



Next Meeting

Oct. 18

12:00 pm

Mary's
Herrin

Fall is here! I do not know about you, but I am ready for cooler weather. The heat and humidity seemed to go on forever this summer. I am enjoying the brisk mornings we have had recently.

We had a nice meeting in August. For those of you who missed it, we had tasty pie to start out the meeting. Then we had a very informative talk from Jennifer Badiu from the SIH Cancer Institute. She shared about the current services they provide and also informed us about plans to expand the facility. Many thought this was one of the better programs that we have had.

Legislation was signed that allows a person to opt back into our teacher insurance program if they so desire. This was a much needed fix, especially for those that had accidentally lost their coverage by mistake. Another interesting bill that was passed would allow a retired teacher to go back into the classroom and teach in an area of need during this school year without affecting their pension. The position has to be declared an area of need because of a lack of teachers in that subject or area. So those of you who have been dying to get back into the classroom this is your chance.

Our next meeting will be Thursday, October 18 at 12:00 pm. The location will be at Mary's in Herrin at a cost of \$16 with tip included. The meal was excellent last year and the meeting area was very nice. Bill Funkhouser, IRTA Area 5 representative and Paul Strid, AMBA representative will provide the program. I hope to see you all there.

Kent Carrell, President WCIRTA

During 2018 the Board of Directors decided to update the active membership list by making personal contact with every WCIRTA member whose name appears on the roster. Each Board member contacted approximately 30 members. One surprising result of this contact was to find that we have more than 200 people on the roster who are not current on paid dues. Even more revealing was that more than half of those are still on the membership list but have not paid dues since the 2014 calendar year or before. (An active member is one who has paid dues for the current calendar year.)

After discussing this matter the Board determined that it should maintain a membership list that included accurate contact information for ONLY those members who have paid dues for the current year. The Board also decided that any person on the present list who has not paid dues since 2015 could become current simply by paying the current year's dues of \$10.

Those members who have not made recent dues payments but who wish to be included on the current membership roster should make a \$10 dues payment for 2018 to the WCIRTA Treasurer prior to January 1, 2019. Mail your \$10 check to Don Kragness, Treasurer, 14802 Poor Farm Rd, Johnson City, IL 62951. Call Don at 618-983-5546 if you have any questions about dues payments.

After January 1, 2019 an updated list of members and current contact information will be prepared that represents the members who are current with their WCIRTA dues. This list will be used to send out the 2019 quarterly newsletters of WCIRTA. Dues for the 2019 year of WCIRTA will be payable to the Treasurer any time during that year.

If you have any questions about this change in procedure please contact any member of the Board of Directors.

In this newsletter and in others to follow, I will write a brief description of each of our board members as a way of introducing them to you.

Don Kragness, born in Carbondale and grew up in Marion, IL.

Education:

Attended Washington, Logan, and Longfellow Elementary Schools

Graduated Marion Junior High School 1961

Graduated Moline High School

1970 Bachelor of Arts in Music with Teaching Certification

Southern Illinois University

Education Career:

1969-1972 K-12 Music Equality Unit Schools in Gallatin County

1972-2003 Middle School Band, Chorus and Classroom Music Johnston City Unit #1

2005 half year in fall while district looked for another High School Band Director

Retired June of 2003

Anna Morris, born on a farm in West Virginia which had been in her family since the 1850's

Education:

Attended Elementary, Junior High, and High School in West Virginia

Bachelor of Arts in English from University of Charleston

Graduate work at Penn State University and Southern Illinois University

Retirement education: John A. Logan continuing education classes

Education Career:

More than 30 years teaching English at Nitro High School in West Virginia, Herrin High School, and two years teaching Business Education at Hurst High School

The Illinois Retired Teachers Association most important objective is fighting for the rights of its members. This is being done by electing legislators in Springfield that will keep the best interests of Illinois retired teachers foremost in their mind when voting. Also, as a local association we need to make sure that our own legislators are doing the same. We must be very cognizant of the legislators we choose to vote for in this upcoming election.

We must vote for the candidates who support and want to protect our retired benefits especially those that relate to our pension and to our Teachers Retirement Insurance Program (TRIP). We need to let our legislators and our governor know how important these are to us. The number one determination of who to vote for by us and our IRTA organization is "which legislators have supported and will continue to support issues important to Illinois retired teachers."

All members are encouraged to support IRTAPAC (Illinois Retired Teachers Association Political Action Committee). IRTAPAC is a statewide, nonpartisan Political Action Committee (PAC) organized by members of the Illinois Retired Teachers Association to benefit the **entire retired educator community** through political contributions to state candidates. To make a contribution send a check to: IRTAPAC, 828 S. Second St., 4th Floor, Springfield, IL 62704 or complete the form on the IRTA website that grants TRS permission to deduct \$1.00 per month from the member's monthly retirement benefits. More members makes us stronger and more influential with our legislators.

Loren Taylor, Information Services

Treasurer's Report 6/5/2018

Beginning balance \$2268.23

Receipts 590.00

Disbursements 293.86

Ending balance \$2564.37

Local dues are now \$10 per year. Please make checks payable to WCIRTA. Mail to Don Kragness, Treasurer, 14802 Poor Farm Road, Johnston City, IL 62951

It is Important! Do it TODAY!

Re: Legislative Update

Fr: Anna Morris

Dear Fellow Retirees: This is my final column for the newsletter. After serving on the WCIRTA Board for 24 years, I will be retiring at the end of this year. Resigning from the board was not an easy decision, since it has been an important part of my life since retirement. When my former principal, Bud Rushing, would not accept “no” for an answer at the retirement tea provided by the board, I agreed, never thinking I’d be there 24 years later—and earn an “honorary degree” in political science in the process. Athel Tanner, a wonderful man, was the president. Both he and his wife are now gone, as are many others with whom I served on the board through the years. When I joined, I reasoned that I could possibly make a difference in improving the benefits available to our older retirees who could not help themselves. Working with legislation has added an extra dimension to my education, and my contribution to the betterment of the lives of retirees has been very meaningful to me. **Many changes have taken place since 1994;** the computer is being used instead of the telephone, the costly bus caravans to Springfield are no longer necessary, and area and regional representatives’ road trips to units in Southern Illinois are not as frequent. **In 1995 teachers came close to losing state health insurance** and, in more recent times, our 3% COLA. We were able to get a second elected annuitant on the TRS Board, also very important. Through the years there were many bills that required our attention to better the lives of our retirees. **Just when there seemed to be a lull and all was well,** something inevitably popped up that jeopardized either the health care or retirement benefits. IRTA, founded in 1955, is an important organization that has worked for us through the years and one that needs our support. In this context, every retiree needs to **sign up for VoterVoice at the IRTA website (www.irtaonline.org) and respond to the emails when they are received.** We can’t rely on a few people to carry the load and think that all will be well. Please know that it has been my pleasure to serve as legislative chair for the past 24 years and to have participated in the advances we have attained. I’d like to thank all our members for giving me your support and ask that you continue to work with our officers in making our unit a vital organization—one of the best in Illinois.

Good News: Governor Rauner signed into law SB3046 on August 21, 2018. Eligible TRS recipients and TRS dependent beneficiaries may elect to participate in TRIP (this includes participants in TRAIL) if they previously opted out of the program. The election must be made during the benefit recipient’s annual open enrollment period, subject to specified conditions. Senator Manar and Rep. Gordon-Booth were the main sponsors of this legislation.

Return to Work Legislation: This one-year program allows a TRS retiree to return to work without post-retirement limitations. The regional superintendent must designate the employment to be in a subject shortage area in order for a retiree to be able to return to work without limitation. The program expires on June 30, 2019.

On August 26, Governor Rauner vetoed the bill that would have raised the minimum salary of full-time public school teachers to \$40,000 over the next five years. He reasoned that it would be an unnecessary state mandate and that it was an inefficient way to compensate teachers. From the Chicago Tribune, quoting Rauner: “Things like pay-for-performance, diversified pay for teachers in hard-to-staff schools or subjects, or pay incentives for teachers with prior work experience are all viable options to provide greater compensation for teachers.” Sen. Manar may try to get the veto overturned in the **veto session, which begins on Oct. 24 and lasts two weeks.**

TRS Annuitant Trustee, Daniel Winter, will be retiring in 2019 and IRTA is seeking a member to replace Winter. For several years we were blessed to have Cynthia O’Neill and Bob Lyons representing us on the board. This is an important, demanding job. It is in our interest that we have excellent representation on the board which has 13 members (six trustees appointed by the governor, four trustees elected by contributing TRS members, and two trustees elected by TRS annuitants, and the state superintendent of education).

Sad News: Mary Shaw, Director of Government Affairs, for IRTA died on September 1 after having fought a valiant battle against lung cancer. She was only 42 years old and leaves behind a husband and two-year-old son. Last year she spoke at one of our meetings; she did an excellent job for us in the legislature.

WCIRTA Membership Report – 9/2018

The WCIRTA held a membership meeting at St. Paul Parish Center in Johnston City, Illinois. The meeting convened at 1:37 pm. There were 31 members present. Board members present were Kent Carrell, Don Kragness, Bert Gordon, Tom Oates, Betsy Murphy, John Harland, Anna Morris, Ed Tresnak, Loren Taylor, and Bob Campbell. Special guest and speaker for the meeting was Jennifer Badiu, Assistant Director of the SIH Cancer Institute. (Thanks Betsy Murphy, WCIRTA Secretary.

Thanks to the 182 members who have paid their \$10.00 2018 dues. Your support is greatly appreciated. We are now accepting the 2019 dues. Don Kragness is our current Treasurer and you can mail your dues to him at: Donald Kragness - 14802 Poor Farm Rd, Johnston City, IL 62951 (618) 983-5546 Email Don @: donjank1@gmail.com

Your WCIRTA welcomed retirees Debbie Dibble, Janice Heninger, Donna Parks, and Cheryl Stein as new members. Susan Whiting who plans on a 2020 retirement is in the retirement pipeline and has also been added to our mailings. Your WCIRTA also sent condolences to the family of Clarence “Bud” Tolley who passed on 7/19/2018. Bud was a friend from my days at Marion Jr. High. He also tried to assist me with my golf game. He will be personally missed.

Our quarterly newsletter emailing’s have had some recent issues. I use Mediacom as my Internet Service Provider (ISP). Mediacom started tightening the number of email addresses sent in bulk in efforts to cut down “Spam”. I was unable to send out any emails for a short period because Mediacom put a block on all of my outgoing emails. At the start of 2018, I was able to include over 100 email addresses at a time in one mailing. That meant sending 4 emails for the nearly 400 retirees, friends and guests on my list. That was shortened at least 2 times to where it’s a challenge to send the newsletter to 25 addresses at a time. The July 2018 newsletter was sent using my Gmail email account and I was still limited. I sent the July 2018 newsletter out in over 10 emails. I’d like to improve this process and will welcome any help or suggestions you may have.

The newsletters and membership meeting minutes are all posted on our website and can be viewed here: <http://williamsoncountyrta.weebly.com/newsletters--meeting-minutes.html>.

Our next membership meeting will be at Mary’s Restaurant in Herrin at 12:00 on October 18, 2018. Please join us for another informative meeting and enjoy another buffet luncheon.



"So are you one of those used-to-be-a-teacher subs, or a-nice-way-to-make-some-extra-money sub. I'm trying to figure out what I can get away with."