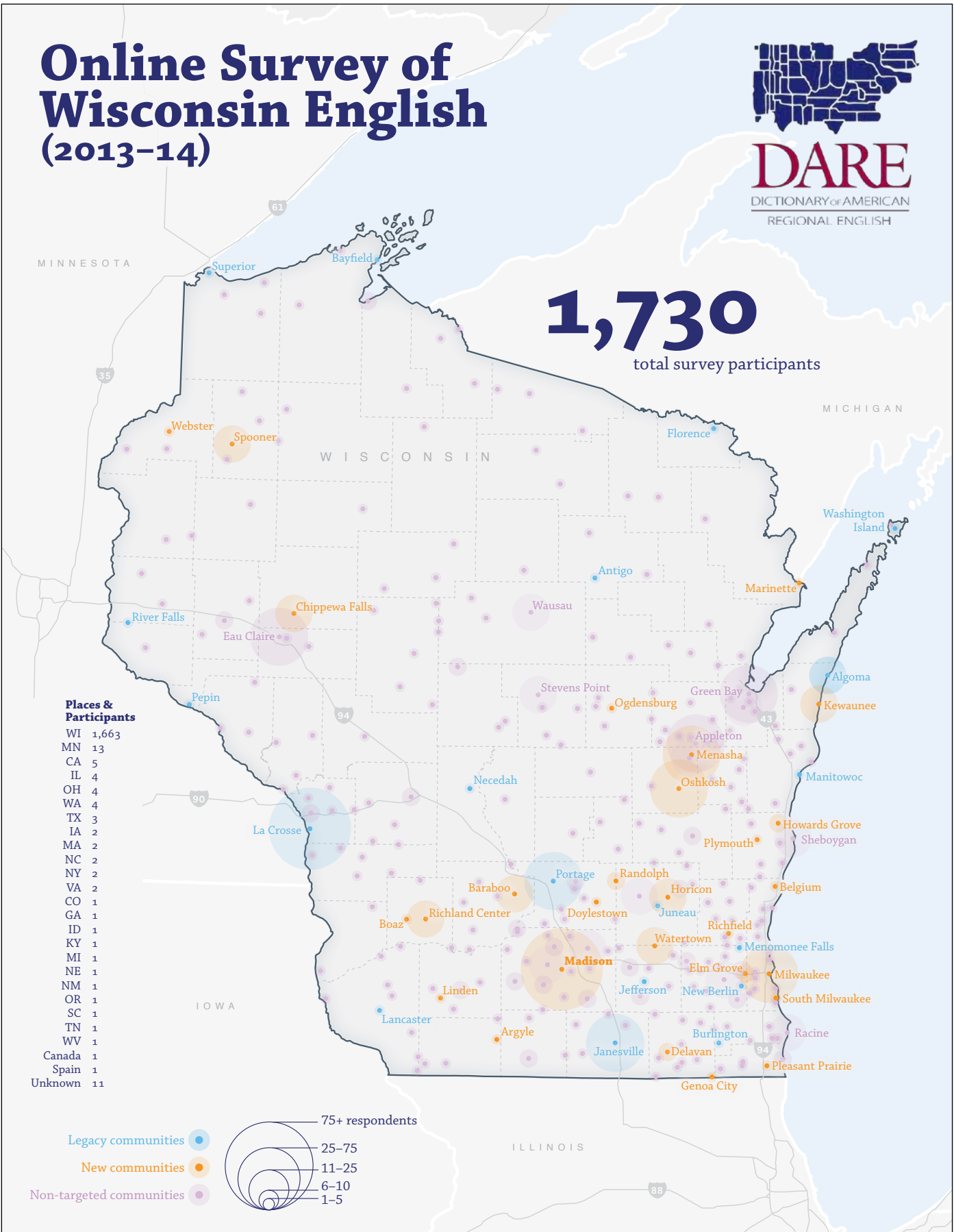


Non-targeted communities



IOWA

ILLINOIS







## Staff Member Profile

*In the latest (and possibly last) installment of this series, Beth Gardner interviews Project Assistant and UIW–Madison grad student Joy Kwon, who joined the DARE staff in August of 2014.*

**Q:** What is your field of study, and what are your primary research interests?

**A:** I am a Ph.D. student majoring in English Language and Linguistics in the Department of English. I am deeply interested in *real* language usages, and my research interests include syntax-semantic interface, second language acquisition, and discourse analysis.

**Q:** How did you first become aware of the *Dictionary of American Regional English*?

**A:** I was not aware of *DARE* until I heard of a position opening for a Project Assistant. I came to the U.S. last August from South Korea, so I had not had a chance to hear about this awesome project.

**Q:** What are your primary job responsibilities at *DARE*?

**A:** My primary job responsibilities largely fall into two parts: entering quotes and checking quotes. Entering assigned quotes into the *DARE* database is done sitting in front of the computer, typing phrases and sentences. This part is not difficult, but I need to be meticulous and scrupulous. The other part of my job is checking the original sources of the quotes. I often visit libraries, looking for a physical copy and checking whether the recorded quote does actually exist in the book.

**Q:** What is the most enjoyable aspect of your work at *DARE*?

**A:** As I grew up in South Korea, I did not have a chance to listen to or read English dialects. Working at *DARE* has opened my eyes to the colorful variation of English vocabulary. I also feel lucky to be a part of recording the history of the English language.

**Q:** What part of your work do you find most challenging?

**A:** I would say the most challenging part of my job is checking quotes right after lunch. Sometimes there is a big pile of quotes, and I just need to go through pages and check whether there are any typos. It is a repetitive, meticulous process, and I find myself easily drowsing in front of the computer! So I avoid working right after lunch (or bring strong coffee).

**Q:** What aspect of working on the *DARE* project has been the most surprising to you?

**A:** As I told you, I was ignorant of *DARE* until I got the PA position. When I started working at *DARE*, I was surprised to find out how long this project has been going on. *DARE* is almost fifty years old, and many of the staff have devoted themselves to this project over decades. Also, I truly admire all the former staff who worked at *DARE* without any technology—I can't imagine myself dealing with myriad words and quotes without the assistance of computers!

**Q:** What would you like to do after finishing your graduate program?

**A:** I would love to do research on multilingual societies and investigate how English is spoken as a lingua franca around the world. So maybe I will move to another country after completing my Ph.D., continue my academic research, and teach in academia. My research will be focused on syntactic levels and pragmatic competence of second language learners of English.

**Q:** When you have a rare moment of spare time away from your studies and your work, what are your interests?

**A:** I love strolling outside while listening to my favorite music. However, since Wisconsin has a long winter, I've had to find alternatives. These days I enjoy playing racquetball (although I'm a poor player, I'm having fun) and doing yoga. I also sing in my Korean Catholic church choir, and sometimes I play my violin at church. Last but not least, I love hanging out with my friends, not to mention listening for any interesting uses of language! ♦

## CONTRIBUTORS TO *DARE* IN 2014

The *Dictionary of American Regional English* is profoundly thankful for the generosity of these donors in 2014. Gifts were received by the *Dictionary of American Regional English* Fund and the Frederic G. Cassidy *DARE* Fund. Because this is a national project, it is particularly meaningful that donations were received from supporters in thirty-one states and the District of Columbia (and friends in France, Germany, and Switzerland as well).

Whether you are contemplating joining the ranks of *DARE* benefactors for the first time or renewing your support for our work, there could not be a more crucial time to make a contribution. Please read Chief Editor Joan Hall's article on the first page and consider responding to our need by using the coupon on the last. ♦

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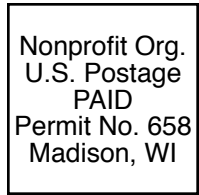
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