



November/December 2023

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

Vice-President's Message

At the end of March 2023, TRS held \$64.8 billion in assets, which is a \$1.5 billion increase since January 1, 2023. For the third year in a row, TRS will receive a state government contribution that is higher than the minimum funding level set by law. The state budget for fiscal year 2024 that took affect in July not only includes the state's minimum contribution to TRS but also \$230.4 million in additional funding for the system. Currently the funding ratio of TRS in 2023 is projected to increase from 43.8% to 44.5%. In fiscal year 2024, TRS will pay more than \$7.6 billion in benefits on time and in full to more than 128,000 TRS members and their families. The current balance in the Teachers Health Insurance SecurityFund ("THIS" Fund) is \$242.7 million. The comptroller fully intends to continue making appropriate transfers of money to THIS to fulfill the \$187.7 million that is still owed to the fund.

Enclosed in this edition of **the Direct Line** is the registration form for the Holiday luncheon on December 1. Besides celebrating with friends and colleagues, we will be holding elections for the following West Lake Shore Unit board positions: President, Vice President, Corresponding Secretary, and Treasurer. Simonette Urbain and Louise Sterett have agreed to continue in their positions of Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer. There are many qualified individuals among our members who are capable of handling the other two positions. I know from experience, that board members are always available to assist the new board member in any way they can. As I have mentioned before, I am retiring from the WLSU board at the end of December 2023 after serving twenty years on the board. It has been a wonderful experience. The last year and a half presented some challenges that I did not expect at the end of my 20 year tenure, but I am grateful that I was able to help during that time. I have a portable file case filled with information on the past events I have organized that I will pass on to the new Vice President and promise I will help you through the first year. If you have questions, feel free to call me at 708-302-2129.

Wishing you and your families a happy and safe Holiday Season.

Fran Pettersen



**WLSU HOLIDAY LUNCHEON
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2023 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 an important Member Meeting at 11:30 to elect a President, Vice President Corresponding Secretary, and Treasurer of the West Lake Shore Unit.

PROGRAM: Jenny Riddle will present Stories Behind the Best Loved Songs of Christmas

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**

**We will still be accepting Adopt-a-School items. Most in need: white polo shirts, size 5-9.
Available at Target and Amazon**

**RETURN REGISTRATION FORM AND CHECKS TO:
FRAN PETTERSEN, 8613 THISTLEWOOD COURT, DARIEN IL 60561
QUESTIONS? CONTACT FRAN AT narfp@yahoo.com or 708-302-2129**

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: NOVEMBER 20, 2023



Trail Insurance Update



If you are satisfied with your current Aetna Advantage Plan, you do not have to do anything to renew it for 2024. It will automatically carry over to the new year! You will receive a new identification card but the numbers will be the same. Barbara Grabowski, FYI Committee

Recapping the last six months. If you didn't attend the special events, this is what you missed. Members attended the Andy Warhol event at COD at a specially reduced rate, which included an informative presentation by a docent. In September "Ben Franklin" visited at the Hinsdale Community Center event and recounted highlights of his life. For more pictures of our events, check out the website www.wlsu.weebly.com. If you missed these events, be sure to mark your calendar for an exciting 2024.



FYI: JOIN IRTA as a Life Member before December 29. Rate will increase from \$400 for life to \$600 at the first of the year.



Workers seem to be rising up and demanding more of their employers. If you've paid attention to the United Auto Workers' (UAW) work action, you may have noticed a few items they're asking for that you already enjoy as an Illinois retired teacher. The main demand seems to be asking for a pay increase that mirrors the compensation received by top company executives. However, also among the demands is a reinstatement of the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to better fight inflation and a return to a defined benefit pension instead of 401(k)s.

You are in a defined benefit pension plan currently and receiving a COLA of 3% annually. Your COLA recently has not been keeping pace with inflation. Overall since 2020 inflation has grown by 18%, with energy costs leading the way. In August this year, the inflation rate was 3.7% compared to August 2022 when it was 8.3%. Over the last 10 years (2012-2023), however, the rate was down to 2.65% according to Richard Laycock at Finders.com.

Your defined benefit pension is a virtual lifeline for you since only 15% of private industry workers have it. You don't have to worry about saving, investing, or managing your own retirement funds, as the Bureau of Benefits as part of Illinois Central Management Services (CMS) takes this load off your hands. Any extra funds you save from your pension can be used to invest in the stock market, government bonds, CDs or be used for your pleasure. Even with a fluctuating market, your defined benefit pension stays the same each month until it increases by 3% each calendar year.

A defined contribution pension is based on the contributions made by both the employer and the employee. This pension depends on the individual account balance and the performance of the stock market. You decide how much to contribute, how to invest the money, and when to withdraw the money. However, this pension type lacks a safety net in a shaky market. Employers moved to a defined contribution pension because it proved simpler to manage and cheaper to administer.

Our concern, and the main concern, of IRTA & WLSU is the preservation of your pension lifeline. This is not an easy task, but so far your pension has been kept safe. Since there are other state and national concerns, our pensions have not been under attack as much as in the past years. We'd like it to stay this way but without the many ills plaguing our society. The IRTA & WLSU cannot do it alone. We need members to help by renewing membership in both IRTA & WLSU. Very important also is recruiting new members to add to our number. An easy way to recruit and increase our number is to simply sign-up a spouse or close friend as an associate member. Life membership is only \$125 to receive all the benefits of regular membership except the right to cast a vote at the biennial convention in Springfield. It's simple to join by calling the IRTA at 800-728-4782 with your credit card handy or going to irtaonline.org. Press "Join" and follow prompts to 'Select A Member Type.' Scroll down and join as an Associate Annual Recurring member at \$25 per year or an Associate Life Member at \$125.

In mid-October members who owe WLSU dues will receive a dues letter. Please renew for more than one year. If you wish to know your WLSU status, check your label or call/email anyone in the contact box in Membership or our Treasurer. If you owe IRTA dues, you'll get an invoice from them also sometime in October.

Please help us stay strong to better protect your retiree's pension rights by renewing, recruiting, and resolving to help your WLSU unit. Join us as a board member or as a participant at one of our events such as our Christmas luncheon on 12/1/23. See luncheon information on Page 2. According to the Oct. 2023 *Kiplinger Retirement Report*, there was a reference to a study in *Neurology* that found that older people with limited or no interaction had lower brain volume, and *The Journal of American Geriatrics Society* noted that social isolation among older adults is associated with dementia risk. Let's all get moving and joining. Playing *Wordle* daily is fun, but it's not enough stimulation for your brain. Get out there and move around. Your brain will thank you and, incidentally, thank you for being a member of WLSU. **Tom Szot, Membership *emeritus***



WLSU/IRTA WELCOMES THESE NEW MEMBERS

Juliet Price Katherine Foster Lynn Kaniff Joseph Calabrese Steve Mrkvicka
Katherine Foster



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

Gloria Hannas Robert Bajak Joyce Ellsworth Lois Tyson Rosemary Lucas Lois Klingeman

Adopt-a-School Project 2023-2024



Julie Jeter, Foundation

THANK YOU!

I wanted to let each of you know how your very generous donations were used toward WLSU's Adopt-a-School program. We are partnering with Thurgood Marshall School in Bellwood this year. These books will support their Reading Nights that promote parents and children reading together. The school had requested seven titles in sets of sixty. Because of your generosity I ordered an additional three titles Friday and feel confident that I will have the funds for that final title before long.

Highlights off the 2023 Convention.

On October 16 President Bill Funkhouser welcomed 182 delegates from the 53 units who sent them to the convention.

The keynote speaker was Thomas Morris, an American philosopher and former professor of philosophy at University of Notre Dame, Indiana. Professor Morris's presentation was amusing and thought provoking, dealing with an issue which we in the organization are facing, moving out of our comfort zone and embracing change to keep our institution viable for future retired teachers. A salient point he made was that we must value growth and learning more than comfort and security, and we should avoid rushing to judgment, regarding new ideas. "We are not here to only be transformative but are here to be transformed."

Mike Schmidt of the Membership Committee and new IRTA president, reported that our membership now stands at 40,510. We are not losing members as so many other organizations are. Local unit membership people will now be getting a new monthly membership report similar to the old Member Management.

Larry Pfeiffer and Doug Strand reported on the state of the TRS. In 2022 the state paid out \$7 \$7+ billion for our pensions. By 2026 Tier II will overtake Tier I in the workplace. The state is underfunded by \$81 billion. Investment returns over 40 years averaged +9.3%. Governor Pritzker's extra funding is inching up.

Election of Officers: President, Mike Schmidt; Vice President, Rainy Kaplan;
Treasurer, Donnie Ostrom; Secretary, LaVonne Chaney.

Six of the 10 proposed amendments to the IRTA Constitution passed. For a more detailed discussion see the website irtaonline.org

Article III—Membership Dues

Article VI—Electing Officers by all active members, in and out of state

Article VI—Electing Area Representatives by all active members

Article VI—Amending the Constitution by all active members

Article IX—Identifying all standing committees, changed Nominations to Leadership Development

Article IX—Finance and Leadership Development one chair & one area member; all other committees one chair, unit chair and any active member who wishes to participate

At the banquet Doris Heaton, IRTA secretary, was honored for her long years of service as were the former presidents. Specially honored was Jim Bachman for his 19 years as Executive Director who led our organization through the troubled times of the lawsuit to save our COLA.

West Lake Shore Unit was honored for achieving Unit of Distinction status for the second year. And our Silent Auction basket brought in \$140 for PAC.



We also had the opportunity to honor a member of our local as Unit Honoree. That distinction went to Fran Pettersen for her twenty years of service to WLSU and her masterful acceptance of the challenge presented when she assumed the duties of president a year and a half ago.



Finally, the new IRTA Executive Director, Jessica Hoselton, was introduced. She was chosen from many qualified candidates that applied for the position.

Your Delegates: John Vespo, Charles Berglund, Julie Jeter, Vic Corder, Margaret Gorman, Louise Sterett, Fran Pettersen, William Rush, Marjorie Sucansky, John Sucansky, Keith Bailey





Helping Educators: Past, Present, Future

2023 IRTAF Grant Winners

This Fall, the Illinois Retired Teachers Association Foundation (IRTAF) awarded \$42,000 in grant money to several public school educators from across the state. This grant money will allow these educators to enrich their instruction with materials not otherwise available to them. Their students are the real winners! A special thank you to the Illinois Principals Association for their assistance with the promotion of this program. Below, you will find the name of each winner from our WLSU area, along with his/her school, IRTA Area. Check the IRTA website for a video about each project in the winner’s own words.

Monica Kula, Pennoyer School #79, Norridge (3)
Josephine Lewis, Jefferson Elementary School, Berwyn (3)

Please note that the Foundation’s monies come entirely from donations, not dues. The primary fundraiser for the Foundation was mailed to you this fall, so please be on the lookout and be generous. Last year the fundraiser generated \$228,938. Any contribution would be appreciated. **Julie Jeter, Foundation**



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.
Note: Rose will need to send in her WLSU dues for 2024..

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.**

WLSU Contact Information

| Vice President | 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— mem- bers@trsil.org website: <http://www.trsil.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
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.

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.

Save money: Join IRTA Life for \$400 before December 29 after which Life will be \$600

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

