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- A great way to contribute to a scholarship fund
- In Memoriam

FROM OUR PRESIDENT



2018-2019 ORTA President,
Bee Lehner

Spring greetings, ORTA Members!

With “Spring” comes the kick-off to chapter visitations by your ORTA Executive Officers and Director! This past week I had the pleasure of driving to the Cheers Chalet outside of Lancaster, Ohio, to address the dedicated officers and members of the **Fairfield County Retired Teachers Association**. After sharing the “why” of becoming an ORTA member - to protect pensions and benefits of our members - an AMBA representative gave a very informative talk and slide presentation on the benefits of looking into their policies.

The Fairfield County Retired Teachers Association is only one of 80+ chapters in Ohio making up the Ohio Retired Teachers Association. Each chapter is a vital part of Ohio’s Association. We all share a mission and that is “to monitor, advocate for, and protect the pensions and benefits of our members. We also encourage individuals to improve the social and economic changes and issues relevant to our retirement.” We can only strengthen our Association by increasing the number of members we bring into our chapters. I encourage you to start your campaign, TODAY!

As we approach our “new” calendar year for ORTA Officers, I am asking for those of you in the **Northeast Region** to consider becoming a liaison for your region. Stella Hull is no longer able to continue as liaison and needs to step down. We have made several contacts but as of this time, we are still without a liaison. You would be joining two excellent, dedicated liaisons, Carol Kinsey and Kendra Burger! Please give the ORTA office a call to volunteer for this great leadership opportunity.

I am happy to report that we have recruited a new liaison for the **Southeast Region** of Ohio and shifted our current Southeast Liaison, Karen Butt to the **Central Region**. Karen will be replacing Kathy Russell who also needs to step down from her liaison position. Thank you Kathy, and thank you Karen for stepping in. We are so fortunate to have Don Baker return and become our Southeast Liaison, joining Brenda Davis and Don Ullmann! We know you will lead your southeastern chapters well— thanks, Don!

In the **Southwest Region**, Michael Ward is stepping down from his liaison position. We are still looking for a replacement for Michael, so please consider this appointment. You would be joining Ralph Moon, Becky Cropper, and Evelyn Yockey. Three great liaisons representing ORTA!

Last year at this time, I shared a membership incentive program initiated in the state of Georgia, which encourages chapters to increase their membership by at least 10% a year. The reward was that chapters reaching this goal would receive \$100 to go toward any program or project they may choose.

(con’d on next page)

Well, it seems that reaching a 10% gain over the previous year's total membership, was a little daunting for many chapters. While gaining on one end, they found themselves losing on the other end by members who had passed or moved away. We are in the discussion phase of coming up with a better incentive plan to help you increase your membership AND to be recognized for it. More on this in my April letter!

As I close, here's my final March thought to share:

"Retirement: Something that should be arrived at in haste and should be lived at in leisure."

-Anonymous

Warmest regards!

Bee Lehner, ORTA President



Greene Co. members Gale Adkins (ORTA Pres. Elect) and his wife Janet.

GREAT THINGS IN GREENE CO.

The winter quarter meeting of **Greene County Retired Teachers Association**, held at Memorial United Presbyterian Church in Xenia, featured a Member Recognition for **John and Kathleen O'Brien**; a Necrology Service for members who had passed away during the last year; and guest speakers **Alan Milkis** and **Kim Sheehan**, who spoke about the new Xenia YMCA facility located within the REACH building on Progress Drive.

Both honored members John and Kathleen O'Brien spoke about their education careers, their current interests while retired and more.

Guests Alan Milkis and Kim Sheehan from the new Xenia YMCA REACH center took time to explain the new facilities, developments and programs the center will offer the community for all ages such as Silver Sneakers for seniors, Zumba classes and even more activities for the local children.

The spring quarter meeting of GCRTA will be held at 11:30 AM May 22 at Memorial United Presbyterian Church in Xenia. All Greene County retired educators are welcome. Please contact Membership Chair **Linda Sessler** at Linnieann52@gmail.com or **937-371-3116** for any questions.

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dr. Robin Rayfield, ORTA
Executive Director

Greetings ORTA Members!

STRS News

The STRS Board of Trustees met in February. Much of the discussion was on the investment activity of our pension funds. As we all know, 2018 witnessed a downturn in the investment market. Thankfully, the start of 2019 is much more promising and most of the losses suffered at the close of 2018 were ‘made up’ by a stronger market so far this year. I mention this, not to frighten or cause concern, but to remind everyone that our pensions all rely on strong investments by the STRS people responsible for this activity. From what I have learned at meetings over the last couple of years, I am certain that the people at STRS do a great job with making the most of our portfolio. There was discussion in February’s meeting about the STRS Funding Policy and what direction future STRS boards might take. Currently, the STRS Funding Policy is focused on getting our system at a 100% funding level. In simple terms, this means the STRS Board is focused on bringing our assets (the money

we have invested plus the income to the system from active members and employers) to the same level our liabilities (what we owe to retirees and future retirees). At present our system is at a level of 75% funding when comparing our assets to our liabilities. Typically, the STRS system has operated in the 80% to 90% range. This goal of reaching 100% is somewhat of a new philosophy. The discussion at February’s meeting was about if future STRS Funding Policy might consider changes in benefits prior to reaching a level of 100%. Certainly, this discussion going forward will be of great importance to retirees.

ORSC Meeting

The group of legislators that closely monitor all 5 of the public pensions in Ohio, the Ohio Retirement Study Council (ORSC) met on March 14, 2019. Each of the pension’s provided an update of each system’s valuation and overall health. From what I heard all Ohio’s public pension systems face similar challenges. Going back to the previous thought on the investment activity of pension managers, each group offered what that group’s assumed rate of return was. Each of the pension groups had lowered their assumed rate of return over the past year. This is important to note as the assumed rate of return has a significant impact on the funding status of any pension system. The greater the assumed rate of return the better the funding status of a pension system. Currently, the assumed rate of return for the STRS system is 7.45%. STRS lowered its assumed rate of return at the last actuarial review, as have the other pension systems.

COLA

So, where are we at regarding our COLA? Currently, STRS sits at about 75% funding status with a goal of getting to 100%. With an assumed rate of return of 7.45% on our investments our system will not reach 100% funding for another 18 years. ORTA is of the opinion that our system does not have to reach 100% funding before retirees receive a COLA. While ORTA supports a goal of achieving a funding level of 100%, ORTA does not think retirees should have a promised COLA withheld until the system reaches 100% funding. Instead, ORTA supports a Funding Policy that makes progress towards 100% funding, while providing some benefit increase to retirees. ORTA’s efforts going forward will be to influence the STRS Board of Trustees towards a Funding Policy that is focused on a balance of providing benefit increases to retirees while making progress towards the goal of reaching a funding level of 100%.

Best Regards,

Dr. Robin Rayfield, ORTA Executive Director

NOBLE CO. “BOOKS” A WINNER



The Noble Co. Retired Teachers Association has awarded the 2018 winner of a \$500 Book Grant to **Taylor Franklin**.

Franklin is a 2018 graduate of Shenandoah High School, and is currently enrolled in the Primary Education Degree program at Muskingum College.

To learn more about this scholarship and Noble Co., please visit their [website](#).

Pictured above: Taylor Franklin accepting the \$500 Book Grant from NCRTA scholarship chair, Cyn Stallings.

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NEED A VACATION?



Vicki Doty and **Jerry Bunn**, retired teachers from Ottawa-Glandorf and Col. Grove, and members of the **Putnam County Retired Teachers**, are organizing a tour of the heart of Spain, **March 19-30, 2020**, through **GoAhead Tours**. The journey begins by flying to Barcelona. The next day is a visit La Sagrada Familia, Gaudi's "House of Bones", the 1992 Olympic site, and the Placa d'Espanya. Then, a free day to explore Barcelona or visit Montserrat, a mountain top monastery in the Catalan Pre-Coastal Range. Next, you will take a high-speed train to Madrid. While in Madrid, you will visit

the Royal Palace, Prado Museum, the Plaza de Espana. The following day you are free to explore Madrid or visit Toledo, a historic city in Castilla La Mancha, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Then it's back on the train south to Cordoba where the group will visit Mezquita, another UNESCO World Heritage cathedral, and then continue on to Seville. In Seville you will see the Plaza de Espana, Seville's Gothic Cathedral, (the world's largest), the Royal Alcazar Palace. Finally, it's on to Costa Del Sol on the Mediterranean Sea. The cost of the tour, (depending on how many sign up) will be under \$4,000.

For more details, check the link:

<http://www.grouptoursite.com/tours/spainwithjerrybunn>

For more information call Jerry Bunn **419-957-3430** or Vicki Doty at **419-233-4234**.

“PLOP”: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Education First Credit Union Investment Advisor Don Brown answers some common questions about STRS retirement and the “PLOP” option.

Where can I find detailed online information on retirement questions and applying for benefits?

www.strsoh.org/co/actives/retire-prep/applying.html

By phone STRS:

In Columbus (888) 227-7877

What resources does STRS have for retirement questions?

- 1) Individual Counseling- Ask for a benefit counselor, can be a teleconference.
- 2) Receiving Benefit Seminars

What information can a retiring individual ask for when deciding to retire?

Retirees ask for the following:

- 1) Annual statement of account. (This does not include service credits in other Ohio Retirement Systems).
- 2) Projection of monthly service benefits

I do not understand PLOP payment option. What is the general option(s) available?

PLOP stands for **Partial Lump-Sum Option Plan**. Upon retiring you have a choice to take a lump sum payment that can be rolled over to an IRA or paid directly to you. The check will need to be a direct rollover to an IRA to avoid taxes. The amount of the PLOP payment can be 6 to 36 times the monthly single life annuity payment. It is elected in \$1,000 increments. It is paid 91 days after the retirement date.

This is a one-time option when you retire to take a PLOP or not. If a PLOP is taken, the monthly benefit is reduced per each \$1,000 taken. The amount of the monthly payment reduction ranges from \$ 7.72 per \$1,000 at age 60 to \$9.08 per \$1,000 at age 70.

An example if a monthly payment before a PLOP is \$2,000. If a member is 60, and the minimum amount of a PLOP payment is six times the monthly single life annuity payment or \$12,000. The monthly payment amount would be reduced to \$1,907 or \$7.72 times 12. If 36 months is taken or a \$72,000 PLOP, the monthly benefit would be reduced to \$1,444.16 or \$7.72 times 72.

Where can I receive financial advice independent of STRS to help me decide?

Our preferred resource is Education First Investment Services
510 E. Mound Street Columbus, Ohio 43215

Please contact:

Donald Brown
Investment Advisor Representative
Education First Investment Services
510 E. Mound Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215
(614) 340-1499
donald.brown@cunamutual.com



Prior to requesting a rollover from your employer sponsored retirement account to an Individual Retirement Account (IRA), you should consider whether the rollover is suitable for you. There may be important differences in features, costs, services, withdrawal options and other important aspects between your employer sponsored retirement account and an IRA.

Representative is not a tax advisor. For information regarding your specific tax situation, please consult a tax professional.

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FR-2412090.1-0219-0321

A “PRIME” OPPORTUNITY IN PORTAGE CO.!

Thanks to the combined efforts of **Darlene Fetterhoff** and **Connie Evans**, **Portage Co. Retired Teachers Association** members have the opportunity to increase funds in the Scholarship Fund. Many of the members are faithful Amazon customers, so this gives the group an extra benefit from their purchases.

Here's how **AmazonSmile** works:

To donate to the PCRTA Scholarship Fund, AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com) offers all of the same items, prices, and benefits (including Amazon Prime) of its sister website, Amazon.com, but with one distinct difference. When users shop on AmazonSmile, the AmazonSmile Foundation contributes 0.5 percent of eligible purchases to the charity of your choice. Especially for frequent Amazon users, this additional perk is a great way to give back to charities effortlessly. All users have to do is to visit smile.amazon.com (amazon.com and Amazon mobile app purchases do not apply) to earn **0.5** percent of their eligible purchase for their favorite nonprofit or cause. There are tens of millions of eligible items (not all) on AmazonSmile.

The first time you login to smile.amazon.com, you will be asked to pick your charity. Please find **Portage County Retired Teachers Association Scholarship**. This is the only time that you have to do this. The next time, just go to smile.amazon.com and login. (You may want to bookmark this site.)

Please encourage your family and friends to also sign up at smile.amazon.com so that the scholarship fund will grow! Below are special instructions how to set up on an iPhone to use Amazon Smile on the App (since you can not use the normal app for Amazon.com).

Visit smile.amazon.com in Safari:

1. Next, hit the share button at the bottom middle of your screen.
2. Now click “Add to Homescreen”. You have just created a shortcut to the Amazon Smile page to easily navigate here from your homescreen.



WHAT'S ORTA UP TO?



Take a look at what's coming up in April around our chapters and organization!
The calendar is always available on our website.
Follow the link to view: <http://www.orta.org/>

Tuesday, April 2

11:30am Summit Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

Wednesday, April 3

12:00pm Warren Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

Thursday, April 4

11:00am Fayette Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

11:30am Allen Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

12:00pm Morrow Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

12:00pm Shelby Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

Tuesday, April 9

11:30am Madison Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

12:00pm Trumbull Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

Wednesday, April 10

11:00am Washington Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

11:30am Franklin Co Retired Teachers Association Chapter Meeting

11:30am Cuyahoga/Greater Cleveland Chapter Meeting

12:00pm Licking Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

12:00pm Muskingum Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

Thursday, April 11

11:00am Noble Co. Retired Teachers Association

11:30am Montgomery Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

12:00pm Columbiana Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

Friday, April 12

11:00am Coshocton Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

12:00pm Alliance Area Retired Teachers Association Meeting

Monday, April 15

Tax Day

12:00pm Lawrence Co. Retired Teachers Association Chapter Meeting

Tuesday, April 16

11:30am Williams Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

12:00pm Butler Co. Retired Teachers Association Chapter Meeting

Sunday, April 21

Easter Sunday

Monday, April 22

Easter Monday



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IN MEMORIAM:

Lake County:

Margaret Haught, March 8, 2019
(Lifetime Lake Co. and ORTA Member)

Shelby County:

Charlotte McAlexander, February 8, 2019
(Lifetime ORTA & Lifetime SCRTA member)

Trumbull County:

Patrick Pinney, March 8, 2019
(Trumbull Retired Teachers President in 2005-2006,
District XI Director, ORTA Trustee, TRTA Treasurer
and ORTA lifetime member)

***Deceased Member submission Policy update:**
If you submit member(s) passing, please forward any obituary or funeral arrangements for our records.

***“When our time on Earth has been complete,
Our spirit moves on, more mysteries to seek.
Celebrate what this person meant to you,
Cherish the memories when this life you review.”***

—B.J. Woodruff



WHAT'S NEW WITH YOU?

We want to put you and your chapter in the monthly e-newsletter! Contact Alissa at publications@orta.org, or download a submission from our website ([click here](#)) and send all submission materials to:

Ohio Retired Teachers | Suite 190
c/o: Publications
8050 North High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43235
We can't wait to share your stories!

