



November/December 2022

## 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

### President's Message

In 1955 a group of retired teachers met in Chicago and formed the Illinois Retired Teachers Association with Herbert C Hansen as the president. This new group, IRTA, was founded during the National Retired Teachers Association convention. There were 1500 members of IRTA by the end of 1955. Currently there are approximately 40,079 members of IRTA.

“The Illinois Retired Teachers Association is a not-for-profit, non-partisan organization of retired educators. The Association serves the needs and interests of its members through advocacy, education, cooperation, and socialization in a flexible organization structure.” **This is the Mission Statement of the IRTA whose only purpose is to protect the benefits of retired educators. Becoming a member of IRTA and West Lake Shore Unit is among the best things you have done since retirement.**

The continued success of IRTA depends on the continued success of the local units. WLSU has over 1100 members which makes it one of the larger units in the state. The success of local units like WLSU depends on the willingness of the members to become involved. Our unit has lost three wonderful executive board members this past year. John Wheeler, retired English teacher from Lyons Township High School, was a member of the board when I joined in 2003. John was in charge of the *Direct Line* newsletter. He retired from the board but was gracious enough to return in 2021 to be part of the Program Committee. Marie Frankina, retired math teacher from LT, organized the WLSU luncheons and then became Vice President which included being Chairperson of the Program Committee. Kate Singletary, retired English teacher from LT, served WLSU in many capacities. Most notably Kate was our president along with volunteering on two state committees.

Our board now consists of 12 members along with an *emeritus* member. Many members have spent over a decade on the board. I retired in 2003 and joined the board in 2003. I am not the only one who became a board member the year I retired. A number of board members joined in their first, second, or third year of retirement. The Membership Committee especially needs volunteers. Please consider being part of the WLSU board. We are there to help any new person adjust to his/her new duties. This is a wonderful opportunity to meet new people and to gain a sense of pride and accomplishment. Feel free to email me at [narfp@yahoo.com](mailto:narfp@yahoo.com) or call or text me at 708-302-2129. **Fran Pettersen**



**WLSU HOLIDAY LUNCHEON FRIDAY DECEMBER 9 2022, 11 a.m.  
DELTA MARRIOTT: 7800 KINGERY HWY, WILLOWBROOK IL  
APPETIZERS, CASH BAR, LUNCHEON, DESSERT  
Cost: members \$30 non members \$35**

**MARTINA MATHISEN WILL ENTERTAIN US WITH HER PROGRAM:  
“T’WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS “ THE FASCINATING STORY  
OF OUR CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS**

**# of members \_\_\_\_\_ # of non members \_\_\_\_\_**

**Total cost. \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**ENTREE CHOICES: chicken, fish, or vegetarian. Please list the entree  
choice after each attendee’s name**

**NAME(S)**

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**Your email \_\_\_\_\_ phone # \_\_\_\_\_**

**Send this form or a reasonable facsimile along with a check made out to  
WLSU to:**

**Fran Pettersen 8613 Thistlewood Court, Darien IL 60561**

**Registration deadline is November 28, 2022**

**QUESTIONS: Contact Fran at [narfp@yahoo.com](mailto:narfp@yahoo.com) or  
Call or text at 708-302-2129**

## **Log in to irtaonline.org For the Latest Information**

The Member Portal located in the Member's Only section of the IRTA website has been revamped.

IRTA members' usernames are now their email, and they need to establish a new password. Each member can review his own personal information, pay his dues, see when his membership is up for renewal, donate or review his donation history, register for an event, and update his profile information. The Member's Only section of the website looks similar to how it did in the past, but it has been updated to use with the new IRTA database. Check it out. There is a lot of good information there, including information about TRAIL and TRIP.



## **SAVE THE DATE! SUNDAY APRIL 16, 2023!**

The New Philharmonic Orchestra will present the music of the ten-time Tony Award winner SOUTH PACIFIC. Vocalists will sing the score written by Rodgers and Hammerstein. Enjoy the acoustic perfection and intimacy of the Belushi Hall at the MAC at COD. There will be a limited number of specially-priced tickets available for us. Reservation information will be available in the *Direct Line* in early 2023.

**Do you want to have IRTA and WLSU information at your fingertips? Add the IRTA and WLSU websites as icons to your phone's home screen or to your tablet. Here is how.**

### **Directions for Android**

1. Launch Chrome for Android and open the website or web page you want to pin to your home screen.
2. Tap the menu button and tap Add to the home screen.
3. You will be able to enter a name for the shortcut (IRTA), and then Chrome will add it to your home screen.
4. The icon will appear on your home screen like any other app shortcut or widget, so you can drag it around and put it wherever you like.
5. Chrome for Android loads the website as a "web app" when you tap the icon, so it will get its own entry in the app switcher and won't have any browser interface getting in the way.

### **Directions for iPhone, iPad, & iPod Touch**

1. Launch the Safari browser on Apple's IOS and navigate to the website or web page you want to add to your home screen.
2. Tap the Share button on the browser's toolbar—that's the rectangle with an arrow pointing upward. It's on the bar at the top of the screen on an iPad and on the bar at the bottom of the screen on an iPhone or iPod Touch.
3. Tap the Add to Home Screen icon in the Share menu.
4. You will be prompted to name the shortcut before tapping the Add button.
5. The shortcut can be dragged around and placed anywhere, including in app folders—just like a normal app icon.
6. When you tap the icon, it will load the website in a normal tab Inside the Safari browser app.

**You can do this for irtaonline.org and with the WLSU website: [www.wlsu.weebly.com](http://www.wlsu.weebly.com)**

**Wisdom has been defined as knowing the difference between pulling your weight and throwing it around. anonymous**



At the beginning of October we sent renewal letters to 220 WLSU members who owe dues for 2023. Perhaps some of you are wondering why should you bother renewing or spending the few dollars required for WLSU membership. Actually, this is a good question. Why should any retiree spend money on IRTA/WLSU membership? As of Sept. 15, 2022, there were 127,518 TRS annuitants of which 40,079 were IRTA members. That means less than one-third felt membership in IRTA was important to them. How important is membership to any retiree? For my wife and me, membership is very important. We are both Life members of both IRTA and WLSU. Here are some of my reasons for being a member. Check off how many you share.

- 1) \_\_\_\_ I trust educators, and those groups representing educators as the IRTA/WLSU, to make decisions on my behalf more than I trust politicians to protect my pension and health care benefits. You may remember that earlier in the summer the IRTA sued the state on your behalf. The lawsuit contends that the state is underfunding the Teacher Health Insurance Security Fund by changing the formula to put fewer state dollars into the fund. This case is proceeding through the Circuit Court for Sangamon County. Further developments will be emailed to you via IRTA's Voter Voice.
- 2) \_\_\_\_ I wish to keep my pension strong. I'm not in favor of changing the pension protection clause in the Illinois constitution no matter what promises proponents for change make. I guess I'm not very trusting of politicians and groups such as the Illinois Policy Institute who call for changing the clause for the "good of the state and its inhabitants." A promise is a promise, and a contract is a contract.
- 3) \_\_\_\_ In this current economic downturn, I feel safer getting a fixed pension, along with an annual cost of living adjustment, that does not fluctuate monthly. Check your IRA or stock, if you possess any of these investments, to see how they are doing this year.
- 4) \_\_\_\_ I feel the current dues to the IRTA/WLSU is a minuscule amount considering the work done on my behalf by paid IRTA staff and the volunteers who represent us on the IRTA/WLSU Boards. Local unit boards across the state are not paid for the time they put in on our behalf. I feel the least I can do is remain a dues paying member and support them. IRTA/WLSU provides us with vital information, guidance, and direction about our pensions, health care, and issues of concern to retirees.
- 5) \_\_\_\_ My pension and health care benefits offer me strength mentally and physically. Mentally, I have no worry about my economic future unless teacher retirees allow politicians to make changes that don't benefit us. Physically, I count on my subsidized health care and personal habits as exercise, social activity, and proper nutrition to keep me going.
- 6) \_\_\_\_ I plan to live a long time in retirement and need my pension to fulfill that dream. TRS says that many retirees live 30 years receiving a pension. The clock keeps ticking, and I hope I do too. How about you?
- 7) \_\_\_\_ I understand that nearly 90% of current workers do not belong to a defined benefit pension that we as Tier 1 teachers enjoy. Count yourself lucky that you do. Let's all work to keep it the way it is and help Tier 2 teachers to make changes to their unreasonable pension.
- 8) \_\_\_\_ The IRTA makes benefits available to its members at discounted prices. Personally, we have the dental and Long-Term Care insurance offered via AMBA. Simply go to the IRTA website to see which benefits you'd like to participate in as a member.

I could go on, but I have a space restriction, and you may feel I've given more than enough reasons to belong. I hope you also feel that membership in IRTA/WLSU is valuable. I hope all 40,079 feel the same way. Please renew your membership if you need to do so. Please guide anyone who is not a member to membership. Have them Google IRTA, choose website and scroll down to "Join Now." Prospective members may also call the IRTA at 1-800-728-4782 for help joining. Members who owe dues to the IRTA will receive a mailed statement with instructions on payment.

To quote the great NY Yankee catcher, Yogi Berra, “You made too many wrong mistakes.” Don’t make the mistake of not renewing. Your pension will thank you by being deposited each month in your bank account. Also, please rejoin for multiple years and thank you for being a member.

**Tom Szot, Membership—*Emeritus***



**WLSU/IRTA WELCOMES THESE NEW MEMBERS**

Candace Durham   Conte Stamas   Karen Tokarz   Claranne Marshall   Joan Kittler  
Ethel Reeves   Freda Wood-Livingston   John Swanson   Mary Zelasko   Janice Bernard  
Lisa Nicholson   George Lowen   Lois Tyson   Sheila Harris   Christine DiGilio   Nicolette Wehrle  
Julie Kelly

**Read Your Label**

WLSU paid thru: 2022                      IRTA pd thru: Deduct  
Rose Petal  
15 Hybrid Way  
Flowerfield, Illinois 60442

Check the label on your newsletter to see your dues status, or email/call Louise Sterett if you receive the newsletter via email.

Note: Rose will need to send in her WLSU dues for 2023.

Her IRTA dues are paid through dues deduction. This means IRTA dues are deducted from her pension check monthly. She doesn’t send any dues or need to reapply annually. **However, payment of IRTA dues does not cover her WLSU dues.**

Please contact Louise Sterett with any questions— [lasterett@yahoo.com](mailto:lasterett@yahoo.com) or 630-325-6470.

**Know Someone Who is Retiring Soon?**

Don’t forget that IRTA/WLSU has a pipeline for those who have signed a letter of intent to retire in the next 4 years. Those who sign up for the pipeline and deduct receive free IRTA and WLSU membership until they retire. That entitles them to information about legislation and issues concerning health insurance and their pension, receipt of both newsletters and member benefits, and invitations to special events. Contact a colleague who is planning to retire and explain the benefits of belonging to IRTA/WLSU, the only organization devoted solely to retired educators and protecting their pensions and health benefits. Help them fill out the application on this newsletter, or have them go to [irtaonline.org](http://irtaonline.org) to sign up.



**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  
Steven Eckert   William Keller   Kate Singletary   Marie Trankina   Carmella Jandacek   Lynn Ververs**

As you may know, WLSU President, Kate Singletary died this August, leaving a tremendous void among her friends, acquaintances, and many organizations in which she was an active participant. As with all WLSU members who pass, WLSU makes a donation in their name to the Foundation Needy Teacher Fund. That was also done for our Marie Trankina, WLSU board member for decades who also died this August, and John Wheeler, board member who died this year as well as for any WLSU member. See IRTA ACTION.

Kate’s family has set up a scholarship fund at Lyons Township High School for students interested in journalism. If you would like to make a donation: Make your check payable to LTHS, include “Singletary Scholarship: in the memo line. Send the check to WLTL Radio, c/o Chris Thomas, 100 S. Brainard Ave, La Grange, IL 60525. For an online donation go to GoFundMe for the scholarship fund and look for The Kate Singletary Scholarship Fund..



Keeping you aware of relevant news and critical trends that impact our association and our mission is one of our ongoing—and most important—goals.

To help you stay current with the fast-paced news cycle, we implemented a new service to our members which leverages Artificial Intelligence to deliver a personalized, bi-monthly e-newsletter to your inboxes.

Here is how it works:

1. The curated IRTA e-newsletter, “Good Dog News” arrives every two weeks in your inbox. (If you don’t see it on the 1st and 15th of the month, check your spam folder or promotions folder.)
2. As you select articles to read, your preferences will be learned by the AI, and content will be tailored to match your interests.
3. We’re only collecting topical data from the articles you’ve chosen to click on within our newsletter; we are not accessing or using your data from other apps to inform these recommendations.

If you are having trouble finding your newsletter, try the following;

Check your SPAM/JUNK, Promotions or Social Folders! Emails from unfamiliar or domains may be filtered here. Be sure to report or mark it as a trustworthy email to avoid this happening in the future.

Add the Send From addresses to your email contacts list. The Send From addresses for IRTA’s e-newsletter is info@irtaonlin.org. Also you can add @sentwithrasa.io and dirta@sentwithrasa.io

Move us to your primary inbox if you use Gmail.

Add us to your VIP list if you use Apple Mail.

Add us to your favorites if you use Outlook.

If that does not work, call the state office at 217-523-8488. Stephanie or Tricia can troubleshoot with you over the phone and send you a test email. After receiving the test email, you can add it to your primary email folder and add the address to your contact list.



### **IRTA HELPING EDUCATORS—PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE Excellence in Education Grant Recipients**

The Excellence in Education Grant program was begun 18 years ago, and over that time has presented over a half a million dollars to active teachers, allowing them to pursue innovative activities for their students. This year 180 teachers across the state applied for the grants.

Of the 17 applicants from Area 3, 7 were chosen with two coming from the West Lake Shore area. Area 3 was given \$3000 to divide among the recipients chosen. Caryn Graham, Member at Large of the Foundation Committee and Marge Sucansky, Area 3 Rep, chose the 7 recipients, based on the descriptions of the projects, expending \$2998.93 of the \$3000.00..

**Kiera Strecker** from Pennoyer School will be using her grant to purchase sets of read alouds that are connected to math for Kindergarten to 3rd grade to engage students in mathematical concepts through literacy and allow them to think about math in different ways, activate background knowledge, and apply new skills in an additional setting which creates a deeper learning experience. .

**Marge Sucansky, Area 3 Rep, Kiera Strecker, and Principal Adam Greenberg**



**Jennifer Giemza** from Jefferson Elementary School in Berwyn will be using her grant to collaborate through the art of weaving as a hands on approach to creating through the mindful practice of watching a small ball of yarn turn into something new. With the use of a loom big enough to seat several students at a time, children in her class can work together to create patterns of lines and shapes through the weaving process. Weaving fosters concentration, pattern recognition that mirrors how we learn to read and write, small motor skills, and interpersonal relationships between classmates. A point of interest—Jennifer’s aunt and uncle Louise and Bruce Lavenuau are and were IRTA/WLSU members. **Dena Thill, principal, Fran Petersen, Foundation, Jennifer Giemza**





### TRAIL Insurance Update



Beginning January 1, 2023, YOUR NEW MEDICAL AND PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN WILL BE THE AETNA MEDICARE ADVANTAGE PRESCRIPTION DRUG (MAPD) PPO

PLAN.

THIS NEW PLAN WILL REPLACE YOUR CURRENT PLAN, WHETHER YOU'RE CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN THE UNITEDHEALTHCARE MAPD PLAN OR ONE OF THE MAPD HMO PLANS (AETNA, HEALTH ALLIANCE OR HUMANA.)

**NO ACTION IS REQUIRED UNLESS YOU WANT TO OPT OUT OF THE AETNA MAPD PPO PLAN. IF YOU AND YOUR MEDICARE-ELIGIBLE DEPENDENT(S) ARE CURRENTLY COVERED UNDER THE UNITEDHEALTHCARE MAPD PLAN OR A MAPD HMO PLAN, YOU AND YOUR MEDICARE-ELIGIBLE DEPENDENTS(S) WILL BE AUTOMATICALLY ENROLLED IN THE AETNA MAPD PPO PLAN WITH COVERAGE BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2023.**

HOW TO LEARN MORE:

IN THE COMING WEEKS THERE WILL BE PRE-OPEN ENROLLMENT VIRTUAL SEMINARS AND IN-PERSON SEMINARS DURING OPEN ENROLLMENT FOR THOSE THAT ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND A VIRTUAL SEMINAR OR HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS. BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR MORE INFORMATION IN THE COMING WEEKS.

YOU'LL RECEIVE A WELCOME KIT IN THE MAIL FROM AETNA WITH MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE AETNA MAPD PPO PLAN. YOU'LL ALSO RECEIVE NEW MEMBER ID CARDS FROM AETNA, WHICH CAN BE USED FOR MEDICAL AND PRESCRIPTION DRUG SERVICES.

YOU'LL RECEIVE MATERIALS FROM THE CENTER FOR MEDICARE AND MEDICAID SERVICES, AS REQUIRED BY LAW.

### New Extension Deadline for Driver's Licenses:

The deadline for anyone to renew a license, ID or learner's permit that has expired since Jan. 1, 2020 has been extended to Dec. 1, 2022.

The deadline to obtain a real ID card in order to board a domestic flight or enter secure federal facilities has been extended to May 3, 2023.

More information is available at [ilsos.gov](http://ilsos.gov).

### Scam Reminders:

An interesting article by Steve J. Bernas, President of the Chicago area Better Business Bureau highlighted some of the most common scams:

Home Security: If you have a sticker in your window for a security system and someone comes to the door saying you need an upgrade that they can do immediately, Beware! Those companies do not send out workers without notifying you ahead of time.

Phony tickets for concerts, sports events: Make sure you know the ticket source.

Home Improvement Calls: Resist workmen at your door saying they can fix whatever, since they're already in your neighborhood. Only work with contractors, etc. that you research.

Gift Card Payment: Remember, anyone asking you to pay any expense with gift cards is a scammer. "That is the tipoff to the ripoff!" Better Business Bureau website is [bbb.org](http://bbb.org)

### Barbara Grabowski, FYI Committee

President	Membership	Treasurer	Foundation
Fran Pettersen	Steve Yurek 630-991-1123 <a href="mailto:mathgreat34@comcast.net">mathgreat34@comcast.net</a>	Louise Sterett 630-325-6470 <a href="mailto:lasterett@yahoo.com">lasterett@yahoo.com</a>	Fran Pettersen 708-302-2129 <a href="mailto:narfp@yahoo.com">narfp@yahoo.com</a>

**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](http://irtaonline.org).

Other helpful numbers:

**Teachers' Retirement System** 1-877-927-5877, email— [members@trsil.org](mailto:members@trsil.org) website: <http://www.trsil.org>

Central Management Services 1-800-442-1300 or 1-217-524-3438

**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. Contact Louise Sterett.



**IRTA State & Local Unit Membership Form**  
 828 S. Second St., 4th Floor • Springfield, IL 62704 • 1-800-728-4782  
 e-mail: irta@irtaonline.org • webpage: www.irtaonline.org

- State Dues
- Dues Deduct - \$30 a year (see left side of form)
  - Annual - \$40
  - 5 Years - \$175
  - Life - \$400
  - Membership Free for the Calendar Year of Retirement

**Dues Deduct** – I hereby authorize the Teachers' Retirement System to deduct my IRTA dues in monthly installments at an initial rate of \$2.50 or as subsequently established by the Delegate Assembly.  
Association Dues are Not Tax Deductible

- State Associate Dues (non-certified)
- Annual - \$25
  - Life - \$125

- Local Unit Dues
- First Year Free

\_\_\_\_\_  
 (Signature required for Dues Deduction)

Social Security # \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Only required for Dues Deduction)

Please print or use your return address label.

NAME LAST	FIRST	MI	DOB
ADDRESS	CITY	STATE	ZIP
PHONE ( )	E-MAIL	UNIT West Lake Shore	SCHOOL DISTRICT RETIRED FROM

Please mail to IRTA.

**Try going GREEN with your next newsletter.**

**Check your spam or junk inboxes if you are not receiving the newsletter.**

**When wealth is lost, nothing is lost; When health is lost, something is lost;  
 When character is lost, all is lost.  
 German Proverb**

“Investing in the FUTURE of retired teachers”

DIRECT LINE

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