

SCRTA NEWS

Summit County Retired Teachers Association

THE SUMMIT COUNTY AFFILIATE OF Ohio Retired Teachers Association March–April 2020

President's Corner



Hello Dear Colleagues,

I am back in the SCRTA saddle again. Four years older and having to think more than I had planned to this year!

So let's get down to business and have some sharing of ideas. This first 2020 meeting at Guys Restaurant will be a little different since we are going to have a buffet luncheon versus a sit down and be served affair. All the officers will be anxious to know how you like this change.

We must have at least 50 guests each luncheon. Currently we are barely making that number. Do you think that it is the day (Tuesday) that is causing a shortage of attendees? We used to have Mondays as our luncheon days. Please be prepared to tell us your opinion when we meet in April.

Our membership needs to have more retired teachers join us from the many school districts in Summit County. There are 16 different school systems in our county. If you know a retired teacher from any of following districts, please invite them to our meeting on Tuesday, April 7, 2020! The Summit County school systems areAKRON, BARBERTON, COPLEY-FAIRLAWN, COVENTRY,

CUYAHOGA FALLS, GREEN, HUDSON, MANCHESTER, NORDONIA, NORTON, REVERE, SPRINGFIELD, STOW-MUNROE, TALLMADGE, TWINSBURG AND WOODRIDGE.

I believe one of the best incentives for coming to our luncheons is that we give out free raffle items. You don't even pay for them. Come on now... when was the last time you went to an event and they gave you a raffle ticket for free! Two of the many gifts are gas cards! Now, do you know any other group that does that?

Another incentive just given to me is an extra raffle ticket if you bring someone new who is retired from any district listed above. Since we also collect small items for the needy like soap, hand lotion, toothpaste, etc. you possibly could win more than one prize at our luncheons. You could win 3 raffle

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tickets. I would like to end my column with a big thank you to Paul Dimascio for being such a great President for us the last four years. And Paul's wife, Sandy, was so good to us with her homemade luncheons when we had to meet at his home. Thanks again Sandy!

Thank you to all the officers who are willing to stay in their positions and continue to volunteer to make our association strong.

We will see each other sooner than we expect because time goes faster as we age, don't you think?

As always,
Mary Lou



P.S. We need to get more retired principals and professors in SCRTA!

SCRTA Program



Join us on April 7th for our next luncheon meeting and be treated to the vocal talents of students from several area schools in Akron. These young people are very talented and entertaining. Looking forward to seeing you!

Johnnette Curry, 1st Vice President and Program Chairman

ONE OF THE
GREATEST GIFTS
YOU CAN GIVE IS
YOUR TIME

#VOLUNTEER



2020—2022

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 - Susanne Grywalski
(330-773-9269)

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 - Mary Anasson (330-836-4272) - Informative and Protective Services; 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

SCRTA Membership, it's that time again. "What time?" you may ask. Time for the 50-50 Scholarship Raffle at the April General Meeting. Please know that everything you give, whether by the donation cups or the raffle goes directly to the scholarship recipients. We thank you for your generosity and the recipients are always grateful. As promised, we have two updates from this past fall:

"I graduated summa cum laude with a B.S. in early childhood education in May 2019. Unfortunately, I have not found a full-time teaching position as of yet, but I am actively looking. I am currently a substitute teacher in the Cuyahoga Falls City School District and Green Local School District. I love every minute of it!"

Thank you!
Olivia Myers

"I am currently student teaching in music at Tuslaw Middle School and High School in Massillon! I'm having a wonderful time and learning so much. There's no doubt that I've chosen the right path of education. I am looking forward to my graduation from the University of Akron in December!

I can't thank you all enough for helping me pay for my schooling. Thank you all for what you do to help area education majors like myself go to college and support the schools in the community in the ways that you do!"

Best,
JoAnna Hrepcak

As you see, our past scholarship recipients are on the

move. Applications will be sent to the schools soon so get ready to meet the new recipients at the June meeting!

Scholarship Co-Chairmen

Judi Hill and Vicky L. Shaw



While visiting the ORTA website recently, I discovered many helpful resources that are available to local chapters. One of the most interesting of all the resources is the **2019 edition** of the **ORTA Membership Growth Handbook**.

The purpose of the handbook is to share ideas to stimulate and support an effort to grow your Association's membership. These ideas have been used with success by other associations. Each association, of course, must consider what their local leaders feel will be best for their organization.

The subject content of the handbook includes information about Pre-retirement Meetings; Teacher Grant Awards; A+ Teacher Award Programs; Each One Bring One Programs; Mailings; Social Concepts; Plays, Concerts, Travel; Successful Recruiting and Retention Practices for Younger Retirees ... along with other General Information.

There are many, many practical and excellent ideas within the contents of the **2019 ORTA Membership Growth Handbook**. Anyone who is interested in helping to flesh out some ideas to revitalize the Summit County Retired Teachers Association should visit the ORTA website (orta.org) and/or contact Mary Lou Swartz, SCRTA President, at 234-678-0747 or (mlswartz129@gmail.com).

Elaine Jarvis, SCRTA Newsletter Editor



Improves Slightly

No progress has been made in the lawsuit filed by two Cincinnati Public Schools retirees over STRS's 2017 decision to suspend annual cost of living adjustments. The class action suit was filed in the United States District Court, Southern District of Ohio, on May 23, 2019. At present, STRS and the plaintiffs are at odds over whether the case is appropriately before the federal court or if it should be heard in a state court. Information available to us at this time suggests that STRS prefers that the matter not be addressed in federal court, the thinking being that the system is governed by state law and that state courts may be more sympathetic to the decision to suspend COLA payments.

On a related note, Ohio's largest public employee pension system, PERS, voted last September to freeze cost of living adjustments in 2022 and 2023. Unlike STRS, PERS must have legislative approval to implement its plan. Many legislators are hesitant to approve the freeze, in large part because of the onerous changes being made to the health care plan offered by PERS. One of those changes includes giving stipends to retirees who would then be responsible for buying their own coverage, for example, through the insurance marketplace.

STRS's **2019 Valuation Report** shows slight improvement in the System's **funded ratio** (the percentage of funds available to pay benefits compared to actuarial liabilities) and in the **funding period** (the number of years needed until actuarial assets cover actuarial liabilities).

The funded ratio increased to 76.1% from the previous year's 75.5%. The funding period improved to 16.6 years from 17.8 years. (Ohio law prohibits funding periods in excess of 30 years.) Of these two

statistics, the more important one relating to a possible reinstatement of a COLA is the funded ratio. In the spring of 2019, STRS adopted a funding policy which included the goal of reaching a funded ratio of 100%. However, a provision included in the policy allows for a possible consideration of plan changes (restoring a COLA) when the funded ratio reaches 85% or greater. Given the small increase in the funded ratio from last to this year, and the STRS staff's estimate that there is a 25% chance that the funded ratio may drop to below 50% within the next decade using current investment strategies, the odds favoring reinstatement of a COLA in any amount and any time soon seem to be very unattractive.

Reduced Benefits Often Include COLA Cuts

There is at least one public pension system in each of the fifty states. Between 2009 and the end of 2018, plan benefits were reduced in all but nine states. The reductions took the form of increased employee contributions (4% phased in over four years under Ohio's 2013 reform plan), increases in the period used to figure final average salary (from 3 highest to 5 highest years in Ohio), decreases in the percent earned per year of service (2.2% in Ohio), increases in the age or service years needed to qualify for full benefits (a phased in plan through 2026 in Ohio), and COLA reductions.

According to the National Association of State Retirement Administrators, COLA reductions were made in 31 states. Changes in 17 states affected retirees, current employees and new hires were affected in 7 states, and new hires only were affected in 7 states.

In Washington, WEP and GPO Bills Stall

Two bills introduced early in the first session of

(Please see Legislation, pg. 5)

(Legislation, Continued)

the 116th United States Congress, one in the House and one in the Senate, and both of which would repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset, have stalled with no action taken thus far on either. (For a detailed report on each bill, WEP and GPO, see the last newsletter on SCRTA's website.)

The House Resolution (HR 141) was introduced by Illinois **Rep. Rodney Davis** and is before the Social Security Sub-committee of the House Ways and Means Committee. Ohio's **Sherrod Brown** introduced the Senate Bill (S.521) which remains before the Senate Finance Committee.

We will keep you informed of any movement on either bill between now and the end of the current session (January 3, 2021).

EdChoice Spells Trouble for STRS

It has finally dawned on the Ohio legislature that providing tuition vouchers for private and parochial schools has become a runaway freight train threatening the financial well-being of many public school systems in the state, including those whose fiscal integrity over the years has been strong. The awakening has resulted in the legislature pushing back this year's application deadline, giving lawmakers time to figure out a way to appease voucher-eligible families while at the same time not destroying local school district budgets. The House and Senate each have their own ideas on how to move forward. As of the date of this article, the House proposes to set income guidelines to determine voucher amounts, eliminating eligibility based upon poor school performance on the Department of Education's school report card. The Senate's idea is to reduce the number of voucher-eligible schools from 1,227 to 425. The two bodies are now attempting to reach a compromise agreement on how to move forward.

Not too many people have given any thought as to how EdChoice vouchers are harmful to public school employee pension plans, including STRS. The

movement of kids from public to parochial and private schools means fewer public school teachers, lower public school payroll growth and, it follows, lower payroll contributions to the retirement system from both individual members and employers. Teachers in parochial and private schools are not members of STRS. It's not surprising that the shrinkage in payroll contributions was among the reasons listed by STRS Executive Director **Michael Nehf** in his 2017 letter to members explaining the need to suspend cost of living adjustments:

"The results of these studies indicate that several factors, including lower than expected investment returns, longer lifespans among active and retired members, and lower than expected payroll growth continue to have a negative effect on the pension fund." (Emphasis added.)

Bill Siegferth, SCRTA Legislative Chair

Membership

Thank you to all of the members who have paid their 2020 membership dues.

If you are not sure if you have paid, please email me at sgrywalski@aol.com or stop by the table at the April luncheon.

Susanne Grywalski
Membership Chair/Asst. Treasurer



SCRTA Luncheon and Meeting

Tuesday, April 7, 2020

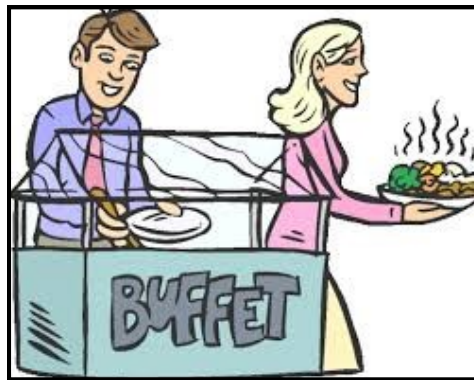
Guys Party Center

500 E. Waterloo Rd

Akron, OH 44319

Doors Open - 11:15 am Luncheon - 12 noon

***New* Buffet Menu**



**Tossed Salad, Breadsticks, Chicken Paradise,
Baked Scrod, Au Gratin Potatoes,
Rigatoni with Meatballs, Green Beans,
Coffee, Tea, Lemonade.**

Price of the luncheon - \$17

Reservation Deadline - March 31, 2020

Checks Payable to SCRTA

**The April 7th SCRTA program will feature the vocal talents
of students from several area schools in Akron.**

Mail Reservations to Ruby Winter 3873 Roller Ave., Akron, OH 44319

For More Information call Ruby at 330-962-6886 or

Carolyn Vogenitz at 330-645-9928

SCRTA / ORTA GENERAL LUNCHEON MEETING

Tuesday, April 7, 2020

Guy's Party Center

500 East Waterloo Road, Akron, OH 44319

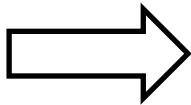
12 Noon

Price: \$17.00

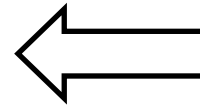
DOOR PRIZES

Bring 5 or more items for the Community Service Project and receive an extra door prize ticket.

Clip this reservation form and send it and a \$17 check (*payable to SCRTA*) to Ruby Winter 3873 Roller Ave., Akron, OH 44319 (330-962-6886) or Carolyn Vogenitz 3326 Waterside Dr. Akron, OH 44319 (330-645-9928) by March 31, 2020. Tax and tip are included in the luncheon price.



**BUFFET LUNCHEON
RESERVATION FORM**



NAME _____

Address _____ **Phone** _____

Number of reservations @\$17 _____ **Total amount enclosed** _____

Guests:

School District

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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 pay ORTA directly _____

I am an ORTA LIFE member _____

BRING THIS FORM WHEN PAYING DUES. MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO SCRTA.
Check # _____ **Email:** _____

BY MAIL SEND TO: SUSANNE GRYWALSKI – 1862 GLENMOUNT AVE., AKRON, OH 44301

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

March—April



2020

SCRTA Website
www.summitcountyrta.org

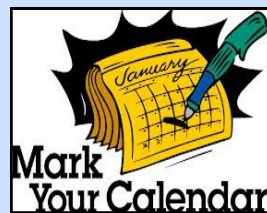
Leroy Martin - Webmaster
lmartin561@gmail.com

COMMUNITY SERVICE

You've had several months to collect items for donations to the various groups we support. Thank you for helping those in need.

SCRTA has received an invitation from Shelter Care (Safe Landing for Boys and Girls) for their fundraiser. It is a dinner and program to honor and remember David Fair, the Founder of Shelter Care. It is at Tangier restaurant on **May 7, 2020** from 5 to 8 p.m. Tickets are **\$75**. Call 330-630-5600 for tickets.

Christine Bean, Community Service Chairman



April 7, 2020 ... SCRTA / ORTA General Luncheon Meeting ... 12 Noon at Guy's Party Center.

April 14, 2020... SCRTA / ORTA Management Board Meeting ... **9:30 am** at the AEA Building in Akron.

June 2, 2020... SCRTA / ORTA General Luncheon Meeting ... 12 Noon at Guy's Party Center.

REMINDER: All General Luncheon Meetings at Guy's Party Center are on **TUESDAYS.**

**SUMMIT COUNTY RETIRED TEACHERS
ASSOCIATION
\$1,000.00 Scholarship**



The scholarship candidate must meet the following criteria:

1. Must have graduated or will graduate with at least a 3.0 GPA from an accredited high school (transcript with State Testing results required).
2. If a post high school student attending college, must have a 3.0 GPA (transcript required).
3. Must be pursuing an education degree.
4. Evidence of college enrollment must be submitted with the SCRTA application form (using format guidelines) to be considered for a scholarship.
5. The Scholarship Co-Chairman must receive the scholarship application no later than **April 1st** of the year of the application.
6. The Scholarship Committee will inform the winner no later than **April 30th** of the year of the application.
7. The scholarship winner will be notified and invited to be a guest at a Summit County Retired Teachers luncheon.
8. The applicant must be sponsored by a past or present educator.

The completed application must be submitted by **April 1, 2020** to:

Vicky Shaw
SCRTA Scholarship Co-Chairman
At: 1372 Hammel St.
Akron, OH 44306
Or: vlps2657@sbcglobal.net

**SUMMIT COUNTY RETIRED TEACHERS
ASSOCIATION
\$1,000.00 Scholarship
Application Format Guidelines**

1. Must be typed.
2. Must be double-spaced.
3. All sections of application must be complete.

Date of application _____

Applicant's full name _____

Street address _____

City, State, Zip code _____

Phone _____ Email _____

High School _____ Graduation Year _____

GPA _____ (Enclose transcript, high school students only)

College/University to attend _____ Year _____

College University _____ Year _____
(Enclose transcript)

Sponsor's Name and Phone Number:

Please include a typed document totaling 100 - 1000 words for the following four prompts:

- A. Why are you pursuing a career in the field of education?
- B. Describe how your favorite teacher, or mentor, inspired you.
- C. Describe specific leadership experiences you have had.
- D. Explain any work experiences or community service activities in which you have participated.