



February/March 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

A Message from IRTA Executive Director – Jessica Hoselton



I am excited and honored to join the Illinois Retired Teachers Association (IRTA) as its next Executive Director. I am thankful to the IRTA Board of Directors for this incredible leadership opportunity. Filling the shoes of Jim Bachman, whose leadership shaped the IRTA's reputation of a powerful advocate on behalf of retired educators, will not be easy. I am grateful for Jim's guidance during our transition period, and I am eager to build upon Jim's legacy. I am confident that with the ongoing input, participation and support of the IRTA Board of Directors, members and staff, the IRTA will enjoy a bright and successful future.

My professional experience includes working for professional trade associations in positions focused on legislative representation, PAC fundraising, and grassroots mobilization. Most recently, I provided direct lobbying services while simultaneously serving as the Executive Director for two statewide construction industry trade associations. In this role, I maintained a wide range of responsibilities including lobbying, coalition building, budgeting, board and committee management and member recruitment and retention. I believe success is maintained by working collaboratively with association leadership, members, staff and industry leaders.

IRTA provides its members with invaluable services including legislative representation on important policies introduced by the Illinois General Assembly, legal representation to fight against laws that diminish pension benefits, and a strong Political Action Committee to aid in the election of candidates who are supportive of IRTA's position on legislative issues that are important to retired educators. In addition, the IRTA Foundation provides financial aid to retired teachers, grants to public school educators and scholarships to students aspiring to become teachers. I am proud to be a part of an association that maintains a sense of community for retired educators and places great focus on positively impacting the lives of others. I look forward to working alongside the IRTA Board of Directors, Committee Chairs and members to continue the important work of the association.

I recognize that I have a lot to learn in my new role. I am committed to investing the time and attention that it will take to understand the IRTA culture, its policies and procedures and work toward elevating IRTA's presence as a powerful advocate on behalf of the Illinois retired teacher community. I look forward to meeting all of you in the months ahead and developing lasting relationships.

In closing, I along with the IRTA staff, remain focused on providing members with personalized service and assisting you with any questions regarding your IRTA member benefits, pension benefits, or other concerns you may have. We are happy to hear from you and encourage you to reach out to us at any time.

Save the Date

March 20, 10:00 a.m.
Hinsdale Community Center
415 W. 8th Street
Hinsdale, IL 60521



Our speaker will be Doug Strand our TRS trustee. He will present the most recent information about your pension and benefits.

His presentation will provide important information regarding the state of TRS. Have you registered with TRS; do you know your Member ID; do you know how to contact TRS; have you updated our beneficiary information? This and more will be discussed.

Doug is an engaging and knowledgeable speaker. Plan to attend.

Attendance will be limited to 40 people as that is what the room accommodates. Please register to save your spot, call, text, or email Fran at 708-302-2129 narfp@yahoo.com
Please include your email address and/or phone contact number.



WLSU/IRTA WELCOMES THESE NEW MEMBERS

Joyce Fisher Mary O'Sullivan Karyn Bute Coradine Heidemann Katie Ross



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

Ellen Bell Barbara Kohut Carl Cutsinger Barbara Appelson Carl Nemecek Elizabeth Zika John Roethke
Jack Leckel Richard Albright

Adopt-a-School Project 2024-2025

As you know last year's collaboration with a school in our area was a great success thanks to the generosity of our members. Shortly, we will be choosing the 2024-2025 school which we will help. Watch the April/May newsletter for more information.

Julie Jeter, Foundation



Happy New Year! How many times have friends, family, and persons you don't even know wished you a great 2024? At our age it is customary to add the wish that we continue in relatively good health. What would make us happy? Would it only be one thing? This is doubtful. If we had that one wish granted, we'd probably accept it and crave the next item on our list. What we probably all wish is to be happy in life, but how do we get there? We must accept that happiness looks different to every person. However, there are several research-backed steps that will keep you moving "down that yellow brick road" to feeling happier this new year.

First is a step that many people don't like, and that is exercise. However, research from the University of Vermont found that as little as 20 minutes of exercise gives mood-boosting benefits for up to 12 hours after the workout. If you wish to give this some thought and have a computer, a good action would be to enroll in Silver Sneakers. Your health insurance should cover your free membership. Google 'Silver Sneakers' and sign up. You'll get nearly daily messages to peruse and decide what activity you would like to try. You can also visit many locations that offer free workouts to Silver Sneakers participants. If working out is not your thing, add these mood boosters to your list: get a good night's sleep, partake in a nutritious diet free of most fast foods, and get a hobby that you find enjoyable, like reading. Happiness can also be found in friendships. If you are looking to add to your list of friendships, join a club; volunteer your time at a hospital, school, or on the WLSU board; smile more; give compliments; participate in cultural and church-related events; or if you're up to it, find a part-time job.

Being happy does not mean having no fears or worries about the future. That would be unrealistic. We are all concerned about our health, the well being of loved ones, the future of our country and planet, the next election, safety, meeting expectations and money concerns.

Your money concerns can be alleviated knowing you have a defined benefit pension that will be available to you throughout your life. Add to this your COLA and your subsidized health care. Belonging to the IRTA/WLSU is one way to protect this life investment. Recruiting friends and family as associate members will help our number grow. Go to irtaonline.org to easily join or even renew a membership or call 800-728-4782 to speak to a real person. Currently, just under one-third of TRS annuitants are IRTA members. We need a larger number so legislators will view us as a bloc of voters to be taken seriously.

We must defend our defined benefit pension. Corporate forces have not given up on their efforts to strip us of our retirement security. We must vigorously oppose any effort to amend the Illinois Constitution to remove protections against pension change or diminishment. To safeguard our TRS pension, we must oppose any effort to cut benefits of employees or retirees in any public pension system. We must also resist forcing public employees into any risky defined contribution retirement plan. We should stand united with all other public employee groups and their representatives.

Make sure you keep your IRTA/WLSU "insurance" up to date. If you are one of the 107 WLSU members who still owe dues for 2024, please pay now. Members who do not renew will not receive another newsletter, and all communications will stop in March. Please send a check to our Treasurer, Louise Sterett, made out to West Lake Shore Unit. Her address is 770 57th St. #2, Clarendon Hills, IL 60514. Renewing for more than one year is an enormous help. Dues are \$30 for 3 years, \$45 for 5 years and \$125 for Life membership. Check your newsletter label or contact Louise Sterett or Steve Yurek if you are unsure of your dues status. See Contact Box for email or phone information. Please remember that IRTA dues do not pay for membership in WLSU. Our unit must collect its own dues.

In closing, please take John Lennon's message to heart. He said "Count your age by friends, not years. Count your life by smiles, not tears." And on a lighter note, 'Why was the horse so happy? Naturally, because he lived in a stable environment.' Please, no groans.

Wishing you a happy and healthy New Year, and thank you for being a member of WLSU.

Tom Szot, Membership *emeritus*



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





Update on Drivers' License Facilities

With complications arising in the appointment system begun at Illinois Drivers' License Facilities on September 1, the Secretary of State's office has instituted a number of changes that went into effect on September 25, and Alexi Giannoulis has made it his goal to make things as easy as possible for elderly drivers.

Currently the mandatory age for the mandatory driving test is 79 because senior drivers are the safest in the state. Persons aged 81-86 will be required to take the vision and driving test every 2 years.

Four walk-in centers for seniors have been established and others are planned.

| | |
|---|---|
| Seat Geek Center in Bridgeview 7000 S. Harlem Avenue Bridgeview, IL 60455 | Westchester 10300 W. Roosevelt Road Westchester, IL |
|---|---|

| | |
|--|--|
| Evanston Civic Center 2100 Ridge Ave Evanston IL 60201 | Addison 50 E Oak St. Addison, IL |
|--|--|

Hours are Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.,. Intended for walk-ins, but appointments may also be scheduled.

Phone Number

The phone number to make appointments at any facility is 1-800-252-8980. Prompts have been expanded to help those 70 and older reach an operator who can assist them with information, schedule appointments, or assist with online renewals.

More appointment slots have been added to all facilities, an increase of nearly 1,300 a day. **To make an appointment online go to the site by 7 a.m. as slots fill up fast.**

Website

The website for all Drivers' License services is www.ilsos.gov

A feature has been added to the website allowing customers to filter facilities by ZIP code and highlighting appointments near them.

Use the phone number or website to follow any future changes.

Barbara Grabowski, FYI Committee

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 or go online at irtaonline.org

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.

Other helpful numbers;
Teachers' Retirement System 1-877-977-5877
Email—members@trsil.org

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

Scholarships



2024 Scholarship News

The 2024 application and current guidelines for the IRTA Foundation Scholarships are available. Applications and current guidelines are posted on the IRTA website, irtaonline.org under Foundation. One need not be a member of IRTA to apply.

One \$2,000 scholarship is available in each of the six IRTA Areas of the state. These scholarships are only available to incoming juniors or seniors in college enrolled in a certified teacher training program. The deadline to postmark or email applications is March 7, 2024. **Thanks to a generous private donation by an IRTA member, there is an additional \$3,000 scholarship in Area 4 & Area 6.**

Other scholarships available in 2024, are the **Moler-Austin Scholarship** which offers two \$4,500 scholarships to KENDALL COUNTY high school graduates that will be entering their Sophomore, Junior, or Senior year of college with a declared major in Education. The **Helen Kennedy Scholarship** which is a \$2,000 scholarship and is available to graduates of any Illinois High School that will be entering their sophomore, junior, or senior year of college with a declared major in Education. Finally, the **Rose Sandstrom Scholarship** is for \$2,000 and is available to one incoming senior in college attending either Western Illinois University or Monmouth College with a declared major in Physical Education.

Applications for any of the above scholarships must be postmarked or emailed and sent to the IRTA office on or before March 7, 2024, and the recipients will be announced by April 21, 2024. The awards will be given as follows: one half in June for the fall semester with the balance to be awarded in January upon registrar verification of a 3.0 or above GPA on a 4.0 scale.

If you have any questions or need assistance in obtaining an application or to send an application, please contact Susan Goetz at susan@irtaonline.org or call 1.800.728.4782.

Excellence in Education Grants

Check the IRTA website in the near future 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 will be on the website, and the deadline for submission is June 1.

Dream what you want to dream; go where you want to go; be what you want to be because you have only one life and one chance to do all the things you want to do.

1 Sm 8:4-7, 10-22a



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! As Doug Strand will emphasize on March 20, the danger of losing what you have earned is not over. Contact Fran Pettersen or Marge Sucansky to join us!



Read Your Label

WLSU dues paid thru 2023

Rose Petal
 15 Hybrid Way
 Flowerville, Illinois 60000

Check the label on your newsletter to see your dues status, or email/call Louise Sterett if you receive the newsletter via snail mail. Renewal notices have been sent via email and snail mail. Note: Rose will need to send in her WLSU dues for 2024..

Payment of IRTA dues does not cover her WLSU dues.

Please contact Louise Sterett or Steve Yurek with any questions. See the WLSU Contact Information Box.

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 |

Mark Your Calendar 2024

| | | | |
|--------------|--------------------|---------------------------|------------|
| March 20 | Membership Meeting | Hinsdale Community Center | 10:00 a.m. |
| 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.

Sign up for \$1 a month deduct from your pension check to support the IRTA PAC, which is devoted to supporting those legislators (on a non partisan basis) who support our pensions and health benefits.

“Tricks and treachery are the practice of fools that don’t have brains enough to be honest.” Ben Franklin

Try going GREEN with your next newsletter.

“Investing in the FUTURE of retired teachers”

DIRECT LINE

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

