



APRIL/MAY 2024

Direct Line

Newsletter of West Lake Shore Unit, Illinois Retired Teachers Association

WLSU and IRTA...Your Voice in Springfield

WLSU—OVER 60 YEARS OF SERVICE TO RETIRED EDUCATORS

POINTS OF INTEREST FROM YOUR WEST LAKE SHORE BOARD

By now you will have received your 3% COLA, compounded, in your February pension check. For those of you who don't remember, IRTA won a lawsuit against the state when legislators tried to deprive you of this earned benefit.

At the IRTA convention last October constitutional changes made it possible for IRTA members, regardless of where they reside to become members of the majority of our state committees. So if you have some spare time, become a member of our legislative committee, member benefits committee, political action committee, or membership committee. Just contact the Springfield office to join and volunteer. All of us working together and giving a small amount of our time, will help keep our benefits safe.

In case you are not aware, the new IRTA president is Mike Schmidt, vice-president is Rainy Kaplan, and secretary is LeVonne Chaney. Thanks to them for stepping up to these important positions.

The IRTA Political ACTION Committee needs your help. Because of attrition, our \$1 a month membership is dwindling. We need more members to sign up for the \$1 a month deduction from your pension check. This fund enables us to be a VOICE in Springfield. This is especially important in this election cycle. The PAC is organized to aid in protecting, preserving, and improving benefits for individuals receiving a pension from the Illinois Teachers' Retirement System (TRS). It is a bi-partisan committee that makes financial contributions and endorsements to elected officials who are supportive of legislation issues that are important to IRTA's members. By contributing to IRTAPAC, you are playing a vital role in raising political awareness among IRTA members and enhancing our engagement with elected officials. Here's how you can join our fight:

Visit www.irtaonline.org

Click on PAC and choose the DONATE option.

If you are a TRS annuitant, you can fill out the online form that allows TRS to donate \$1 each month from your monthly pension check.

You can also mail a check payable to IRTAPAC to 828 S. 2nd Street, 4th FL, Springfield, IL 62704

Not sure if you are already donating, call Susan at 217-523-8488.

Your local West Lake Shore Unit is a Unit of Distinction 2023 for the third time. Thank you members for your participation.

Watch for a Zoom invitation to the Area 3 Conference to held on June 27 at 9:30 a.m.



**WLSU SPRING LUNCHEON
THURSDAY, MAY 2 AT 11 A. M.
CRYSTAL SKY BANQUETS**

7941 WEST 47TH STREET, McCOOK, IL 60525

The FAMILY STYLE meal will include soup, salad, two meat choices, pasta, potatoes, vegetables, dessert, and coffee or tea. CASH BAR

There will be a short Member Meeting at 11:30

PROGRAM: Dick Volker who was in sales management for Coca Cola for over 40 years will present a history of the company dating back to its beginning.

COST: MEMBERS \$30. NON-MEMBERS \$35

of MEMBERS _____ # of NON MEMBERS _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED _____

MEMBER NAME(S) _____

MEMBER EMAIL _____

MEMBER PHONE NUMBER _____

GUEST NAME(S) _____

**RETURN THIS FORM OR A REASONABLE FACSIMILE ALONG WITH A CHECK MADE OUT TO
WEST LAKE SHORE UNIT**

REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS APRIL 15

RETURN REGISTRATION FORM AND CHECKS TO:

FRAN PETTERSEN, 8613 THISTLEWOOD COURT, DARIEN IL 60561

We know you're busy. Who isn't? What we are asking of you should not interrupt your busy schedule. We all have places to go: doctor appointments, lunch with a friend, shopping for groceries, visiting family, volunteering, etc. We all thought that retirement meant loads of free time. It does mean more free time, but sometimes not as much as we'd like. What follows is what we are asking of you and why.

We need a constant flow of members to maintain our strength, and in this way, protect our state pension, COLA and subsidized health care. We have all been spoiled because there does not seem to be a funding crisis or a current call to change the state constitution eliminating the pension protection clause. Back in May 2015 the Illinois Supreme Court ruled that the pension reform law of 2013, which attempted to solve the state's \$100 billion unfunded liability over 30 years by basically reducing the COLA, was unconstitutional. The state contended that its contractual obligations to the pension were not absolute because it reserved "emergency powers" in a time of crisis that superseded the pension protection clause. Fortunately, the court did not agree. However, another pension crisis that threatens your defined benefit pension can rear its ugly head at any time. Only our strength, as seen through our numbers, can allay that fight. Your insurance against this possible battle is your membership in the IRTA/WLSU. This is why we must grow our numbers.

We are asking for your help in a few simple ways. First, your family benefits by your pension, and any spouse or significant other should immediately join the IRTA as an associate member. An associate member has full rights of membership except a vote at the biennial convention in Springfield. Secondly, ask your former colleagues if they are members of IRTA/WLSU and consistently urge them to join. Let them know how they benefit by joining. Finally, we need information about possible members. We do not have addresses of retirees. We only have, occasionally, a name and school email address until they retire. Once they leave, we lose touch. Any list of retirees, especially with current contact information such as an address, is very helpful. Doing these few things to help IRTA/WLSU will not take much time from your busy day or add a huge financial drain on your savings. We hope you will help by sharing names of retired teachers and/or current '24 retirees. Email your list to any Membership person or our Treasurer. See the WLSU Contact Information box enclosed in this newsletter. Take a minute to think about your change of lifestyle if you only had a small IRA account and a Social Security check as your total income- a sobering thought. Isn't your pension worth fighting for?

Signing up someone for membership is simple using email. Google IRTA and go to the website. Choose 'Association.' Go down to 'Join Now.' Here it explains the Types of Memberships. Click on the red line for the service you require. Dues deduction is a little cheaper per year, and the dues are taken from your monthly pension check. You don't even miss the \$3.50 per month. For associates, the cheapest choice is becoming a Life Member at \$200. You may also call 800-728-4782 for any type of help or questions. Also, both the IRTA and WLSU offer free membership to current teachers who will retire within 4 years. These are referred to as Pipeline retirees. Then, upon retirement, dues will need to be paid if the retiree wishes to remain a member. Sign up is also at the IRTA website.

Recruiting new members is not an easy task. However, it is a most important one. We need your family members and friends to join. Please remember that it is your pension you are protecting by your effort to recruit a new member. In 1857, Frederick Douglass said, “If there is no struggle, there is no progress.” “Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.” Join the struggle by helping out with recruiting. It’s your pension to lose or maintain.

Thank you for being a member of WLSU.

Tom Szot, Membership *emeritus*

Mark these dates on your calendar and look for ZOOM invites in your mailbox.

Good Dog News— Every 1st and 15th of the month

Monthly briefings with Jessica

April 23 guest is Andrew Bodewes, our lobbyist

May 23 guest is Darren LaHood, not a supporter of WEP/GPO

September 26 guest from Attorney General’s Office—Senior Scams

November 14 possible guest from CMS

December 10 TBD

Area Conferences—all invited

Area 1 June 13

Area 5 July 10

Area 2 June 20

Area 4 July 17

AREA 3 JUNE 27

Area 6 July 24

IRTA Educational Webinar Series 9:00 a.m

April 24 Emergency Transportation Issues in Illinois

May 15 Preparing for Summer—Discounts and Benefits

June 26 All About Your Dental and Vision Plans

July 31 All about Long Term Care

August 21 Protecting Your Nest Egg

September 18 Life 101

October 16 The Basics of Medicare



WLSU/IRTA WELCOMES THESE NEW MEMBERS

**Denise Reicher Karen Weed Teresa Alfaro Christine Stiel Marianne Difrisco
Louise Such**



May they rest in peace, and may their memory be a blessing.

For each of our recently deceased members , WLSU donates \$25 to the IRTA Needy Teachers Foundation

Kenlyn Rini Dr. Frances Salvato Karin Bull Mary Sordel John Craig Patricia Olderr Donald Whited



Karried Away

WITH CARRIE



Laverne and Shirley Themed

Tour of Milwaukee!

Date: October 10

8:30 am-5:30pm

Fee: \$165

**Last day to register
is September 1st**

If you are a fan of the **Laverne & Shirley** show, you will appreciate seeing **Milwaukee's City Hall** which was the opening shot of the show. See **Polish Flats** and the Brewery that made Milwaukee Famous, "Shotz." We even make a stop to see Laverne's heartthrob, The Bronze **Fonz Statue**. Bring your camera for that! Our day includes touring **Lakefront Brewery** where you will enjoy 2 samples and a souvenir glass. Laverne's pop was well known for his pizza served at the **Pizza Bowl**, so lunch is at a family-owned Pizzeria. The day also includes a game of mini-bowling because the girls have to keep their skills sharp for the Shotz Brewery Tournament. Top off the day with a frozen custard treat at Milwaukee's legendary and nostalgic **Leon's Drive-In**. Be ready for surprises along the way.

Motor Coach leaves and returns from the KWAC Office Located inside the Willowbrook Burr Ridge Sports Performance Center, 7850 S. Quincy, Willowbrook IL 60527

ACTIVITY LEVEL 3

Min 25/Max 34

Includes: Roundtrip motor coach entrance fee, lunch, escort, tips, and snacks.

Exclusive adventure offered to the WLSU from KAWC

To Register Call Carrie Navins: (630)360-1314

Email Carrie with any questions at

carrie@karriedawaywithcarrie.org

For more trips visit our website: karriedawaywithcarrie.org

Follow us on Facebook Karried Away With Carrie





Tax Scam Alerts

With Tax Season upon us, the IRS wants you to be alert to any scams related to the IRS, especially those to do with tax refunds. Be aware that the IRS will not initiate any phone calls, emails, or social media regarding your tax refund. If you do receive a call, do not give out any personal information. Report the call to the IRS using their official website or phone number.

If you have a Ring Video Doorbell, be aware that scammers may call and ask you to update your personal information. Scammers believe that homes with a Ring Doorbell may have valuables that are worth stealing. Scammers may also pose as Ring doorbell salespeople and tell you that your model needs to be updated or that new software is available that you can purchase through them. As always, be aware that legitimate companies will not solicit information or sales in this way. Report any such activity through your personal Ring account.

As you know, the Illinois Secretary of State’s Office has established a number of Senior Only DMV Centers that offer services, including driving tests, on a walk-in basis, Mondays through Fridays, 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. A list of these centers is available on their website www.ilsos.gov. One that would be convenient for many of our members is located at the Westchester Village Hall, 10300 W. Roosevelt Road, in Westchester.

If you prefer to make an appointment for a specific time at a particular DMV Center, the Senior only call center phone number is 800-252-8980. I personally have made an appointment this way, and the process worked very well.

The deadline for the Real ID which will allow you to use it for identification for domestic flights and visiting various government facilities has been extended to May 2025.

Barbara Grabowski, FYI Committee

WANT TO JOIN OR NEED TO RENEW—DO IT NOW! Clip the coupon below and mail it with your check made out to West Lake Shore Unit and send to Louise Sterett

NAME: _____

3 YEARS \$30 _____

5 YEARS \$45 _____

LIFE \$125 _____

Louise Sterett, 770 57th Street, Unit 2, Clarendon Hills 60514-1682

WLSU Contact Information

Program	Membership	Membership	Treasurer	Foundation
Fran Pettersen	Steve Yurek	Keith Bailey	Louise Sterett	Julie Jeter
708-302-2129	630-991-1123	630-926-0742	630-325-6470	708-370-3929
narfp@yahoo.com	mathgreat34@comcast.net	kmldbailey@ameritech.net	lasterett@yahoo.com	jj149@aol.com

IRTA HOTLINE—Members who wish to hear the latest information about legislation regarding pensions and health insurance should telephone the IRTA office at: 1-800-728-4782, irtaonline.org.

Other helpful numbers:

Teachers’ Retirement System 1-877-927-5877,

email— members@trsil.org website: <http://www.trsil.org>

Central Management Services 1-312-793-565 or 1-217-782-2141

Membership Cards Many AMBA and other IRTA endorsed benefits require proof of membership in IRTA. Please call the Springfield office to request a membership card: 800-728-4782

ALERT: 90 Years Old and Above—You qualify for free Life Membership in IRTA & WLSU. To qualify, you must contact us—Act Now.

Scholarships



2024 Scholarship News

Excellence in Education Grants

Check the IRTA website for information regarding Grants to active teachers which provide teachers with up to \$750 for a classroom project not covered by their district funds. The application on the website, and the deadline for submission is June 1. Last year 7 grants were presented in Area 3 and two were in the West Lake Shore districts. Encourage actives you know to apply for the grants.



Adopt a School

Our first Adopt-a-School project, post pandemic, is drawing to a close. Thurgood Marshall School in Bellwood was the recipient of our Unit's generosity this year and, as always, our members came through in grand style. We helped provide school supplies like paper towels, pencils, crayons and markers, items that often come out of the pocketbooks of teachers themselves. WLSU

membs also provided nearly 100 uniform shirts for the students. We all know that by mid-year white polo shirts can begin to look worn, and our generosity allowed the staff at Thurgood Marshall to give students new shirts as needed.

The Principal, Dr. Burnham, had some very specific requests related to improving reading skills in his building. WLSU members provided over 300 books that the staff used to implement a reading program to encourage parents to read with their children at home. To accomplish this, we accepted cash donations for the first time, and I am pleased to announce that our members enthusiastically supported this endeavor. I was able to order the readers from the company the principal recommended, have them delivered to my house where I placed labels in each one indicating that the book was donated by WLSU Retired Teachers. The school was thrilled that we were able to purchase all of the titles requested. Our members also provided boxes of sight words so the children could practice learning the words. Dr. Burnham was pleased to see the students working together to practice these, as it was a extra benefit he didn't see coming.

Once again WLSU members have impacted the educational process in a local school and shown their willingness to help by providing requested items that the school community might not be able to provide. Through this program, which has been in existence for more than five years, WLSU members have provided assistance to a variety of schools. Letters searching for a partner for the 2024-2025 school year will be going out soon. Stay tuned for how you can make an impact by participating in this endeavor.



Julie Jeter

You can sway a thousand men (women) by appealing to their prejudices quicker than you can convince one man (woman) by logic. Robert Heinlein

Mark Your Calendar 2024

May 2	Luncheon	Crystal Sky	11:00 a.m.
September 18	Membership Meeting	Hinsdale Community Center	10:00 a.m.
December 6	Luncheon	Crystal Sky	11:00 a.m.

Be sure to check your inbox on the 1st and 15th of each month where you will find *Good Dog News*, containing the latest legislative information regarding your pension and health benefits as well as other IRTA news.

The West Lake Shore board is still in need of members to fill open positions on the board. We currently have two open positions: President and Vice-President. The current members are stepping up to keep WLSU functioning so we can provide our members with the latest information regarding their pension and health benefits. Now is a good time for you to consider accepting one of those open positions. All the members of the board will be available to help you acclimate to the position. For the minimum amount of time you will have to devote, you will have the satisfaction of keeping your colleagues abreast of any situation that could endanger their benefits and yours! The danger of losing what you have earned is not over. Contact Fran Pettersen to join us!

Try going GREEN with your next newsletter.

Investing in the future of retired teachers

West Lake Shore Unit
Direct Line Newsletter
Marjorie Sucasny, Newsletter Publisher
2942 Crabtree Avenue
Woodridge, Illinois 60517
Direct Line Mailer: Simonette Urban

