

Direct Line



Newsletter of West Lake Shore Unit, Illinois Retired Teachers Association

WLSU and IRTA...Your Voice in Springfield
WLSU - 60 YEARS OF SERVICE TO RETIRED EDUCATORS

www.wlsu.weebly.com

Membership Luncheon—December 1, P. 7

President's Message

WLSU Membership Meeting on September 19, 2017, hosted Jim Bachman, Executive Director of IRTA; Nathan Mihelich, Director of Membership and Marketing, and Bill Kurth, candidate for Area 3 Representative position. Below is a summary of their reports:

Jim Bachman

The governor's intent was to zero out funding for the teacher retirement insurance plan. Our legal team was asked about the health benefit protection under the constitution—what is the scope of the constitutional protection? Health benefits are protected by the pension clause—IRTA attorney opinion. There is currently \$140,000 in the legal defense fund should we need it. (If you would like to make a contribution, send your check to IRTA with "Legal Defense Fund" in the memo line.)

IRTA took the governor's plan of reducing the funding by 1/3 each year until it was finally zeroed out to the legislators with the conclusion of our attorneys. The attempt at zeroing out did not happen.

The state can raise the costs we pay, however, to force members out of the plan. There is a stipulation that they cannot be undue costs. The question becomes: What are undue costs? We may be forced to sue if it is determined that the costs are undue.

The legislature attempted to change how they would spend money in the budget they finally passed. They included eliminating TRIP appropriations. So every year we would be subjected to the appropriation process. IRTA's 2000 Voter Voice emails let legislators know we opposed the language in the bill. IRTA went to legislators who were unaware of the language in the bill and made them aware of it, and the bill did not pass.

The budget did not address \$14 billion in unpaid bills.

Our health insurance is the best funded in the state. Our bills are paid within 100 days. Other state insurances are getting paid within 550 days. Community college retiree bills are not paid for 2 years. Chicago teachers' health insurance is paid by personal property tax and a small stipend from the state. When we go to the doctor, we must explain that we are in TRIP/TRAIL, so doctor won't hesitate to accept insurance.

The governor vetoed SB1 regarding education funding. A bill later passed but the budget is still not keeping up with TRS funding. This spring the amount contributed was reduced by General Assembly “smoothing.” There was a \$500 million reduction to TRS.

We have to pay attention to the elections this fall. Five state senators and 18 representatives are not running again. We must seek out those who will support us. If a candidate receives an IRTA endorsement, it means that that candidate supports IRTA issues. Each person must decide if there are other issues supported by other candidates that are a priority with him. The IRTAPAC now has \$126,900. (Contributions to IRTAPAC should be sent to IRTA with IRTAPAC on the memo line.)

Nathan Mihelich

Nathan explained the many new services that IRTA is able to provide to locals such as robo calling, helping with newsletter design, helping with membership recruitment and member participation among others.

Bill Kurth

Candidate for Area 3 representative. Bill is concerned with issues affecting retirees. He is particularly concerned about the pension clause and how it could be affected by a constitutional convention in the future. He feels we need to look at making alliances with other agencies and organizations which share our interests and concerns. He is happy with the current efforts of the IRTA Board.

Finally, and I do mean that, this will be my last president’s message. After the December membership meeting I hope we will have a new president to serve a two year term. To date no one has stepped up. There are many qualified individuals among you who would be able to handle the position with ease. However, you would not be left on your own, as I have prepared a month by month guide of the duties and will continue to help you in any way I can until you can make the position your own. I will attend meetings in the capacity of Past President *ex officio* for at least a year and will serve as your personal assistant, offering as much or as little help as you wish. If you are at all interested, please give me a call at 630-985-2620. I would love to take you to lunch to discuss the position.

In conclusion, I want to thank all the Executive Board members for their advice, assistance, and dedication over the last ten years. Also, all the kind words and encouragement that have come from members have made my tenure rewarding and enjoyable. It has been my honor to work with all of you. **Marge Sucansky**

IRTA HOTLINE—Members who wish to hear the latest information about legislation regarding pensions and health insurance should telephone the IRTA office for information—1-800-728-4782. Other helpful numbers: Teachers’ Retirement System 1-877-927-5877, email address members@trsil.org, website—<http://www.trsil.org>; and Central Management Services 1-800-442-1300 or 1-217-524-3438; and irtaonline.org

WLSU Contact Information

President Marjorie Sucansky 630-985-2620 sucansky@comcast.net	Membership Tom Szot 630-852-3138 itszot@comcast.net	Treasurer Louise Sterett 630-325-6470 louisesterett@att.net	Foundation Frances Pettersen 630-985-7508 narfp@sbcglobal.net
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Website: www.wlsu.weebly.com

Reminder to Members

If you change your contact information, be sure to let us know.

Mark Your Calendars 2018—tentative—check the February/March Direct Line and email updates for final dates

January 24 Wed.	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place	9:30 a.m.
March 6 Tues.	Membership Meeting	Ashton Place	10:00 a.m.
March 15, Thurs	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place	9:30 a.m.
April	Area 3 Conference	Bradley, Illinois	
May 3 Th.	Membership Luncheon	Ashton Place	11:15 a.m.
May 8 Tues.	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place	9:30 a.m.
August 2 Thurs.	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place	9:30 a.m.
September 11 Tues.	Membership Meeting	Ashton Place	10:00 a.m.
October 26 Thurs.	Executive Board Meeting	Plymouth Place	9:30 p.m.
December 7 Fri.	Membership Luncheon	Ashton	11:15 a.m.

Membership Report

Charles Dickens wrote of it being the best of times and the worst of times. With the destructive hurricanes of September and the continued unrest over North Korea, a case can be made for the worst of times. Since we try to concentrate on issues directly bearing on retired teachers, you may wonder how we're doing during these times. Our pensions are still being paid and our subsidized health insurance is still in place and has not been zeroed out as the governor proposed. If we can keep these as is, this is good. However, a few developments cast a cloud over this sunny outlook. One is national and one is very local.

The national concern for us as retired educators is that the U.S. Supreme Court is poised to strike a hard blow to unions representing millions of educators and other public employees. The court has agreed to consider the mandatory fees that support collective bargaining or "fair share." A similar California case was set aside last February when Justice Antonin Scalia died, leaving an evenly divided Supreme Court. The current case to be considered is brought by an Illinois state employee who objects to paying a "fair share" fee for services supplied by his union, AFSCME. With conservative Neil Gorsuch replacing Scalia, it seems certain that the court will strike down the 40-year-old ruling. It is widely predicted that a large percentage of current and future employees would stop supporting their union monetarily even though they would lose in the long run as far salary, working conditions, and benefits. Likewise, in Illinois the IRTA represents only 37,000 TRS annuitants of 118,000 drawing a pension. It appears that only one of three retirees feels that IRTA's work to protect our pensions and health benefits is worth paying membership for though in a survey members who did not renew membership claimed to approve and applaud IRTA's actions and achievements. Truthfully, not all 118,000 have heard of the IRTA, but it seems very likely that they know something of the IFT and IEA and haven't joined them either. This picture doesn't portend the best of times nationally or statewide. AFT President, Randi Weingarten, said recently, "powerful interests want to gut one of the last remaining checks on their control--a strong and united labor movement that fights for equity and opportunity for all." Your IRTA/WLSU membership and participation helps these organizations keep working to protect your pension and health benefits that are always under attack.

This leads to the problem that besets our local unit. Come the New Year, WLSU will be without a President and Membership Chairperson. These two positions have not been filled despite having one of the largest IRTA locals in the entire state (currently 1271 members). To make the membership position less taxing and time consuming, it has been streamlined by eliminating a number of duties of the committee and by dividing these duties into 3 parts, which makes each of them easily manageable. These are the 3 R's--record keeping, recruiting, and renewals. A breakdown of these duties will be emailed to all members in the near future. Each position would require about 2 hours of work per week. Some weeks there would be nothing, and some weeks would require up to 5 hours, depending on the season. Your local needs you to step up and take a more active role to ensure we will remain strong and working for our pension rights. Contact Tom Szot at jtszot@comcast.net or 630-852-3138 to find out what each position entails. Email me your name, and I'll send you a breakdown of each position immediately. If you take a position, you need not fear being without help and guidance. I will remain to support you for as long as it takes for you to feel comfortable in the position. Better yet, join with a friend and share the duties. The clock is ticking.

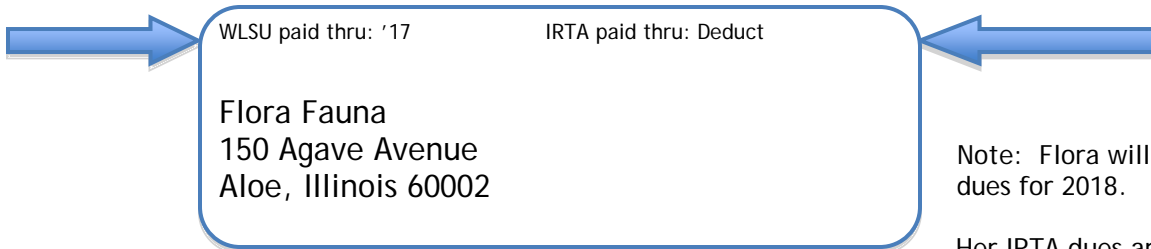
At the beginning of October all members who owe dues to WLSU for the coming year received their renewal letter. Again this year, there are no increases in dues amounts for the coming year. The IRTA dues remain \$40 annually, 5 years for \$175, and \$400 for Life. Dues deduction is only \$2.50 per month, saving you \$10 compared to annual dues. WLSU dues are \$12 annually, 3 years for \$30, 5 years for \$45, and \$125 for Life. This year you only received a renewal for WLSU. The IRTA will bill you in November if you owe them dues. Please refer any dues questions to Tom Szot or Louise Sterett. See the WLSU Contact Information box in this issue for phone numbers and email addresses. As has been mentioned before but bears repeating, any payment of dues to the IRTA only covers state dues. Our local unit, WLSU, must collect its own dues and isn't allowed to use dues deduction because of TRS rules. **Tom Szot WLSU, Membership Committee Chair**

WLSU/IRTA Welcomes These New Members

Nancy Chlumsky	Mary Schlessler	Joanne Dombrowski	Cheryl Abens
Steven Bogren	Marc Papiernik	Theodore Demos	Mark Doyle
Janet Bushue	Mary Anderson	Catherine Kennedy	Denise O'Brien
Jessica Young	Beverly Robertson		

Read Your Label

Check the label on your newsletter to see your dues status.



Note: Flora will need to send in her WLSU dues for 2018.

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 or Tom Szot with any questions. See the WLSU Contact Information Box.

In Memoriam

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

Joseph Gross Jerry Johnson Stephanie Maibusch Robert Vashinko

ALERT-90 Years Old and Above- If you are 90 or older and are a current member, you qualify for free Life Membership in IRTA & WLSU. To qualify for this perk, you must contact us. If you are 90 or older, act now. Contact Tom Szot or Louise Sterett with your date of birth. See WLSU Contact Information box.

WLSU NEEDS YOU!

I know we all have other obligations, but saving our pensions and health benefits should count among them. As of January 2018, WLSU will need someone to step up as president as I will no longer accept that position. Anyone who accepts this position will not be left in the lurch. I will be available to help until you can make this position your own. Please reconsider, and let me know if you are willing to share some of your time.

AT&T to Eventually End Traditional Landline Service

This past July the Illinois General Assembly overrode a veto by Governor Rauner and approved a telecom modernization bill. AT&T supported this bill which will eventually allow AT&T to discontinue providing traditional telephone landline service. However, AT&T must get approval from the Federal Communications Commission before ending the service.

Paul Schiazza, AT&T Illinois president, said AT&T wants to focus on modern alternatives like internet-based and wireless phone services. He said that with more customers choosing newer forms of communication technology, the company is losing about 5000 landline customers statewide each week, with under 10% of Illinois households in its territory still using the service. Schiazza also said that it will be several years before traditional landline service goes away. (AT&T continues to market and sell traditional service.)

In the meantime, critics, such as AARP and CUB (Citizens Utility Board,) say the new law will disadvantage seniors and those who rely on their landline for communication and as a link to vital medical services. Phones in elevators, swimming pools, and other emergency type phones could also be eliminated. CUB spokesman, Jim Chilsen, said CUB will shift their attention to the national level to try to keep in place current FCC rulings requiring AT&T to keep offering traditional landline service.

AT&T is required to notify Illinois residents of its plan to discontinue traditional landlines before it petitions the FCC. Customers who believe that landlines are their only viable service option will be able to appeal to the Illinois Commerce Commission. Julie Vahling, Associate State Director of AARP Illinois said the association will focus on working with members who plan to appeal to keep their traditional service.

This piece is a summary from an article in the [Chicago Tribune](#), July 6, 2017, by Robert Channick.

Barbara Grabowski, FYI Committe

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. The number is 800-728-4782

Foundation—WLSU Area Teacher Wins Excellence in Education Grant

The \$36,500 in Excellence in Education Grants are now available yearly in all six area of the state.

Susan Forcash, a teacher at Congress Park Middle School in Brookfield, was a winner of one of the 73 awarded Grants out of a total of 350 applicants throughout the state. Charlie Chrisman and Jan Bryant presented the grant on October 27. Check out the IRTA website under the Foundations tab for a picture of the presentation. Susan Forcash is the daughter of WLSU member Bonnie Blafka.

Susan is going to use her grant to purchase Breakout Kits for her classroom. These kits foster team work, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication. The activity is similar to the Escape Rooms that are popping up all over where a team uses clues to escape from a locked room in a specified amount of time. In the Breakout Kit, the players must solve puzzles to unlock the mystery box.

Pictures of the Grant presentations are on the IRTA website. Fran Pettersen, Foundation Chair

Don't Unsubscribe from Emails Unless You Mean It

If you have not been receiving emails from me, maybe you are happy, but if you do want to keep abreast of what is going on with WLSU, your pension, and health care benefits, please contact me. I have gotten reports from our email provider, ConstantContact, about members who have unsubscribed. When I contact them, some reply that they did this unintentionally. Getting back on the email list is a little involved. I have to contact ConstantContact and ask that the member be resubscribed. Then CC sends an email to the member, requesting confirmation that he/she wants to be resubscribed. I have found that members often do not notice this email and so do not respond, and consequently, remain unsubscribed.

Another way of being unsubscribed occurs when a member forwards an email from me to a friend. If that friend sees the unsubscribe message on the bottom of the email and clicks on it, the WLSU member is unsubscribed, not the friend. Solutions: Try to recruit your friend rather than forward pension information to him/her so he/she gets the information directly from me. We need to get people to join so we have numbers when our lobbyists talk to legislators about all of our pensions. If you must forward information, be sure to delete the unsubscribe message on the bottom of the email before forwarding to avoid unintentional unsubscribing. You should have received 3 emails from me in September. If you did not, please contact me (630-985-2620 or sucansky@comcast.net).

IRTA OUR FRIEND WITH BENEFITS

We will be highlighting a benefit that IRTA Members have access to in every newsletter. Please feel free to contact me with any other benefits you know of that can help our members.

Hear In America Hearing Plans

www.hearinamerica.com

- Free annual hearing screening for you and your family
- Referrals to qualified local hearing centers
- Full line of high quality hearing aids

Call 1-800-286-6149 to register for your free benefit. You will be referred to a participating provider in your area. **Member Benefits Chairperson, Vince LaPaglia** -- Vlapaglia@yahoo.com

Giving Back Partnership for 2017-2018 School Term -- Year 3!

For the third year in a row, WLSU has partnered with a local school district to donate needed school supplies. On August 23rd I made our first delivery of supplies to Rhodes School in River Grove. Our members generously provided enough supplies to fill my Honda CRV to the brim. I had made arrangements earlier with Maury Vasquez, one of the school social workers, to drop off the supplies. It took Maury, two custodians, and me to get the supplies into the building. While unloading the car we had a chance to talk about Rhodes School. Ms. Vasquez stated that despite the neatly landscaped homes that made up the environment surrounding the school, the pupils at Rhodes have many needs. She expressed that families in the school community are proud and do their best to meet their own needs, but many times paying rent and buying food take priority over spending money on school supplies. Like teachers everywhere, the burden of providing needed supplies falls on individual teachers. This is why she was so pleased that Rhodes was chosen for this year's partnership. The supplies already had a designated home in a closet which was organized so all staff would have easy access to them. Ms. Vasquez hoped I would share their appreciation for all that WLSU was doing for Rhodes School this year.

Dear Julie Jeter,

I wanted to thank the Illinois Retired Teacher Association's West Lake Shore Unit for the generous donation of school supplies and prizes for the students, toiletries for our families, and sweaters and jackets for the children. We are very fortunate to have a partner like you and greatly appreciate your act of kindness to the Rhode's community. Sincerely, Jim Prather, Superintendent -- Rhodes School District 84.5, River Grove

Please know that we will be collecting supplies throughout the 2017-2018 school year. I plan to make another trip to Rhodes before Thanksgiving. Here is the list of items requested. Please feel free to drop off items at any WLSU function or at the Jeter Home, 427 N. Waiola, LaGrange Park.

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------|-------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Small toys/prizes used for behavior awards | winter coats | erasers | pencil boxes | Pocket Folders |
| ZipUp hoodies/sweaters | sharpies | baby wipes | hand sanitizer | Zippered pencil cases |
| Gloves/hats | Ziploc bags | binders | rulers | Packs of markers |
| Wide ruled/College ruled spiral notebooks | highlighters | index cards | pens, red/black/blue | crayons |
| Travel sized toiletries, especially deodorant | Kleenex | scissors | dry erase markers | backpacks glue sticks |

JULIE JETER—LEGISLATIVE AND ADOPT-A SCHOOL

WLSU December Luncheon

Friday, December 1, at Ashton Place
341 75th St., Willowbrook, IL -630-789-3337

Return this form and a check for \$25 members and \$30 guests to Marie Trankina, 10 Algonquin Drive, Unit 2, Indian Head Park, Illinois 60525. Reservations must be received by November 20, 2017. No telephone reservations. Make Checks payable to **West Lake Shore Unit**.

Member Name (s) _____

Guest Name (s) _____

email address _____

Phone _____ Total \$ _____

Entrée' Choices

- Filet of Chicken Breast with Lemon Herb Sauce
- Herb Crusted Tilapia
- Peppercorn Crusted Sirloin

**NO ENTRÉE SUBSTITUTIONS AT THE
LUNCHEON!!!**

Confirmation of receipt of your reservation will be done by email only.

WLSU Winter Luncheon

ASHTON PLACE

341 75th St., Willowbrook

SW Corner of 75th Street and Clarendon Hills Road

Enter from Clarendon Hills Road, 630-789-3337

Friday, December 1, 2017 11:15-2:15

Socializing, cash bar, short business meeting,
door prizes, and plated lunch

Program: Rick Pickren, the Singing Cowboy

Rick Pickren is a singer, songwriter who has shared the stage with George Strait, Merle Haggard, Alabama, The Judds, Dolly Parton, Joe Ely, Rodney Crowell, B. J. Thomas and cowboy poet Waddie Mitchell. He has been nominated and/or won numerous awards, including Western Music Song of the Year by the Academy of Western Artists. He is a descendant of Buffalo Bill Cody and travels the plains performing his cowboy song and history program-- *Illinois: Gateway to the American West*. He is an actor who has appeared in films such as *Major League* and *While You Were Sleeping*.

Questions: call Marie Trankina at (708) 246-6709.

Ashton Place is located at the SW Corner of 75th and Clarendon Hills Road.



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

State Associate Dues (non-certified)

- Annual - \$25
- Life - \$125

Local Unit Dues

- First Year Free

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

(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	RETIREMENT YEAR	
PHONE ()	E-MAIL	UNIT West Lake Shore	SCHOOL DISTRICT	RETIRED FROM	

Please mail to IRTA.



West Lake Shore Unit Direct Line Newsletter

Marjorie Sucansky, President
2942 Crabtree Avenue
Woodridge, Illinois 60517

Direct Line mailer: Simonette Urbain

DIRECT LINE

"Investing in the FUTURE of retired teachers"