

The Minnesota Humanities Commission advertised a program in 1995 offering grants for proposals designed to foster "life-long learning". Bettye and I had discussed the virtues of Liberal Arts educational opportunities for senior citizens. We envisioned course work with serious academic study that challenged participants. Unfortunately, the MHC due date for submitting a draft proposal was only ten days away. Michael Foote came to the rescue. He was a local academic with whom I had shared our senior education idea. Mike declared, when told of the looming due date, "No problem... You know what you want. You recite, I'll type and we'll submit a draft." Along with the help of the Northfield Senior Citizens Center and the Northfield Retirement Community, who promised support services as affiliates, we submitted the completed draft. And we had two days to spare. The Humanities Commission funded us on the first draft, offering three thousand dollars for the initial year. A hearty celebration welcoming the birth of our Elder College followed.

Gatherings of potential faculty, meetings with the newly drawn Advisory Board, writings describing our Elder College, meetings with institutions offering classroom sites, flurries of often contrary opinions regarding the details of our project---all proceeded at accelerating speed. The Humanities Commission had been promised course work commencing fall of 1966 and we had work to do. Bettye and I needed help. Keith Anderson, retired St. Olaf, along with his wife Beverly, offered welcome advice. They were long time Northfield residents. They new everybody in town. And we were recent arrivals. Thus, we welcomed them. And the Advisory Board offered Keith the position of Associate Director.

Our proposal to the State of Minnesota asking status as a non-profit organization hit a snag. We called ourselves a "College". The government reminded us that colleges have specific attributes and duties that we lacked. And, they also reminded us that college institutions have government fees. We needed a new name. Keith Anderson suggested the word "Collegium", a term that he declared nobody was privy to. Webster Unabridged defined Collegium as "a society...of independent powers, free of government control". Thus, we reframed our non-profit proposal to the State. They accepted and we became the Cannon Valley Elder Collegium.

So here we are, seventeen years later. We have an institution that endures. And, it continues to thrive on the intellectual energy and enthusiastic support of the Northfield community. Thanks to all who have supported our Collegium.