

SCRTA NEWS

Summit County Retired Teachers Association

THE SUMMIT COUNTY AFFILIATE OF **Ohio Retired Teachers Association** August-September 2021

President's Corner



Dear Colleagues in SCRTA and especially new members,

It was with great joy and relief that your SCRTA Management Board met at the Akron Education Association's Building in person for the first time in 17 months! Zooming is O.K. but being together is sooo much better! This was a must attend meeting for these officers and chairs. Out of 20 possible attendees, 17 were present! That has to be a record in attendance for this organization's management group.

Why a MUST attend meeting? Our SCRTA future is at stake! We need to know who we can count on to support this educational retirement group. Seventy-five percent of our membership are life members, so they never have to pay dues again. So we must continually have new members join.

We had many ideas presented at this meeting to proceed...but now, we must see as many members as possible at our September 14, 2021 meeting at Guy's Restaurant at noon. Without members appearing in good numbers for OUR FIRST GENERAL MEETING, we will not feel very confident about our future. Each one of you reading this newsletter is so valuable to us.

Would you reach out to a new retiree and invite

them to this meeting? Do you have a favorite college professor or school principal who is retired? Do you realize that Summit County has 18 school districts within its boundaries? We have included a block with the names in this newsletter of the different school districts within Summit County.

Any education retiree from any county in Ohio is welcome to join Summit County Retired Teachers Association.

If they receive STRS pensions ... they should keep up with the latest news coming out of Columbus. We have the perfect Legislative Chairman in Bill Siegfert to keep us updated. He was the President of the Akron Education Association for many years. Akron retirees respect him so much because he was our chief negotiator. For many years, thanks much to Bill, Akron City School Teachers and Administrators had the best salary

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President's Corner, continued

levels in the county. I am sure your district attempted to keep up with us to attract new teachers and administrators. That was then ... not sure about that now.

Yes, one more challenge ... we need a new **TREASURER** as soon as possible. Our elections come up in November with nominations in September. There are some of you out there who like accounting ... you might just love this position. If you would try this position until November to see if you like it ... that would be so appreciated. I am sure Paul Green, who now has a home in Florida too, would mentor you. My number is on the inside of this newsletter ... call me.

We are very excited to welcome Jackie Hovey back to Akron. She has accepted the Assistant Treasurer/Membership position. Thanks Susanne Grywalski for acclimating Jackie to your schedules and practices. Appreciated your listening and following my ideas during these COVID months. I hope my special article regarding dues during those months is clearer to all.

Regarding our first General Meeting in a while, I would suggest wearing your masks when walking in, walking around, and leaving the restaurant. From what I see, many of us are vaccinated by now and are comfortable getting out and about. I also think wearing the masks makes the waiters and the unvaccinated feel more at ease.

Looking forward to seeing so many of you with your visitors. Almost forgot ... Ruby Winter is making a special basket for one the 2 members who brings in the most guests. And one of our Board Members said his wife was going to make a basket, too. So there will be special prizes for the 2 members who bring the most guests to the September 14th General Meeting.

And please tell me what other organization has a FREE RAFFLE? (Even giving out gas cards and other usable prizes.)

*As Always,
Mary Lou*



Did you know that the Summit County Sheriff's Office has an officer who speaks to Senior groups? Our **September 14, 2021** General Meeting will have Sgt. Mike Walsh sharing information on senior topics like how to avoid being burglarized, how drugs have become more potent, and some good practices so that we don't live with "Senior Fear." Sgt. Mike's main focus in his career is keeping seniors safe.

You don't want to miss this meeting. Bring a senior who could use some help in feeling safe. You will have an opportunity to ask questions ... if time is available.

2020—2021

SCRTA MANAGEMENT BOARD

President - Mary Lou Swartz (234-678-0747)

1st VP/ Prog. - Johnnette Curry (330-699-4123)

2nd VP/Legislative Chair - Bill Siegfert
(330-819-4123)

Past President - Paul Dimascio (330-882-4738)

Administrative Assistant - Judy Mervine
(330-745-7587)

Treasurer - Paul Green (330-733-7311)

Asst. Treasurer/Membership - Jackie Hovey (330-940-0147)

Public Relations - Ruby Winter (330-644-6886)

Newsletter Editor - Elaine Jarvis (330-607-0226)

Travel - Carolyn Vogenitz (330-645-9928)

Web Master - Leroy Martin (330-666-3984)

Nominating Committee: 3 elected members Carol Caughron (330-745-1776), Micki Lavis (330-854-3054) and Phyllis Lewis (330-342-3550); **2 Members at Large** Informative and Protective Services—**OPEN**; Christine Bean (330-784-4575) - Community Service

Scholarship Committee - Vicky Shaw (330-773-5862) and Judi Hill (330-688-2512) - Co-Chair

Chaplain - Rebecca Moore (330-497-9326)

Scholarship News

The Scholarship Committee is pleased to announce that we are awarding two students a scholarship of \$500.00 each for the 2021-22 academic school year.



The first recipient is no stranger to SCRTA. One of the recipients in 2018, **Nicholas Ratay** will begin his senior year at Kent State University in the fall. He has kept the membership updated at the end of every semester as requested. His update for Spring semester 2021 is as follows:

Hi SCRTA!

I hope everyone is doing well. I am just about to complete my third year of school. It has been a very enjoyable semester! Kent did a very good job accommodating for COVID so I was able to have many safe and in-person teaching and music experiences! It looks like I will complete this semester with all A's! This summer I am planning to work with the Revere High School marching band again, and next year will be my final year of school, with student teaching occurring next winter/spring! Thank you all for your support!



The second recipient is **Abigail May**, an honors student graduating from St. Vincent-St. Mary High School. Abigail plans to dual major in Elementary and Special Education at Marietta College.

Here is an excerpt from her essay:

I would like to pursue this type of career in education because I love working with children. Over the years I have been a tutor at Helen Arnold CLC, and it has been incredible. I remember the first time I stepped into a classroom to tutor, and I sat down with a little boy to work on his sight words, and he

struggled. He didn't know how to say very many of them, so I told him that I would be back tomorrow to see if he could do any better. When I walked into the classroom the next day, he ran over to me, grabbed my hand, and started dragging me to the table where his sight words were so he could show off how well he could read the words. I will never forget the excitement in his voice or the pure joy that was clearly visible on his face. I want children to love to come to school and be motivated to do well. The only way I can do that is by becoming a teacher, where I get to see the children's progress and joy each day.

A special thank you to the SCRTA members who have donated to the scholarship fund when we could not meet during the pandemic. Every donation helped to make it possible to award scholarships for the upcoming school year. The committee is looking forward to the September meeting, where we can meet and greet you all in person. Be blessed!

Vicky Shaw & Judi Hill

Scholarship Co-Chairpersons

SUMMIT COUNTY

City and Local School Districts:

Akron City	Mogadore Local
Barberton City	Nordonia Hills City
Copley-Fairlawn City	Norton City
Coventry Local	Revere Local
Cuyahoga Falls City	Springfield Local
Field Local	Stow-Munroe Falls City
Green Local	Tallmadge City
Hudson City	Twinsburg City
Manchester Local	Woodridge Local

If you know retired educators from any of the Summit County City and Local School Districts listed above, please consider inviting them to visit/join our Summit County Retired Teachers Association.



COLA Lawsuit Maneuvering Continues; Forensic Audit Blasts STRS Staff and Board

COLA

It's been over two years (May 23, 2019) since a pair of retired Cincinnati Public School teachers filed a class action lawsuit in the United States District Court, Southern District of Ohio, alleging that STRS broke the law when its Board voted to eliminate the annual cost of living adjustment (COLA).

July 28th of this year marked the one year anniversary of a magistrate's recommendation to a court judge, Judge **Timothy S. Black**, that the suit be dismissed and removed from the Court's docket. Since that time, there have been no fewer than ten motions, objections, orders, notices and responses as the unresolved case continues its long slog through the judicial process. There is a glimmer of hope as the Court's pandemic policies are lifted that another two years will not be needed before the Judge accepts the magistrate's recommendation or orders the case to move forward in his courtroom. We will continue to monitor the situation and report important developments as they occur.

STRS Forensic Audit

In the meantime, the forensic audit of STRS commissioned by ORTA and paid for by its highly successful crowdfunding effort (\$75,000) has been completed...almost. **Edward Siedle**, a pension forensic expert, Wall Street guru, former U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission attorney, Forbes magazine contributor and author of the book *Who Stole My Pension?* has issued his preliminary findings. The audit examined STRS investment strategies, practices and

policies, and evaluated the System's investment returns against the fees and bonuses STRS has paid to achieve those returns. ORTA pursued this strategy with the hope of showing conclusively that STRS's decision to eliminate the COLA was unjustified and not necessary to preserve the pension fund's financial well-being.

To put it mildly, Siedle had nothing positive to say about STRS. It would be impractical to present here in any detail his preliminary findings; his report is a whopping 127 pages long. The Executive Summary is 21 pages long. At the end of this article is a link to the STRS Ohio Watchdogs website that includes Siedle's full report, STRS's rebuttal of his findings and Siedle's response to the STRS rebuttal. In a nutshell, Siedle concluded:

1. STRS has long abandoned transparency;
2. Legislative oversight (by the Ohio Retirement Study Council as established in law) of the pension has utterly failed;
3. Wall Street has been permitted to pocket lavish fees without scrutiny;
4. Investment costs and performance may have been misrepresented;
5. Failure to monitor conflicts (of interest) may have undermined the integrity of the investment process.

Siedle's closing remark is an ominous one: "Billions that could have been used to pay retirement benefits promised to teachers have been squandered."

I've mentioned a couple times that Siedle's report is "preliminary." It is so because certain information his company has requested from STRS—which he and ORTA claim is public information—has not been provided. ORTA filed a lawsuit in May seeking to force STRS to provide the requested information. Court-ordered mediation of the dispute resulted in some documents being turned over, but not all.

Even as the dispute continues, Siedle has recommended, "based upon the expert findings in the

Please see Legislation, pg. 5

(Legislation, Continued)

report,” that pension stakeholders take several actions, including submitting the report to the Securities and Exchange Commission Enforcement Division’s Municipal Securities and Public Pensions Unit, the Division of Securities, Ohio Department of Commerce, Ohio Attorney General David Yost, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Franklin County prosecutor and the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio.

Interestingly, the STRS audit has given birth to a “Kickstarter Campaign,” the goal of which is to raise funds for a similar audit of the Ohio Public Employee Retirement System (OPERS). A Facebook group of OPERS retirees and active members called Save Our Pensions is conducting the fundraising effort. As with the COLA lawsuit, we will keep you informed of any significant further developments that arise in the wake of the publication of the STRS audit findings and recommendations. The website below includes a wealth of information related to the audit.

<https://www.strsohiowatchdogs.com>

Bill Introduced in Senate to Repeal WEP and GPO; House Bill Modifies WEP Formula

A bi-partisan bill that effectively eliminates the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) has been re-introduced in the Senate by **Sherrod Brown** (D-OH) and **Susan Collins** (R-ME). The *Social Security Fairness Act* would allow public pensioners and their families to collect full social security benefits which were reduced by legislation passed in 1977 (GPO) and 1983 (WEP). Over 2 million teachers, police officers, firemen and state, county and local government workers, including roughly 250,000 Ohioans, receive reduced social security benefits because of WEP and/or GPO.

In the House, H.R. 2337, the *Public Servants Protection and Fairness Act of 2021*, was introduced by **Rep. Richard E. Neal** (D-MA) on his own behalf and on behalf of a group of bi-partisan House

members. The House bill is weaker than the Senate bill in that it retains the pension offsets but it establishes an alternative formula to calculate Social Security retirement benefits for those who receive a public pension. Both bills have been assigned to committees.

Bill Siegferth, Legislative Chair



Our SCRTA chapter has a total of 412 members (312 lifetime members and 100 members who pay dues yearly).

In February, I contacted 35 members who had not paid dues in the last several years. Of the 35 contacted, 8 renewed their memberships and sent in their dues. If you received an email or letter from me, it is still not too late to send in your membership.

I am pleased to welcome our new members Janna Bruner and Joan Frase. In addition, we have three new members who joined through ORTA – Carol Lewis, Leslie Jean Schmock Riddle, and Deborah Ulrich. We hope they will be able to join us at the September 14th luncheon.

Thank you to the following members who were kind enough to send in donations: Diane Lazzerini, Vicky Shaw, Sharon Hall, Barbara Mesek, Mary West, Carmen Oyenque, and Patricia Koval.

One final note – Jackie Hovey, a former Akron Public School teacher, will be taking over the Membership Chair/Assistant Treasurer position. Her contact information is on the membership form in this newsletter. She has several ideas how our chapter can increase its membership and welcomes any of your suggestions or names of potential members.

Susanne Grywalski
Membership/Assistant Treasurer



Easing Back Into Society

Recently I viewed the television series on Ideastream (PBS) called *Professor T*. The Belgian drama set in Antwerp tells the story of a brilliant criminology professor who consults with detectives to solve crimes. A complex story, it reveals the professor's childhood trauma and the role it plays in his neuroses. Many episodes introduce us to prisoners who have committed serious crimes. (I don't want to give away too much of the story because PBS has recently begun to show a remake of the series with an English-speaking cast.) While intently reading the English captions, I listened to the Dutch language throughout each episode and was thrilled and amused by the varied scripts, the acting, and the way the professor's frequent hallucinations were shown to the viewers.

Now to my point. The series led me to think about the struggle of prisoners who must find their way in society after living in a closed community. I cannot imagine the challenges faced by a person released from prison or from a long-term facility such as a mental health or addiction rehab clinic. I also think of the struggle military veterans face when they return home.

It led me to ponder the sense of anxiety around reintegrating, and I encourage you as we do our best to resume what we *used* to consider normal day-to-day living. Most of us are already well on our way after phasing in small gatherings with friends, family members, and, of course, doctors' visits. We may have timidly begun to put ourselves in public places that had been off limits for so long such as houses of worship. Have you resumed visits to the library, barber, hair salon or with family members or friends who have been vaccinated? Do you feel comfortable

shopping for groceries without a mask? Perhaps you are among the brave who have already resumed travel to far off places! Whatever our outings, we choose activities that are most enjoyable to us now.

The Rev. Paul Womack, a chaplain at Chautauqua this summer, used the parable of the lost sheep and the lost coin to talk about how we all feel we have lost something(s) during the past year and a half. (He joked about his solution for finding a lost book. He buys a new copy and quickly thereafter finds the lost one.) In both parts of the parable the person who finds what was lost invites the community to celebrate what was found – to rejoice!

Rev. Womack asks us to ponder what things of value we have lost during the pandemic as we look forward to the time when we can celebrate with the community. SCRTA is part of our supportive community. We have lost that community for a while, but can begin to find it again by attending our next luncheon. We are fortunate to have the folks at Guy's Party Center who fastidiously sanitize the venue on a daily basis and who take all precautions to keep customers safe as they provide delicious food for us.

I am grateful we can look forward to sharing stories of things we had lost (most of all in-person family contacts) and are now found! As we rediscover activities, we can experience a rebirth of what has been missed and support each other in our re-entry process. Hope to see you soon!

Becky Moore, SCRTA Chaplain





It has been a busy couple of months at ShelterCare, and we have so much to be grateful for these days! Between the wonderful spring weather we've been enjoying lately, along with the generous friends who have offered their lives and support to our youth, it's important to acknowledge God's hand on this agency and all of the opportunities we have been gifted. What a blessing it is to be part of such a loving community, eager to give back and make a difference in this world. From in-kind donations to monetary contributions and service projects, every day we are reminded of God's love and presence through the kindness of our donors. There simply are not enough ways for us to thank you all for your support, but we want you to know how much we appreciate you. **To our friends, donors, and readers, nothing we do here would be possible without you.** Thank you for playing such a major role in the lives of our youth.

A MESSAGE FROM CHRISTINE BEAN

SCRTA has been sending your donations of various items such as school supplies, paper products, hygiene and cleaning supplies to ShelterCare. As you can see in the reprint of the article that was in the June ShelterCare newsletter, the management and clients of the center are very appreciative of the support they receive from organizations such as SCRTA.

YOU CAN
make a difference

A SPECIAL MESSAGE TO SCRTA MEMBERS WHO PAID 2020 DUES

Although we did not have any meetings in 2020, a number of you paid 2020 dues. In the March/April 2021 newsletter, I announced that those SCRTA members in question, could have their 2021 dues waived. I neglected to add, that if you wanted to accept this gift of a free year, you would need to inform SCRTA leadership. (You, of course would still have needed to pay your \$30.00 to ORTA.)

A number of you not only paid your 2020 dues but also paid for 2021, too! So, if you paid for BOTH years...it also seemed reasonable to me that your bonus year would be for 2022.

In retrospect, because I didn't announce that SCRTA leadership would need to be informed about your acceptance of the bonus year concept and because we don't have much revenue coming in to our SCRTA chapter each year, I am withdrawing the offer. Thank you for understanding.

We now have a new Membership and Assistant Treasurer, Jackie Hovey, and I want her to have an enjoyable beginning in her volunteer position. She will be accepting money at our September 14, 2021 Luncheon meeting from those members who have not paid their 2021 dues of \$40.00 She will send in your dues to ORTA (\$30) for you. Membership dues can also be mailed to Jackie. Please see the form in this newsletter.

I apologize for the confusion I have caused. I blame it all on the COVID year mindset. I wanted to acknowledge my gratitude to those of you who paid dues to our SCRTA chapter during an inactive year.

Sincerely,
Mary Lou Swartz, SCRTA President

SCRTA / ORTA GENERAL LUNCHEON MEETING

Tuesday, September 14, 2021

Guy's Party Center

500 East Waterloo Road, Akron, OH 44319

12 Noon

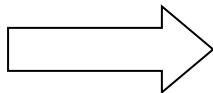
Price: \$20.00

DOOR PRIZES AND 2 SPECIAL PRIZES

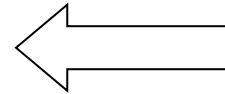
Bring 5 or more items for the Community Service Project and receive an extra door prize ticket. There will be special prizes for the two people who bring the most guests to this meeting.

When you make your reservation, you will need to indicate your entrée choice: Beef Tips, Chicken Paradise, or Rigatoni with Meat Balls. Along with the entrée, they will be serving potatoes, green beans, salad, rolls/butter, and desert. Coffee, tea or lemonade are included with your entrée. Tax & tip are included.

Clip this reservation form and send to: Ruby Winter 3873 Roller Ave., Akron, OH 44319 (330-644-6886)



LUNCHEON RESERVATION



NAME _____ ENTRÉE SELECTION: ____ BEEF TIPS ____ *CHICKEN PARADISE
____ RIGATONI AND MEAT BALLS

Check your choice of entrée, make checks payable to SCRTA and send to Ruby Winter. She must receive this completed reservation form and your check by **Friday, September 10.**

Note: Chicken Paradise is charbroiled chicken breast in an Italian dressing based marinade.



Our luncheon meetings are on Tuesdays!!



DUAL-MEMBERSHIP FORM FOR SCRTA & ORTA DUES

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____ / _____ / _____
Street City Zip

SCRTA / ORTA DUAL-MEMBERSHIP DUES \$40 ____ (SCRTA \$10 / ORTA \$30)
(Dual-membership required) YEAR YOU RETIRED _____

I am a SCRTA LIFE member _____

I am an ORTA LIFE member _____

I pay ORTA directly _____

School District _____

BRING THIS FORM WHEN PAYING DUES. MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO SCRTA.

Check # _____ Email: _____

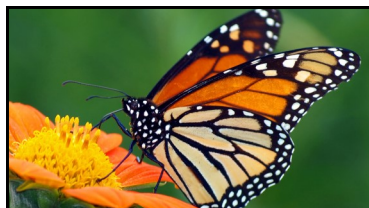
BY MAIL SEND TO: JACKIE HOVEY 1085 COOKHILL CIRCLE, AKRON, OH 44312

Summit County Retired Teachers Association
452 Herbert Rd.
Akron, Ohio 44312

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U. S. POSTAGE PAID
AKRON, OHIO 44309
Permit No. 418

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

August-September



2021

SCRTA Website
www.summitcountyrta.org

Leroy Martin - Webmaster
lmartin561@gmail.com

COMMUNITY SERVICE

ShelterCare still is being supported by SCRTA through donations such as school supplies as well as other needed items such as paper towels, hygiene and cleaning supplies. Please consider bringing donations to our September 14th General SCRTA meeting at Guy's Party Center.

Christine Bean, Community Service Chairman



SEPTEMBER 14, 2021 ... SCRTA /ORTA General Luncheon Meeting ... 12 noon at Guy's Party Center

SEPTEMBER 21, 2021 ... SCRTA Management Board Meeting ... 9:30 am at AEA Bldg.

NOVEMBER 16, 2021 ... SCRTA / ORTA General Luncheon Meeting... 12 Noon at Guy's Party Center