

WCIRTA

Winter 2017



Next Meeting
March 3
Crab Orchard Golf Course
9:00 am

Fellow Retired Educators:

I thought it might be a good idea in my first article as president to tell you a little bit about myself. Some of you know who I am, but many of you know little or nothing about me. My name is Kent Carrell. I grew up in central Illinois but I have lived in Marion for the last 37 years. I received my degree in mathematics education from SIU in 1977. After that I went to Bible school for two years in Oak Park, Illinois. I got married to my beautiful wife, Laurel, in 1979 so we have been married for 37 years. She taught in the Marion school district as an elementary teacher and was a baton twirling instructor for many years. We have two children. Aaron and his wife live close to Minneapolis, MN where he is a civil engineer. They have two daughters, ages 7 and 5. Hope and her husband live in North Augusta, SC. She has her own baton twirling studio with about 50 students. They have 3 sons ages 5, 2, and 2 months. That gives us a total of 5 adorable grandchildren!

I started teaching at Marion High School in 1979. I taught math for 33 years (all at MHS) before retiring in 2012. I also coached for 31 years: 27 as volleyball coach and 4 as girls track coach. I enjoy working in my yard whenever possible and fishing, especially with my son when I go to Minnesota. I also enjoy computer games when I have to be inside.

Our meeting is scheduled for March 3 at the Crab Orchard Golf Course in Carterville at 9:00 am. It will be a chance to meet our new legislators. Dave Severin was elected as our representative defeating John Bradley in the November election. Dale Fowler was elected as our senator defeating Gary Forby. It will be interesting to hear what these men have to say when they are our guests at the meeting. I am sure they will have a different perspective since they are both freshmen legislators. You may want to think of questions that you would like to ask these gentlemen.

Kent Carrell, President WCIRTA

WCIRTA Membership Report: January 2017

The WCIRTA officers and board members have changed. Kent Carrell is now our President. Bert Gordon is now our Vice President. Betsy Murphy is new to the board and is our new Secretary. Other changes include Marge Mangan takes over for Mary Lou Gander at Information Services. Other officers and board members continue their current positions. A full list of Board members and officers can be found here: [A list of our officers and Board members can be found here: http://williamsoncountyrta.weebly.com/officers--committees.html](http://williamsoncountyrta.weebly.com/officers--committees.html)

The WCIRTA list includes the names of 380 retirees. 318 of those retirees are members of the Illinois Retired Teachers Association (IRTA). The vast majority or 184 of the IRTA members, have chosen the dues deduct method and 78 are life members. Other IRTA members also pay annually or pay for other periods. If you are not an IRTA member and wish to join go to their website at: <https://www.irtaonline.org/> or renew you IRTA membership here: <https://www.irtaonline.org/pay.aspx> Several payment options are available from annual membership at \$40/yr. to one time cost for a Life membership at \$400.

2016 saw the WCIRTA reach out to the retired teachers. Efforts by the board and individual members saw our WCIRTA membership rise to 205 local, paying members. 117 of those 204 members have their WCIRTA memberships expiring. 88 of our members had either paid recently or had pre-paid for 2017. Maxine and Gene Snider as well as Linda Smith have paid their memberships thru 2025. I will be contacting those 88 members by an email to thank them for their continued support as well as send group email that you membership has expired. Please pay your 2017 \$5.00 dues to: Treasurer Don Kragness, 14802 Poor Farm Rd, Johnston City, IL 62951 (618) 983-5546 Email @ donjank1@gmail.com

Keeping up with the WCIRTA is easy.

Our website is located at: <http://williamsoncountyrta.weebly.com/>

Our meeting dates are at: <http://williamsoncountyrta.weebly.com/meetings.html>

Our newsletters and other minutes can be found at: <http://williamsoncountyrta.weebly.com/newsletters--meeting-minutes.html>

*We strongly urge you to become more involved with the WCIRTA. **Thanks for Your Support**

Steve Maxwell - WCIRTA Membership

Why do we have a Williamson County Illinois Retired Teachers Association? The following statements will help to answer that question:

to cooperate with the NRTA Division of the American Association of Retired Persons; to maintain and improve the social, educational, economic and recreational welfare and status of retired educators in the local community, state and nation;

to help retired teachers maintain identity with the teaching profession and to further the cause of education, and to provide opportunities for meaningful contact with friends and associates of the active teaching years; to gather and disseminate information of value to the members;

to provide an organizational framework through which retired educators can continue a life of service to fellow members; their active colleagues, and the community; to respond to community needs and to encourage retired teachers to contribute their talents and experience to the decision-making processes in their local communities;

to present the image of aging as one of dignity, independence and purpose; and to encourage active educators to prepare for retirement; and to familiarize retired and active teachers with the benefits of membership in the local, state and national associations.

After reading the above, one can see why our organization needs each Williamson County educator to become a member and to assist in helping to incorporate and follow-through on the above tasks. With more members the stronger the organization becomes and more goals can be accomplished. We are an association of educators, by educators, and for educators.

If you are not presently a member, make plans now to join our local Williamson County Illinois Retired Teachers Association and the Illinois Retired Teachers Association. You will be rewarded greatly.

Since retired educator's insurance and pension benefits are seriously being threatened all retired educators are strongly encouraged to join.. This will enable us to present to the legislators a huge block of extremely motivated voters.

Once you join IRTA and WCIRTA, you will have access to IRTA members only website where you will be able to find the latest news on retired educator pension and health insurance issues and about our local WCIRTA unit. Plus you can register with Voter Voice (IRTA's only online advocacy tool).

Plus! Plus! A few of the endorsed and informative benefits include AAA, Annuity Policy, Government Employee Travel Opportunities (GETO), Dental and Vision Insurance, Life Line Screening, Medical Air Services Association, Apple Products, AT & T Discounts, Collette Vacations, Rental Car Discounts, Sam's Club Benefit, supporting and making stronger our local Williamson County Illinois Retired Teachers Association, renewing acquaintances and visiting with other retirees at meetings/conferences/events, staying abreast of current issues and information through our local newsletter, and more.

START THE YEAR OFF RIGHT, JOIN TODAY!

Loren Taylor, Information Services

Williamson County Retired Teachers
Treasurer's Report

BEGINNING BALANCE 9/30/2016	\$2,398.10
INCOME	240.00
EXPENSES	250.00
ENDING BALANCE 1/5/2017	\$2,388.10

Submitted by Don Kragness

Excellence in Education Grants for Active Teachers

The IRTA Foundation is making \$36,500 in grant money available to ALL counties in Illinois. This special grant will provide additional funds to public school educators (Pre-K through 12) so that their students will have the means to participate in special projects. Please visit the IRTA website at www.irtaonline.org for further instructions. You can download, complete, and submit the application online from the IRTA website. All applications must be submitted online to the IRTA Foundation by June 1, 2017. A special committee will select the recipients of the grant money over the summer. Grant awards will be presented in the fall.

Still a Need for Contributions to the IRTA Legal Defense Fund

IRTA and other educational retirees throughout Illinois are justifiably proud of the success experienced when the Illinois Supreme Court declared the provisions of Senate Bill 1 to be unconstitutional in 2014. That law, if allowed to stand, would have reduced benefits for Illinois retired teachers and for current teachers still working in the schools of the state. At the time of that stunning success we were warned that there would be other attempts to "reform" the pension program that would likely result in further attacks on our pensions. Both the litigating lawyers and our own IRTA leadership urged us to continue to prepare for future battles to keep the benefits we have earned.

We have a vehicle in place to continue that preparation—the IRTA Legal Defense Fund—which is not funded in any way by the dues we pay to IRTA. Instead, the funding comes solely from contributions made by individuals and/or groups. We raised over \$600,000 when the fight was being waged over SB 1 and had enough to pay for the successful efforts of our legal counsel in that contest. At the conclusion of that effort, former IRTA President, Bob Pinkerton, urged us to annually take a portion of the 3% automatic annual increase we receive and write a check to contribute to the Legal Defense Fund to replenish it so the fund will be available for the next battle we face.

The automatic annual increase went into effect with your recently received TRS payment for February. How much was your increase? How much can you afford to contribute so that we can be ready to counter the next assault on our pensions? Will you write a check for the Legal Defense Fund and send it in to the IRTA office?

(Check should be made out to IRTA with Legal Defense Fund in memo line. Send to IRTA, 828 S. Second St., Springfield, IL 62704.)

(WCIRTA) AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT
JANUARY 1, 2016 - DECEMBER 31, 2016

THE AUDIT WAS CONDUCTED BY THE WCIRTA AUDIT COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH COMMONLY ACCEPTED ACCOUNTING PRACTICES. ON JANUARY 4, 2017 THE AUDIT COMMITTEE CAREFULLY REVIEWED THE FINANCIAL RECORDS MAINTAINED BY WCIRTA TREASURER, DON KRAGNESS. THE COMMITTEE FOUND THAT NO IRREGULARITIES HAD OCCURRED DURING THE AUDITED PERIOD, AND THE MANAGEMENT OF FUNDS BY THE TREASURER HAD BEEN DONE IN PROPER ORDER.

THE AUDIT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS ACCEPTANCE OF THE REPORT, AND COMMENDS THE TREASURER FOR PROPERLY MAINTAINING THE FUNDS OF WCIRTA.

AUDIT COMMITTEE: TOM OATES, JOHN HARLAND AND LOREN TAYLOR

SUBMITTED: JANUARY 5, 2017

**TWO IRTA SCHOLARSHIPS
AVAILABLE IN OUR AREA!!!**

One \$1,500 scholarship and one \$3,500 will be awarded this Spring. These scholarships are for incoming JUNIORS OR SENIORS IN COLLEGE majoring in EDUCATION. The application and current guidelines are on the IRTA website. Just go to www.irtaonline.org and the information is located under the Foundation tab/programs. Applications can also be obtained by calling IRTA Administrative Assistant, Susan Goetz at the IRTA office. (1-800-728-4782) The deadline to postmark applications is **March 7, 2017**

Re: Legislative Update

Fr: Anna Morris

The Budget: The Strategy that seems to be emerging toward getting a budget bill passed in the current legislative session appears to focus on the Senate. A bipartisan group headed by President Cullerton [D] and Minority Leader Radogno [R] has introduced a comprehensive package of bills, referred to as the “Grand Bargain,” they hope to get passed in the near future. They would then be introduced, possibly modified, and acted upon by the House. Any compromise package would then be negotiated with the governor toward reaching a unified agreement.

Some of the package measures include:

- **Personal income tax would increase from 3.75 to 4.99 percent.** A new tax would be added on certain services; a “business opportunity” tax is also included.
- **Illinois would borrow 7 billion by selling bonds to pay off a portion of over 10 billion in overdue bills.**
- **A pension reform bill would allow new employees to choose between getting fixed future COLA’s or being allowed to expand their pension base.** It might also abolish pension benefits for new legislators.
- **\$694 million would be budgeted to fund the expenses of six agencies** for the first half of 2017.
- **The State would assume responsibility for paying the employers’ portion for Chicago teachers.**
- **Workers’ compensation benefits would be further tightened.**
- **Local property taxes would be frozen for two years.**
- **Gambling would be expanded and would include a river-based casino for Williamson County.**
- **The minimum wage would be increased from \$8.25 to \$9 per hour with yearly increases reaching \$11 in 2021.**
- **On Jan. 26 Att. Gen. Lisa Madigan filed a motion with the St. Clair Co. Court to prohibit payment of wages to state employees until the governor and General Assembly adopt a state budget. All parties including AFSCME, the state employees’ union, are objecting to this motion.**

Master Contract: Governor Rauner is expected to impose his rules soon for the stalled master contract.

Based on this assumption, AFSCME President Roberta Lynch has sent a letter to affected employees to move forward with a strike authorization vote. The vote will take place between Jan. 30 and Feb. 19. AFSCME asserts that the imposed contract will double insurance rates for employees and retirees, privatize many services, and freeze wages.

Retirement: TRS Executive Director, Dick Ingram, presided over a town hall meeting at Marion High School on Jan. 18. He assured approximately 100 attendees that TRS had never missed a payment and that their benefits are not in jeopardy. Moreover, the TRS payroll is one of the region’s major economic stimulators, with an average local recipient receiving a little over \$48,000 annually. **He also listed some major issues:**

- **TRS has 45 billion on hand but 71 billion short of what it should have.**
- **It pays out over 6 billion annually.**
- **It receives about 4 billion per year from the State, with over one billion of this amount being paid out to retire pension bonds.**
- **The current return on investment for the past year is about 2 percent, with a 10-year average of 8 percent.**
- **The TRS Board will review a possible reduction in future anticipated investment returns this summer.**

Teacher Opportunities: Gov. Rauner visited Carbondale on Jan. 6 to sign a bill aimed at easing teacher shortages. The bill will ease restrictions and fees for retired and out-of-state teachers to teach on a substitute basis.

Morneau Shepell Call Center: CMS has contracted with this group to handle insurance questions.

Phone: 1-800-877-7896 or mybenefits.il.gov.

New Leaders: Senator Dale Fowler [R] 59th District and Rep. David Severin [R] 117th District have begun their terms in the legislature. They will speak to us at our next meeting on March 3 at the Crab Orchard Golf Club, Carterville.

Dave Severin will have an office at 1301 Enterprise Way, Suite 40-A, Marion. Ph.: 618-440-5090 217-782-1051 email: Severin@ilhousegop.org website: repseverin.com **Dale Fowler:** Ph.: 618-294-8951 1-217-782-5509 email: senatorfowler59@gmail.com