

- STRS Update from Executive Director
- Regional Meetings Highlights
- Catching Up with Our Chapters
- ORTA Calendar

FROM OUR PRESIDENT



2019-2020 ORTA President,
Gale Adkins

Greetings ORTA members! Fall is here! Even though the temperatures do not feel like Fall. I hope it cools off soon! As I am typing this, I am thinking about the days spent in buildings that had no air conditioning. My thoughts go out to those active teachers and students that are experiencing this currently. It makes it very difficult to be comfortable and concentrate in any learning environment. However, I know that teachers are very adaptable to situations such as this and continue striving to provide the very best learning environment. Didn't we all?

Since the start of the new ORTA administrative year of 2019- 2020, ORTA Regional Liaisons have been busy planning, coordinating, and presiding at their Presidents and Officers meetings. I have not been able to attend some of the meetings due to scheduling conflicts. I apologize to those Regional Leaders. I have been fortunate enough to attend the **Central Regional** meeting in Columbus and **Southeastern**-southern meeting in Jackson. This coming week, I will be looking forward to being at the **Northwest Regional** meeting in Findlay on September 25th.

Discussions and interactions at these meetings have been very informative. The meetings have covered the topics of importance to our members and organization. Topics that have been included are: **Review of information needed by the ORTA Office; Yearly Reports; AMBA presentations; Education First presentation; Recruiting and Retaining Leaders; Web Designing by Alissa – ORTA Publications/ Communications Coordinator; and discussions on how to recruit members and keep them.**

On August 28th I had the opportunity to attend the 50th Anniversary of my own chapter, **Greene County**, and present a Certificate of Accomplishment from ORTA. Kudos go out to GCRTA President and former ORTA President **Linda Beaver** and the Program Committee for a very fun, informational, and entertaining meeting!

ORTA continues to monitor the actions of STRS and address issues of importance to all Ohio retired educators. We have a presence at all STRS Board meetings! We have been a constant voice for gaining back our COLA that was promised, lowered twice, then taken away for five years. I encourage all our members and future members to stay informed, get involved and support our efforts.

Our Theme for this administrative year is reinforcing:

***Advocacy through Action
Serving our Communities
Gaining membership through Friendship***

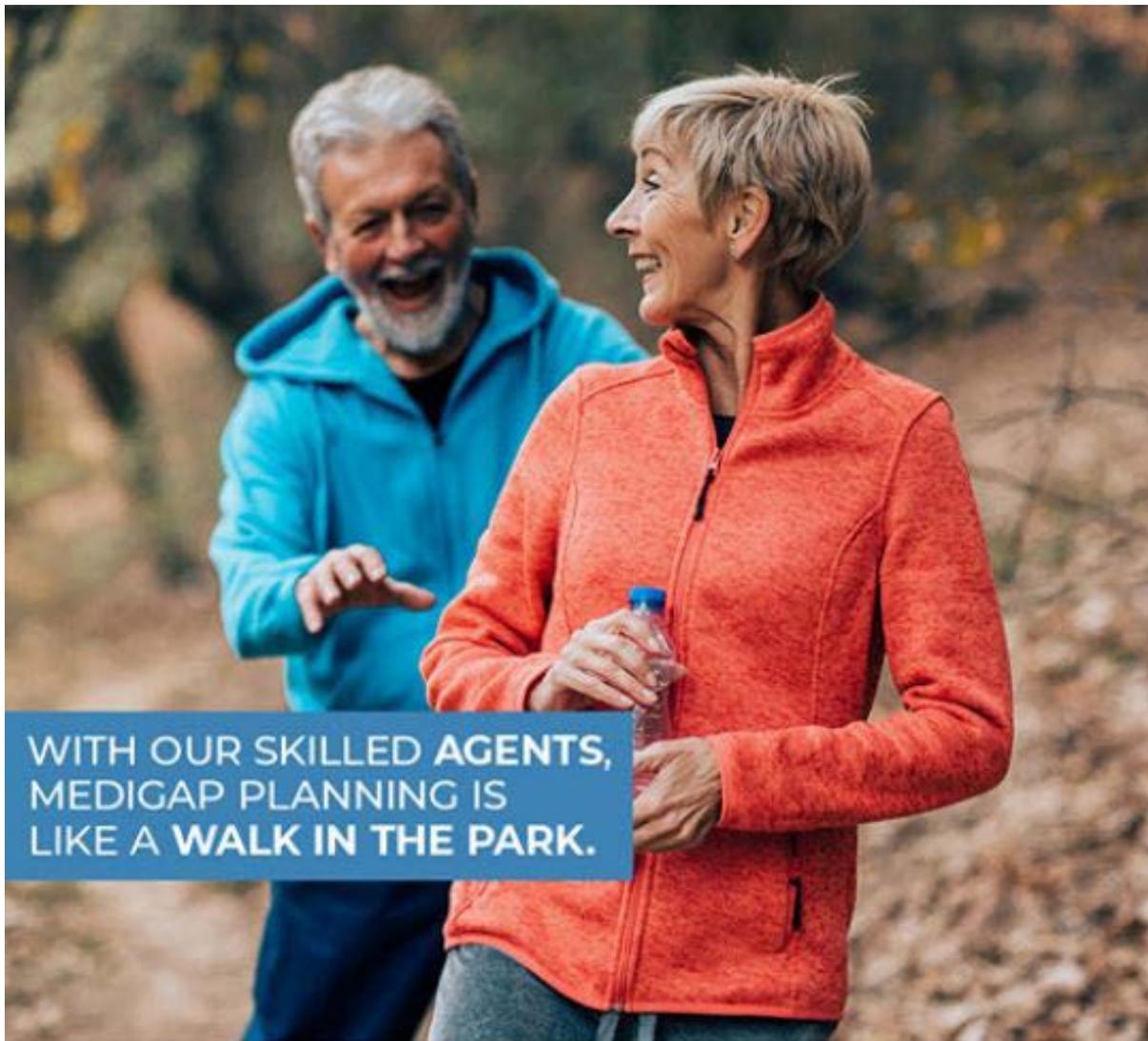
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(con'd from last page)

Reminder to all Chapters – If you need someone from the ORTA office to attend your meeting, call the office at (614) 431-7002 and let us know if there is any topic(s) you would like to have discussed.

To all of our members, I hope that all of you can get out and enjoy all of the colors of Fall and I encourage you to attend some of the very fine festivals that are being held this season within our wonderful State of Ohio.

Best Regards,
Gale C. Adkins, ORTA President



REGIONAL MEETINGS: CENTRAL REGION

The **Central Region** met on August 21st in Columbus at the new ORTA offices for their regional meeting. Almost all chapters had a presence at the meeting, and all engaged in lively discussions. **Sudi Narine** from AMBA was also a guest speaker, along with **Mike Wettrich** of **Education First Credit Union**. **ORTA President Gale Adkins** spoke about his goals for ORTA in 2019-2020, and **Executive Director Dr. Robin Rayfield** shared latest STRS news. **Alissa Burton**, **ORTA Publications and Communications Coordinator** spoke to chapter webmasters and technology leaders about new ideas for websites, launching social media within chapters and more.

A lunch was served and chapters mingled and share ideas for program ideas, membership growth and finding new chapter leadership.

A special thank you to all who attended, and an extra big thank you to Central Liaisons **Kara Mendenhall**, **Ken Moody** and **Karen Butt** for their organization of the meeting, and making it a success!



AMBA Rep. Sudi Narine



Central Liaisons Karen Butt, Ken Moody and Kara Mendenhall



The whole group of Central Region chapter leaders; over 25 in attendance!

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dr. Robin Rayfield, ORTA
Executive Director

September Greetings ORTA members!

STRS News

The STRS Board met in August and again in September. At each meeting the ‘audience’ contained 30 to 40 retirees. Several of these retirees spoke during the public participation portion of the meeting. As you may guess, most of the comments from retirees centered around what the loss of COLA has meant to their individual lives. By and large, the people that attend the meetings in Columbus are not satisfied with the STRS board and are seeking a restoration of COLA. As the person responsible for speaking on behalf of ORTA, my comments often contain suggestions for steps that STRS could and should take to protect the welfare of Ohio’s retired educators. (You can review comments that have been made at STRS Board meetings by ORTA over the last year or so at the ORTA website www.orta.org/news). There is some good news regarding our pension system. In

the fiscal year that ended in August of 2019, the STRS systems assets grew by \$1.1 billion. That represents about 1% in growth towards the 85% funding policy goal. August’s asset balance was \$78.9 billion. With liabilities of \$100 billion our system was over 78% funded. The meeting in September included information that mirrored what was provided in August, however, there was discussion about the global and U.S. economic conditions. Most of the economic indicators point to continued growth in the U.S. economy, however, concerns over an inverted yield curve and a chance for a recession are out there. What this means to STRS beneficiaries is that any downward turn in investments are bad news for us.

ORTA New Offices

ORTA moved its offices to 250 E, Wilson Bridge Rd. Suite 150 Worthington, OH. 43085 on August 12. Our phone number remains the same 614-431-7002.

ORTA Membership

I remind all ORTA members (and all STRS beneficiaries that are not currently ORTA members) that your membership is critical to ORTA’s mission and continued success. ORTA membership has very slowly decreased over the last decade. It seems like there are a few ‘reasons’ for the downward trend:

1. ORTA members, by their demographic makeup, are older. As the membership of ORTA grows older, more and more of our members pass on. Without increasing our efforts at gaining new retirees, it stands to reason that our membership will slowly decrease.
2. Newer retirees are not joining at a rate that matches or exceeds our rate of members that pass on. Every local chapter officer understands what I am reporting. ORTA must find a way to engage recent retirees and impress upon them the need to join in our fight to protect and preserve our defined benefit program.

NRTA Conference

Every other year the National Retired Teachers Association invites state retired teacher organizations to Washington D.C to learn about federal legislative issues related to teacher pension programs.

(con'd from last page)

The cost for attendance is completely paid by the national office. As we are all aware, our pension programs are under attack from the state as well as from elected officials from Washington. Issues such as the Wind-fall Protection Exclusion and the Government Pension Offset have serious negative consequences for STRS retirees. I will be in D.C October 22nd and 23rd and have an opportunity to meet with several members of Ohio's congressional delegation to offer information regarding these and other legislative issues.

Best Regards,
Dr. Robin Rayfield, ORTA Executive Director

LATEST ORTA COMMENTS TO STRS

“Greetings STRS Board of Trustees and Staff. My Name is Robin Rayfield and I represent the Ohio Retired Teachers Association. I am a STRS beneficiary, having retired in 2011 after 30+ years of service.

I want to publicly acknowledge the work of the STRS employees throughout the 2018 fiscal year. As reported during last month's meeting of the STRS Board of Trustees, the investment people added just over \$1.1 billion to the assets of our retirement fund. If I understand correctly, STRS earned just over \$5.1 billion through its investment activities. With approximately \$4 billion going towards paying beneficiaries, the net result of the work of the investment staff resulted in \$1.1 billion being added to the assets of our pension fund.

Although the increase in assets brings the pension system closer to the 85% funding level required by the recently revised funding policy, the system remains well below the level identified for serious consideration of benefit enhancement. Many of our retirees do not have 7 or more years of life left to enjoy prior to receiving an increase in the benefit that they were promised at the time of their retirement.

ORTA encourages the board of trustees to take action to rectify the hardship the loss of COLA has placed on retirees. Two specific actions would demonstrate a commitment to the retirees that STRS Ohio serve:

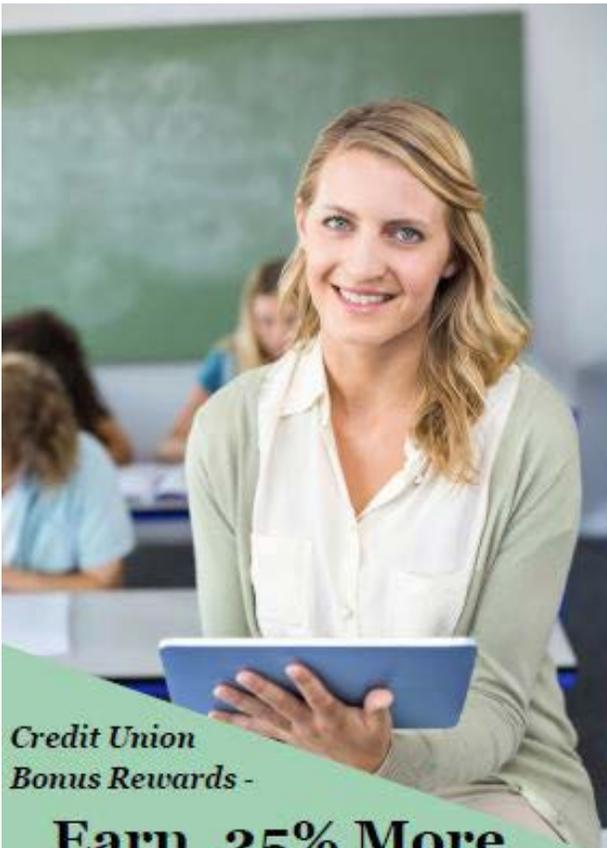
- 1. STRS should seek an increase in the rate of employer contributions. The 40% increase forced upon active educators that resulted from the pension reform efforts put into place in 2012 were not matched with an increase in employer contributions. Similar to the 'phased in' increase in employee contributions, STRS should seek a similar increase in employer contributions. It does not make sense for active employees to contribute more, retirees to receive less, and employers to be exempt from the process of strengthening the STRS pension system.*

- 2. STRS should revise its funding policy to allow for a COLA for retirees providing at least some of what they were promised. Establishment of a minimum level of asset increase, for example \$500 million, would allow STRS an opportunity to provide a COLA, although that COLA might be much less than what was promised, to current retirees during the time that the STRS pension system is moving towards 100% funding status.*

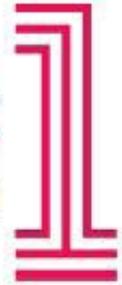
I hope that the board of trustees will seriously consider actions that will strengthening the STRS pension system while offering retirees more of what they were promised.

I respectfully remind the STRS Board that simply not paying the obligations of STRS to the beneficiaries is not a 'plan to strengthen the system.'”

—Dr. Robin Rayfield, STRS Meeting on September 20, 2019



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has *joined* with

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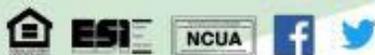
Earn .25% More
On Certificate Accounts

Earn Up To \$250
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Exclusively For ORTA Members-

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ORTA Members who open a new certificate of 36 months or greater, with new money can earn .25% more than the current stated rate. New money means funds not currently on deposit with Education First Credit Union. Mortgage and Home Equity loans are subject to underwriting guidelines. NMLS#811029. Home Equity Loan and Mortgage Loan offers are valid for 1/2 of 1% of the balance of loan, not to exceed \$250. Funds will be deposited to Share Account or applied as a closing cost credit. For certificates \$25,000-\$49,999 you will earn a one year paid ORTA membership. For certificates \$50,000-\$99,999 you will earn a two-year paid ORTA membership. For certificates greater than \$100,000 you will earn a lifetime paid ORTA membership. For home equity loans or mortgages \$25,000-\$49,999 you will earn a one-year paid ORTA membership. For home equity loans or mortgages \$50,000-\$99,999 you will earn a two-year paid ORTA membership. For home equity or mortgages \$100,000 or greater you will earn a lifetime paid ORTA membership. Some restrictions may apply. Offer is subject to change at any time and without advance notice. **Offers cannot be combined with any other credit union offers.**

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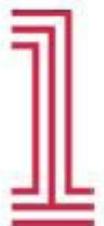
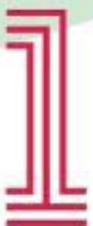


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to let us know you are an ORTA member!

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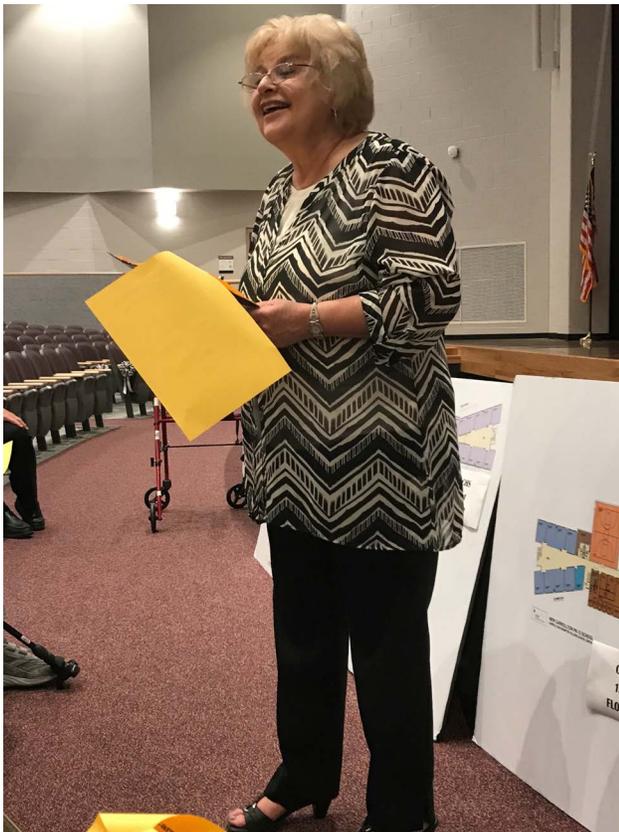


SHARING WITH THE COMMUNITY IN CARROLL CO.

The Carroll County RTA held its August meeting at their newly built, \$40 million-paid in cash-High School/Middle School in Carrollton, Ohio. Members met with President, **Rose Seck** in the commons, then held their chapter meeting in the auditorium with seating for over 500. **ORTA Past President Bee Lehner** was also in attendance. Lunch followed back in the commons, then folks enjoyed a tour of the new building!

Congratulations to Carrollton Exempted Village Schools for being home to a great new facility for active and retired educators to enjoy!

To learn more about the Carroll Co. chapter, please visit their [website](#).



CCRTA President Rose Seck, addresses the chapter members



The new High School/Middle School building for Carrollton Exempted Village School District



Members of Carrollton RTA



State of the art classrooms fill the building for ease of teaching and learning

AWARDS IN AUGLAIZE CO.

The Auglaize Co. Retired Teachers Association has announced it's winners for their Book Grants to students who are furthering their college careers in education. Each of the following students received \$300 for the school year: **Karissa Frische**, **T.J. Mele** and **Kyle Prenger**.

Karissa Frische is from Wapakoneta, daughter of Tammy and Kyle Frische; she graduated from Memorial High School, and will be a junior at Capital University where she is majoring in music. **T.J. Mele** from St. Marys, is the son of Tom and Kelley Mele and is a senior at Wittenburg University, and is majoring in early childhood education with a 4th and 5th grade endorsement. Lastly, **Kyle Prenger** is the son of Christa and Dennis Prenger from Minister; Kyle is a graduate of Minister High School and is currently a junior at Bowling Green State University, and studying education.

Congratulations to all of the winners this school year!

HIGH DOLLAR PRIZES IN HIGHLAND CO.



Pictured Above: Robert Hottle, President; Melissa Leach Shepherd; Mary Black, Scholarship Chair; Samantha Shepherd; and Jim Faust, Vice –President

The Highland County Retired Teachers Association have awarded three scholarships for the 2019-2020 school year. **Samantha Shepherd**, daughter of Chris and Melissa Leach Shepherd of Leesburg, and **Deon Burns**, son of Margeret Burns of Hillsboro, each received a \$500 HCRTA Scholarship. **Samuel Buddelmeyer**, son of Joel and Amy Buddelmeyer of Leesburg, received the **Harold W. Spargur Memorial Scholarship** in the amount of \$500.

Congratulations to these deserving future educators.

To learn more about the Highland Co. chapter. please visit their [website](#).

NEW NEWS IN NOBLE CO.

The Noble County Retired Teachers met on August 8, 2019 for a “Summer Potluck” and business meeting.

Members brought back-to-school supplies that will be distributed between the two elementary schools in the county.

The “Summer Potluck” yielded an abundance of delicious foods and all enjoyed the feast!

Guest speaker was **Braun Schwieterman**, a PT and graduate of Noble County’s Shenandoah High School. Braun is employed through Southeastern Med Sports Med & Rehabilitation. He spoke about joint health and joint replacements.

NCRTA held its annual Book Exchange. **Bring one - take another one home!**

President Don Ullmann offered an incentive to members as a way to increase membership. He proposed giving a \$25 gift certificate to a local restaurant to the first two members who would each recruit a new member. Linda Buckey was the first to accept his challenge by signing up, not just one, but TWO new members! Congratulations to Linda and a warm welcome to Noble County’s two newest members, Jan Palmer, and Debbie Seamster. Who will be the next member of NCRTA to recruit a new member? Don Ullmann has another gift certificate waiting just for you!



Braun Schwieterman,
guest speaker

To learn more about the Noble Co. chapter, please visit their [website](#).



Don Ullmann and Linda Buckey welcome two new members Jan Palmer and Debbie Seamaster



School supplies donated from Noble Co. Members



The member driven book exchange; bring one, take one!

A LOOK AT LAKE CO.



Jean P. Lentz Memorial Active Teacher Grant Recipients (L to R): Christine Chandler, Erin Avram, Donna Fiore & Nick Meyer, and Christine Downs



Mr. Tim Niederkorn, of LCRTA Scholarship winners Gabrielle Taylor, and Katharine Perry

The Lake Co. chapter has awarded the **Jean P. Lentz Memorial Active Teacher Grant** to the 2019 recipients:

Christine Chandler, Madison Schools, Spanish Gr. 9-12; **Erin Avram**, Fairport Schools, Physics, Gr. 11-12; **Donna Fiore & Nick Meyer**, Mentor Schools, Art, Gr. 6-8; and **Christine Downs**, Willoughby-Eastlake Schools, Social Studies, Grade 8

The Jean P. Lentz Memorial Active Teacher Grant recipients received \$200 each during the school year and presented their programs at the June 2019 Luncheon Meeting.

Also awarded were the **Lake County Retired Teachers Association Scholarships**. Congratulations to **Gabrielle Taylor** (Wickliffe High School to University of Dayton); and **Katharine Perry** (Mentor High School to The Ohio State University). Each Lake County Retired Teachers Association Scholarship Recipient received a check in the amount of \$1,200 at the June 2019 Luncheon Meeting.

To learn more about the Lake Co. chapter, please visit their [website](#).



Pictured above are the Lake Co. 2019-2020 Officers: Terri Herbert & David Morse, President Elect; Pat Humphrey, Treasurer; Debbie Deal, Secretary and (seated) Karen Sawitke, President

REGIONAL MEETINGS: SOUTHEAST REGION (PTS 1 & 2)

The **Southeast Region** held it's yearly Regional Meetings in both Jackson, Ohio and Cambridge, Ohio.

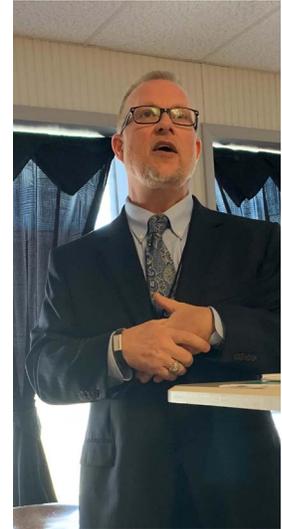
In Jackson, the chapters met at LaRosa's for an exchange of chapter membership growth ideas, a delicious lunch and wonderful entertainment from **Deloris Ullmann** from Noble Co. and guest visitor **Jim Caine** of AMBA.

In Cambridge, the northern portion of the region met at the Pritchard Laughlin Civic Center for a wonderful welcome from the Cambridge city mayor **Tom Orr**, followed by an STRS and ORTA update with **ORTA Executive Director Robin Rayfield**, a lunch and solutions to chapter leadership and membership challenges.

A special thank you to all chapter leaders who were able to attend both meetings and to **Don Ullmann** and **Brenda Davis** for their leadership of the Southeast Region.



Deloris Ullmann plays her mandolin



Jim Cain from AMBA



Pictured above are various chapter leaders from Pike Co., Meigs Co., Jackson Co., Vinton Co., Gallia Co. and Lawrence Co. present chapter ideas for membership drives, chapter success stories and leadership recruitment plans.

(SE meeting photos, con'd)



Pictured above: Cambridge Mayor Tom Orr



Pictured above: Dr. Robin Rayfield



Pictured above: Dr. Rayfield, Deloris and Don Ullamn



Pictured above and below: Chapter leaders sharing ideas and chapter success stories



Pictured above: SE Liaison Brenda Davis



WHAT'S ORTA UP TO?

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



Wednesday, October 2

12:00pm Warren Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

Thursday, October 3

11:00am Fayette Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

11:30am Allen Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

12:00pm Shelby Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

Monday, October 7

11:30am Madison Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

12:00pm Morrow Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

Tuesday, October 8

12:00pm Trumbull Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

Wednesday, October 9

11:00am Washington Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

11:30am Pickaway Co. Retired Teachers Association Chapter Meeting

11:30am Cuyahoga/Greater Cleveland Chapter Meeting

12:00pm Licking Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

12:00pm Auglaize Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

Thursday, October 10

12:00pm Noble Co. Retired Teachers Association

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

Friday, October 11

11:30am Montgomery Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

Monday, October 14

Columbus Day (regional holiday)

12:00pm Muskingum Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

Wednesday, October 16

11:00am Wood Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

12:00pm Lorain Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

Thursday, October 17

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

Friday, October 18

12:00pm Hardin Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

12:00pm Alliance Area Retired Teachers Association Meeting

Monday, October 21

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

Tuesday, October 22

12:00pm Butler Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting

TIME TO RENEW?

Full Name: _____

Current Address: _____

Street/Apt./Suite #

City State Zip

Amount Enclosed: _____

Current E-Mail: _____

Year of Retirement: _____

I would like to become a Life Member of ORTA (a \$500 one-time payment)

Thank you!



Need to renew your dues? Just fill out this form and send in your payment to:

250 East Wilson Bridge Road

Ste. 150

c/o Mia McLean, Membership

Worthington, OH 43085



****Remember, the date we process your payment is your new due date for the following year (i.e. 8/18/19, new due date is 8/18/20). If you pay your ORTA dues to your local chapter, your payment is applied upon receipt to our office.**

IN MEMORIAM:

Muskingum Co.-

Ann Colvin, Muskingum Co. and ORTA
Life Member
July 26, 2019

Stark Co.-

Jane K. Simile R.N., Stark Co. Member
August 20, 2019
Donna Louise Brandon, Stark Co. and
ORTA Life Member
August 8, 2019

Please note, the Stark Co. "In Memoriam" portion of our previous newsletter has a name correction: the correct deceased name should read **Jane Wentz Woodie*

Trumbull Co.-

Willow Jean Rowley, Trumbull Co. and ORTA
Life Member
Aug. 1, 2019

***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



With Sympathy...