

2023 Meeting Dates: April 5 June 7 September 6 November 1

April 5, 2023 Meeting

Lake Shelbyville Visitor Center

= Bring along your coffee, tea, etc. Light refreshments and bottled water will be provided.

8:45 - Social Time

9:00 – Due to our speakers’ schedules, we will begin the program promptly at 9:00, followed by the business meeting

Please plan to attend whether or not you're a member of the local SCRTA.



Shelby County Retired Teachers Association Newsletter

April 2023



President’s Message for April 2023

I bid all my fellow SCRTA members fond spring greetings. I look forward to warmer weather and being able to be outside without a jacket although I don’t want the grass to need mowing too soon. The executive officers of SCRTA and I recently met to loosely establish the itinerary for our quarterly meetings for 2023. We have tried to balance our agenda with important information from the Illinois Retired Teachers Association along with community interest programs. I really hope you will take the time to join us for those meetings in April, June, September, and November at 9AM at the Army Corps of Engineers Lake Shelbyville Visitor Center. Mark your calendars now.

Inflation has been of more concern this year than Covid for a change, but not a good one. Teacher Retirement System continues to safeguard our pension funds and I’m sure that we will have more to share regarding this at our monthly meetings. Hopefully insurance concerns are beginning to smooth out as Carle and Memorial Health Systems are onboard with Aetna now as agreements have been reached.

Nancy Wilhelm, our Vice-President, will be running the April meeting. Please feel free to see her after the meeting if you have any concerns or questions. Kim and I will be in Florida giving our only daughter, Skylar, away as she becomes Mrs. Luttmann. We will see you all again in June.

Officers

President – James Sparks Secretary – Ione Elliott
Vice-President – Nancy Wilhelm Treasurer – Kim Sparks

SCRTA 2023 dues of \$5 may be mailed to Ginnie Hostetler at 1014 W. N. Fourth Street in Shelbyville or brought to the April meeting.

Good News!

The “Dam Road” is open!! You can now approach the Visitor Center from 9th Street.



Shelby County wins Unit of Distinction Award

Jim Sparks was notified by IRTA Executive Director Jim Bachman that the SCRTA was one of 22 local associations named as an IRTA Unit of Distinction for 2022. Units receiving the award will be recognized at the IRTA Biennial Convention, in the IRTA ACTION e-newsletter, and on the IRTA website. Units will also receive a gift of \$250.

April Meeting

Great things are going on outside of the traditional classroom for Shelby County students.

Tom Shoaff, Facilitator of the CEO Program, will be bringing county students to speak to us about their class which teaches leadership, encouragement, and creativity through real life learning experiences. They are currently preparing for their annual Trade Show coming up in April. Check out their website to learn more: <https://www.shelbycountyceo.com/> .

We'll also hear about the Youth Ambassador workdays at the lake. Students from Windsor, Okaw Valley, Beecher City, Stewardson-Strasburg, and Shelbyville have joined Lake Shelbyville maintenance crew and park rangers to work on various projects.

There will be time allotted for discussion of the new Aetna health insurance plan. If you have any questions that you would like us to look into, please send them to LaVonne Chaney ahead of time. (Email: lavonnec45@gmail.com or phone/text: 217-246-5049)

SCRTA Mini-Grants

Last year SCRTA instituted a program that would give back to our county schools. A fundraiser in July at Monical's Pizza helped make it possible to award six \$100 mini-grants, one to each school in the county.

A committee was formed to develop criteria, devise an application form, and then vote on the applications from each district. Tough decisions had to be made to narrow it to six recipients. We were able to visit schools on their January in-service days to award the cash and certificates in front of the schools' staff members. It was exciting later to see our award winners in local media, and two were featured on WCIA and WAND as well.

The proposals covered several subject areas and impacted students from kindergarten through high school. We plan to invite the recipients to our June meeting where you can learn all about their projects.



Central A&M High School – Tonya Christian



Herrick Elementary School – Emily Boehm



Okaw Valley High School – Shari Bruyn



Moulton Middle School – Caleb Mathis & Jennifer Gergeni



Stewardson-Strasburg Elementary School –
Lindsay Altgilbers & Nikki Worman



Windsor Elementary School –
Ryann Ibanez & Vanessa Fritscher

You may have seen one of our award recipients, Tonya Christian, on WAND. She used her grant money to buy shelving and racks for a clothing room for CAM students that will be run by her high school Functional Skills class. It will not only help students in need of clothing and toiletries, but will also help her students develop job skills for the future. She is relying on donations to stock the store. If you would like to help, below is a list of items needed. You may bring items to the April meeting or drop off at LaVonne Chaney's or Nancy Wilhelm's house.

-- Antiperspirants, toothbrushes with travel caps, toothpaste, dental floss, Chapstick, feminine pads and tampons, shampoo and conditioner, moisturizing lotion, combs, hairbrushes, and ankle & quarter socks. Walmart Gift Cards are also appreciated.

She also has registries at Amazon and Wal-Mart that you can buy from directly and the items will be delivered to the school.

<https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/U5HBK7YPF608...>

<https://www.walmart.com/.../93beeb6c-2b4a-42f1-b540...>

In Memorium

Pat Cordes taught for many years at Windsor Elementary School. She passed away on December 2, 2022.

Les Camden passed away on January 2, 2023. He taught chemistry at Shelbyville High School for over 35 years, retiring in 1995.

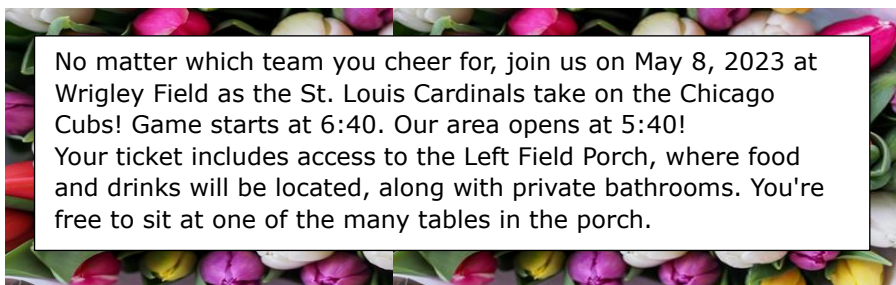
A donation will be made to the IRTA Foundation in their honor

Congratulations to former SCRTA President Noble Wright who turned 100 years old on January 16

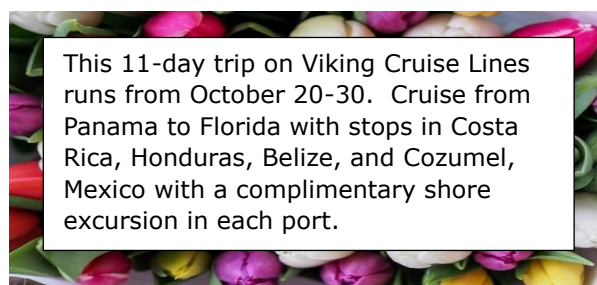


-- From the IRTA --

Join fellow retired teachers at a Cub-Cardinal game or on a cruise through the Panama Canal, both sponsored by IRTA. Discover more at <https://www.irtaonline.org/>.



No matter which team you cheer for, join us on May 8, 2023 at Wrigley Field as the St. Louis Cardinals take on the Chicago Cubs! Game starts at 6:40. Our area opens at 5:40! Your ticket includes access to the Left Field Porch, where food and drinks will be located, along with private bathrooms. You're free to sit at one of the many tables in the porch.



This 11-day trip on Viking Cruise Lines runs from October 20-30. Cruise from Panama to Florida with stops in Costa Rica, Honduras, Belize, and Cozumel, Mexico with a complimentary shore excursion in each port.

There are several items on the IRTA website <https://www.irtaonline.org/> that may be of interest to you.

The IRTA Constitution Committee is working to fulfill the IRTA Strategic Plan developed by the Executive Committee. Look over information on Amendments to the Constitution.

Upcoming topics in 2023 IRTA Educational Webinar Series each month at 10:00 a.m.

April 12 - Dental and Vision Benefits
June 14 - Protecting Your Nest Egg
July 19 - Emergency Transportation Issues in Illinois
August 16 - All About Long Term Care

The state legislature is currently in session. Get legislative updates.

Excellence in Education Grants for Teachers" Program

The Illinois Retired Teachers Association Foundation is making \$42,000 in grant money available statewide in Illinois. This special grant money will provide additional funds to public school educators (Pre-K through 12) so that their students will have the means to participate in special projects.

If you have friends or relatives currently teaching in Illinois direct them to the IRTA website to download, complete, and submit the application online by June 1, 2023.

Much is happening in Springfield to address teacher shortages in Illinois schools. The state will invest more than \$200 million over the next three years as part of a proposed Teacher Pipeline Grant Program aimed at supporting school districts struggling the most in the ongoing educator and support staff shortage. The Illinois State Board of Education will also be using \$6 million in federal funds to contract a marketing firm to develop a statewide recruitment advertising campaign. Read about other education news.

From IRTA Good Dog News: The Tax Counseling for the Elderly program offers free help to those 60 or older. The IRS online locator provides a list of sites offering this help. You can also call 800-906-9887 for help finding a site near you.

We revisit WEP/GPO - Again

As you may remember from previous articles, WEP and GPO can reduce Social Security benefits for recipients of public pensions.

The **Windfall Elimination Provision** affects a person who in their lifetime worked in jobs not covered by Social Security as well as in jobs where they did earn Social Security benefits. It can cut Social Security benefits by as much as one half. The **Government Pension Offset** affects a person who gets a government pension (such as TRS) and applies for spousal or survivor benefits from Social Security. The benefits will be reduced by up to 2/3 of your pension amount, often resulting in 0 benefits.

= Go to <https://www.shelbycountyretiredteachers.com/legislation> to learn more about WEP/GPO and Voter Voice. =

Federal lawmakers seeking to repeal Social Security's WEP and GPO are giving it another try this year. The Social Security Fairness Act of 2023 (H.R. 82) was reintroduced in the U.S. House in January. A similar bill received widespread bipartisan support in 2022 but never made it to a floor vote. (Bills that don't pass expire at the conclusion of each Congress.) While some bills in recent years have aimed to modify one or both the WEP and GPO, H.R. 82 seeks to fully repeal both provisions.

What's IRTA doing about it? This is a federal issue so we encourage retirees to contact their members of Congress to share their opinion about these provisions and how they affect them. Below is a sample letter & contact information.

As a constituent, I urge you to support the Social Security Fairness Act (S. 597/H.R. 82) to ensure public employees get the Social Security benefits they have earned. More than 2.5 million hard-working Americans, including many educators, have their Social Security benefits reduced—or lose them entirely—due to the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO).

The WEP reduces the Social Security benefits of people who work in jobs covered by Social Security and jobs NOT covered by Social Security over the course of their careers—for example, educators compelled to take part-time or summer jobs to make ends meet. Some people receiving foreign pensions are also subject to the WEP. The GPO reduces the Social Security spousal or survivor benefits of people who get a government pension (federal, state or local) but did NOT pay Social Security taxes themselves while performing the government job. The GPO reduces the Social Security spousal or survivor benefits of people who get a government pension (federal, state or local) but did NOT pay Social Security taxes themselves while performing the government job.

Please support the Social Security Fairness Act to fully repeal both the GPO and WEP.

Representative Mary Miller - <https://marymiller.house.gov/contact> (Or phone: 201-225-5271 or 217-703-6100)

Senator Dick Durbin - www.durbin.senate.gov/contact (Or phone: 202-224-2152 or 217-492-4062)

Senator Tammy Duckworth - www.duckworth.senate.gov/connect/email-tammy (Or phone: 202-224-2854 or 312-886-3506)

Information on TRAIL Health Insurance

January 1st brought changes to both members who came from United Healthcare and those who previously had Aetna HMO insurance. Hopefully, after three months members are getting used to the differences. If you still have concerns about your coverage, please contact LaVonne Chaney ahead of the April 5 meeting and she will address them then. (Email lavonnec45@gmail.com or phone 217-246-5049)

At the time of our November SCRTA meeting several things were still up in the air with our new Aetna TRAIL coverage. On November 16 lawmakers met with CMS and Aetna officials. IRTA President Roger Hampton also attended to represent retired educators. Discussion centered around why retirees no longer had a choice of plans and what facilities would not accept the new plan. Earlier in November Aetna and Carle had reached an agreement to continue to treat state retirees, but there was still concern over other hospitals and doctors. At the end of this meeting CMS committed to work more closely with legislators to improve the process of picking plans in the future. Our state senator, Chapin Rose, pledged to propose legislation in the spring session that would require options for retirees.

In February, state retirees began receiving notices of a potential provider network change between Aetna and Memorial Health System, who were in ongoing negotiations for a provider contract set to expire on April 1st. This would include several facilities in our area – Decatur, Springfield, Taylorville, and Sullivan. In March, the State of Illinois announced that Aetna and Memorial Health Systems had reached an agreement. Members covered by TRIP/TRAIL health plans utilizing Memorial physicians or hospitals would have no interruption in services.

On March 22 new rules were passed requiring health insurance companies to self audit their directories at least twice per year. This came about after doctors no longer practicing in an area were still listed in network directories. The new rules also list exact patient to provider ratios needed to be considered an adequate network. Companies will also have to give more detailed reports after major changes are made to their networks (e.g. Blue Cross/Blue Shield dropping Springfield Clinic).

TRS News

TRS LONG-TERM FINANCES ARE STABLE DESPITE “CHALLENGING” YEAR

Now that the required external audit of the System’s finances in fiscal year 2022 has been completed by the Illinois Auditor General and an independent accounting firm, here is the current status of TRS:

All Benefits Will Be Paid TRS will continue to pay all future benefits that are due to our members. This year, TRS will pay close to \$8 billion in benefits on time and in full to more than 128,000 members and their families. Benefits paid in fiscal year 2022 totaled \$7.6 billion. Total revenue during the period was \$6.3 billion. At the end of September 2022, TRS had \$60.7 billion in assets.