

SCRTA NEWS

Summit County Retired Teachers Association

THE SUMMIT COUNTY AFFILIATE OF Ohio Retired Teachers Association May-June 2022

President's Corner



My Dear SCRTA Members,

As I begin this newsletter in mid-April, I note that we still have snow coming down in NE Ohio. So, as I look out my window and check the weather, it almost feels and looks like winter. Would you believe...it is 36 degrees right now? Now onto happier thoughts...

Those of you who missed our last luncheon meeting, trust me, it was wonderful! We had an attendance of 69 members and guests. We had the best turnout since November of 2019! The main reason was the entertainer...our own Lennie Green! How did we wait so long to hear the beautiful range of Lennie's voice? If you closed your eyes, you would have felt that you were present in Carnegie Hall! Bravo! Bravo! Mr. Green! Your lovely pianist, Amy, so talented, played with the gentleness and dignity of an angel!

By now you have received ballots and voted for our retiree representative. It is so good to have Bill Siegferth, our Legislative & 2nd VP to share the latest news from STRS! Having Bill as one of our officers is another reason to be a member of SCRTA! I doubt all of the candidates put together do not know as much as Bill regarding STRS. He is very passionate about legislation and always wants the best for those he represents. If you have

questions for him at our luncheon meetings ... please don't hesitate to raise your hands and ask him after his report.

I want to thank Carolyn Vogenitz, Vicky Shaw, Christine Bean, and our Past President, Paul Di Mascio, for volunteering to help with the dinner reservations, nametags, purchasing gifts for the raffle, welcoming members and guests at the entrance, and especially for the counting and counting of the money and checks received. I was even helping triple check the money as I was the one depositing all of it at the bank. (Ruby dear, we pray you are recuperating and getting back to us) Yes, folks...it took four people to handle all the responsibilities that Ruby did by herself.

A little reminder for those who bring guests. The reason the raffle is LAST is because we want the recipients of the gifts to be PRESENT! If you LEAVE before the raffle begins, you lose out on getting the

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prize. I believe there was some confusion at our last meeting.

Until we have a greater number of members coming to our luncheon meetings, we will continue to have a special prize for the person bringing the most guests or potential new members who join at our meeting. If you bring one or two new SCRTA members that is great, but we can't be giving gifts for just a few new members. Let's say 5 new members at the same time...yes, you deserve more than a thank you. Remember folks, we have very little money coming into our treasury each year. The majority of our membership are lifetime members of SCRTA and ORTA! When our Membership Chairman/Assistant Treasurer, Jackie Hovey, shares her info with us, listen carefully. You will be surprised how well we do with such little money.

Remember, anyone interested in being on our Management Board, we welcome you to join us at any time to see how we work for you! The next one will be on July 12, 2022, at the AEA Building on North Main Street at 9:45 A.M.

I am opening up the nomination committee to at least two new members. If you would like to join this committee, please let me know now. The present group will need more members to start contacting our membership for the leadership positions in the year 2023 and for 2024. I will be leaving the Presidency in November 2022. The present officers will continue until November of 2023 unless they tell the nominating committee now, they are not continuing. The only reason I am leaving is that I ended up being the Covid President. It was only to be a few months but it ended up being two years!! For new members, it is important you understand why it is time I leave this position...I was President in 2013-2016 and 2020-2021 and still finishing up in 2022!

Looking forward to the next seven months with all of you!

Mary Lou, SCRTA President



JUNE 7, 2022 SCRTA PROGAM ANNOUNCED

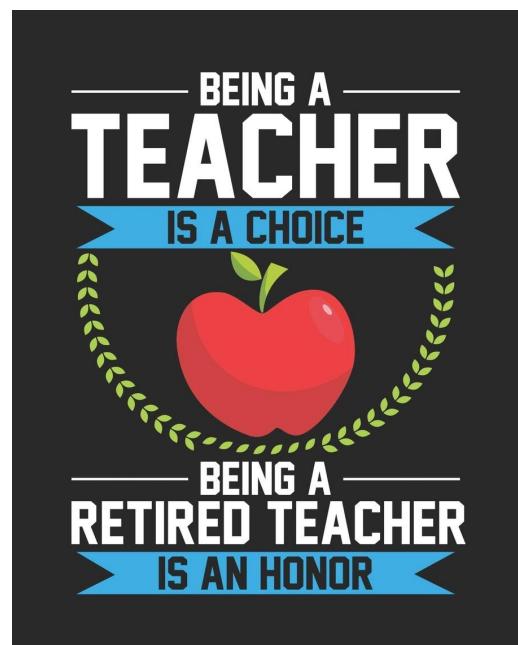


Thank you to all members and guests who attended the April SCRTA luncheon meeting. The musical presentation from Lennie Green was beautiful.

Join us on **June 7th**, for our next general meeting and lunch. The guest presenter will be **Garry Russell who is the Deputy Executive Director of Member Benefits and Chief Benefits Officer of STRS.** Mr. Russell is excited about sharing with us benefit updates and to answer questions that you may have. Don't forget to send in your reservations.

We look forward to seeing you.

*Johnnette S. Curry
1st Vice President and Program Chairman*



ABOUT GARRY RUSSELL
SCRTA June 7, 2022 Presenter



Mr. Russell is the Chief Benefits Officer in a premier retirement system with comprehensive experience in public pension management, including strategic planning, staffing, budget administration, stakeholder communication, actuarial analysis and delivering exceptional customer service.

- 28 years of experience at STRS Ohio with 22 years in senior management.
- Extensive knowledge in pension plan design, actuarial concepts, institutional investment concepts and the impact on plan funding.
- Proven track record of managing exceptional customer service while improving processing efficiencies and reducing costs.
- Proven abilities in implementing large-scale projects such as pension reform, pension administration systems and a defined contribution program.
- Skilled in consensus building with cross-functional teams.



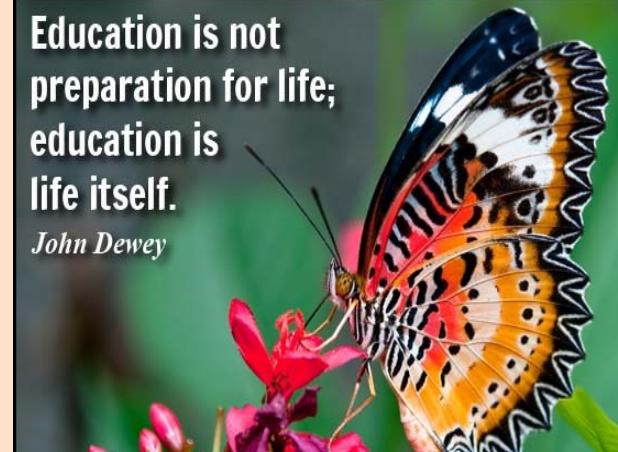
We want to welcome new members Christina Haas and Anita Stricklen. Christina retired from Akron Public Schools in 2003 and Anita from Norton City Schools in 2000.

All paying members are encouraged to send in their 2022 dues at this time. 25 members have paid already. If you are not sure if you have paid this year please email or call me. Please fill out the membership form in the newsletter and return it to me with a check made out to SCRTA for \$40 (SCRTA keeps \$10 and \$30 is sent to ORTA).

*Jackie Hovey
Membership & Assistant Treasurer
330-940-9147
jhoweysue@gmail.com*

**Education is not preparation for life;
education is life itself.**

John Dewey



LEGISLATION UPDATE



IRRESPONSIBLE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TAINTS STRS ELECTION

We've all read accounts of how some social media participants and website sponsors and contributors have used the technology to attack individuals and institutions and make misleading, inaccurate or flat-out false statements about them. Regrettably, the State Teachers Retirement System, its employees and its board members have become the targets of such irresponsible use of the internet.

Two groups ratcheted up their online efforts to discredit STRS as this year's board elections approached, and they continued their campaigns throughout the month of April while elections were taking place. One of these groups is the "STRS Ohio Watchdogs." They're "all-in" on the social media landscape...Twitter, Facebook plus they host and moderate their own website. The other is "Fix My Pension." There is no evidence that the two are one in the same or even loosely affiliated. There's no way to determine if there is any relationship because there is no ownership or contact information available for the Fix My Pension crew on their website. The group is, as STRS has said, untraceable.

The Watchdogs and Fix My Pension do, though, have much in common. For example, both claim that STRS pensions are the worst in the country, both claim the system is irreparably damaged, and both claim that for every dollar teachers put into STRS they only get 77 cents back in benefits. Fix My Pension attributed this last claim to the Boston College Center for Retirement Research; in response, the Center initiated contact with and notified STRS that it had conducted no such research or drawn any such conclusions, and that it has asked the group(s) to stop attributing the false information to the Research

Center. The biggest similarity between the two is their endorsements for the STRS Board. Both endorsed candidates to run against the incumbent directors. Liz Jones—the retired Cincinnati teacher who ran and lost two years ago—is again being pushed for the retired member seat. Julie Sellers, president of the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers and Zanesville assistant superintendent Steve Foreman are the groups' choices for active member seats. All subscribe to the unsubstantiated (and in some cases debunked) claims of their endorsers and promise, if elected, to save the System from certain self-explosion.

Regrettably, the Ohio Retired Teachers Association (ORTA) has claimed a vocal and prominent position in the Watchdogs kennel, and no wonder. Dean Dennis serves on the ORTA Legislative Committee. He is also the founder of the STRS Ohio Watchdogs website, and a plaintiff in the COLA lawsuit against STRS. ORTA's Executive Director, Robin Rayfield, serves as one of the moderators for the STRS Ohio Watchdogs. In one of the finest examples of how social media can be used irresponsibly to broadcast intimidating and inaccurate messages that lead to discomfort and alarm for many readers, Rayfield took to YouTube to announce ORTA's endorsements for the STRS Board (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vTupp5yidvw>). In a performance that won't have any of the world's movie studio companies inviting auditions, Rayfield not surprisingly endorsed the same candidates as the Watchdogs and Fix My Pension. In the process, he made several claims without any supporting evidence whatsoever: our current pension is broken and it's broken beyond repair; retirees are getting far less than they were promised; active teachers have the worst deal in America; teachers are paying in more than their pensions are worth; we feel the pain of our active brethren who are paying more and receiving less; everyone involved is getting shafted except the people who work at STRS ... those people have the

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best deal in America. Finally, in one of Rayfield's more puzzling claims, he said, "The current OEA-endorsed candidates are the root cause of what's wrong with our pension." His comment apparently doesn't apply to an OFT-endorsed Board member who has served for a number of years and who, to our knowledge, has a voting record that very closely resembles the records of those he blames for all the problems. Secondly, ORTA's retired teacher membership stands at approximately 18,000. That's roughly 13% of the total number of retired teachers receiving a benefit from STRS. ORTA recently opened up membership to active teachers, a move some feel was made to rescue a sinking ship. Whether that's the case or not, one has to wonder why ORTA would lay the entire blame for what it perceives to be a hopelessly broken retirement system on the Board members who were elected by the largest bloc of teachers it (ORTA) now wishes to recruit into its membership ranks.

STRS has taken the high road in the face of the social media pounding it has taken. Only recently has it communicated to members about gross misrepresentations that have been published, and then only because the false information was being used in an attempt to influence the election.

STRS is certainly not the organization these social media groups paint it to be. The System has regularly reported highly positive findings by independent groups. For example, in the recent past, STRS earned the Auditor of State's top rating award for open and transparent government. The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) awarded STRS Ohio its Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the system's *Annual Comprehensive Financial Report* (ACFR) for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2020. STRS has received this award each year since 1990. And, contrary to claims by the social media groups that they represent Ohio teachers and retirees, and that teachers and retirees are "fed up" with STRS and are demanding change, independently conducted satisfaction surveys continue to show a

high degree of member confidence in and satisfaction with STRS.

At the time of this writing, the election for STRS board members was not completed. Regardless of the outcome, we are hopeful that members cast ballots based on factual information about each candidate, and not on the less than accurate claims and scare tactics delivered via social media.

Bill Siegferth,

SCRTA Legislative Chair/2nd Vice President



SCRTA MANAGEMENT BOARD

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

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

2nd VP/Legislative Chair - Bill Siegferth
(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
(330-940-9147)

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; Community Service** - Christine Bean (330-784-4575)

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

Bulk Mailing - Rozanne Emich (330-603-7660)

Chaplain - Rebecca Moore (330-497-9362)



At our house we continue an on-again off-again project. You may have heard of it. Formerly called "cleaning out the basement" the current term for it is "decluttering". We take a look at a zone of things that are most likely unneeded and just taking up space. More often than not, my husband and I work at a different pace. Steve's method is to look quickly at items before sorting them into one of the categories: recycle (paper or electronic), Goodwill donation, Habitat for Humanity donation, see-if-a-family-member-wants- it, or save it.

Years after retiring, I find things from my teaching days. Last week we found a booklet of students' work. Sometimes after they completed a writing assignment, I would have the children write neat copies to go in a book for our classroom library. One assignment was to write a letter and address the envelope to a Mother Goose character from a new character's point of view. The children worked in teams of two that week and amazed me with their clever creative writing. I set aside this booklet (so my husband wouldn't see me slacking off) and later read all fifteen letters before placing them in the recycling.

A large part of our decluttering requires going through my mother-in-law's belongings. When she left her home for Rockynol and years later after she passed, we had family members take what they wanted. Her remaining belongings were moved to our house. Little by little we have donated furniture and other goods. Some kitchen things, yarn and sewing materials, photos, and books remain. Last week we sorted kitchen items and books.

Bev's Christian faith directed her everyday living. Three of her prominent characteristics were her sense of humor, her reputation for being a good

cook, and her ability to keep lifelong friends. We still share stories that illustrate her fun way of looking at life. To illustrate the importance of friendships we only had to look through a few boxes of photos, cards, letters, and books. One box contained Christmas cards and thank you notes she received the last year she lived independently. Greetings were from friends old and new. Other cards and notes were from people she had helped in some way, most often friends she had invited to her place for a meal. Several notes showed appreciation for a cake or casserole in a time of need.

Her Bibles and other inspirational writers' books indicated the importance of her faith. One book, a Mother's Day gift from Steve, is a collection of verses by Helen Steiner Rice. You may know about the poet because she was a writer for a greeting card company. Her inspirational verses are frequently used today. The verse below taken from a dog-eared page shows Bev's philosophy of life. This book is a keeper.

Rebecca Moore, SCRTA Chaplain

Strangers Are Friends We Haven't Met

God knows no strangers,
He loves us all,
The poor, the rich,
The great, the small.
He is a friend
Who is always there
To share our troubles
And lessen our care.
No one is a stranger
In God's sight,
For God is Love
And in His Light
May we, too, try
In our small way
To make new friends
From day to day.
So, pass no stranger
With an unseeing eye.
For God may be sending
A new friend by.

Scholarship News

2022 Summit County Retired Teachers Association Scholarship Recipients



It's Scholarship Season!! Your donations through the "giving cups" on the tables at our luncheon meetings made it possible to award a second substantial scholarship. The Scholarship Committee is pleased to present the 2022 SCRTA scholarship recipients and their essay on why they wanted to become an educator.



Kady Bragg, Ellet Community Learning Center

Kady will be attending Kent State University majoring in Early Childhood Education. She played softball throughout high school and was a member of the National Honor Society.

After going back and forth between several other options I was interested in, I decided to choose to pursue a career in education. This took me quite some time, as I wanted to review all of my options and be sure that education is what I want to continue my schooling for. I have been wanting to be a teacher since I was a young girl.

Even though I steered off that track and considered other options, I found my way back to my original desire. I know this is going to be the right choice for me. I get excited and anxious thinking about the fact that I will be helping shape the minds of future generations and help change the lives of children. I have always loved kids and being able to teach and interact with them on a daily basis is something that I have become passionate about in this past year. Nothing else seems to catch my eye, and I can see myself being in a classroom. I have spent the last thirteen years in school being taught by dozens of teachers, some of whom have left lasting impacts on my life today. I have always envisioned being like the teachers that I have had the pleasure of learning from.

Kathryn Swanson, Barberton High School

Kathryn will be attending Bowling Green State University majoring in Music Education. She is a member of the National Honor Society and the French Honor Society (Société Honoraire de Français). She was a member of the symphonic band all four years. She also was involved on the academic challenge teams and was team captain for the past two years.

I am pursuing a career in the field of education because I believe it is so important to educate and help future generations learn and experience a love for learning. I want to teach kids about the things that I love and share my passion with them. I have had so many great teachers throughout grade school, and I want to be that positive role model for them as well. I would like to be a caring person that can help students with the area I am teaching, but also help them to grow as a person. Teaching is not just about the subject you are teaching, but also about the life lessons you can learn and take out of the classroom.

I have had many great teachers that have shown me that through the years and have made an effort to help me and my classmates leave as better people, not just more educated. I would like to share this with future students and be a person that can help and guide them through the good and bad. I love learning, and I would like to help future students find something they are passionate about and enjoy learning about. I want to inspire them and motivate them to reach for their goals and always strive to be better. I am pursuing a career in education because I hope to help people learn and grow in and outside school.

Congratulations to these young ladies and we wish them a bright future.

Mrs. Judi Hill and Mrs. Vicky Shaw – Scholarship Committee

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

**NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
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AKRON, OHIO 44309
Permit No. 418**

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

May - June



2022

**SCRTA Website
www.summitcountyrta.org**

**Leroy Martin - Webmaster
lmartin561@gmail.com**

Community Service

Due to your generosity, your donations exceeded the amount given last November. 160 items were given in April. A lot of hand soap, shampoo, plus other personal care items, cleaning and paper supplies were just a few of the many items donated. They will be given to Safe Landing and Battered Women's Shelter. If you have suggestions for donating to other organizations, please let me know. Thank you.

***Christine Bean,
Community Service Chairman***



June 7, 2022... SCRTA /ORTA General Luncheon Meeting ... 12 noon at Guy's Party Center

July 13, 2022 (Wednesday) ... SCRTA Management Board Meeting ... 10:30 am at AEA Bldg.

"A Teacher's Heart Never Retires"

**APRIL 5, 2022 SCRTA MEMBERSHIP
LUNCHEON MEMORIES**



SCRTA / ORTA GENERAL LUNCHEON MEETING

Tuesday, June 7, 2022

Guy's Party Center

500 East Waterloo Road, Akron, OH 44319

12 Noon

Price: \$20.00

DOOR PRIZES AND A SPECIAL PRIZE

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

There will be a special prize for the person who brings the most guests to this meeting.

The meal entrées are Beef Tips, Chicken Paradise, and Rigatoni with Meat Balls. Along with the entrées, they will be serving potatoes, green beans, salad, rolls/butter, and desert. Coffee, tea or lemonade are included with your meal. Tax & tip are included.

Clip this reservation form and send to: Carolyn Vogenitz, 3326 Waterside Drive Akron, OH 44319

Phone: (330-645-9928)

LUNCHEON RESERVATION

NAME _____ PHONE # _____

Please make checks **payable to SCRTA** and send to **Carolyn Vogenitz**. She must receive this reservation form and your check by **Friday, June 3, 2022**

Our luncheon meetings are on Tuesdays!!

DUAL-MEMBERSHIP FORM FOR SCRTA & ORTA DUES

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____ / _____ / _____
Street _____ City _____ Zip _____

SCRTA / ORTA DUAL-MEMBERSHP 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 _____
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