



# Shelby County Retired Teachers Association Newsletter

September 2023  
Volume 10, Issue 3

Jim Sparks, President  
Nancy Wilhelm, Vice-Pres.  
Ione Elliott, Secretary  
Kim Sparks, Treasurer

## September Meeting

**Date:** Wednesday, September 6  
**Place:** Lake Shelbyville Visitor Center  
**Program:** Rep. Brad Halbrook  
& Joe Houk with his K-9 partner

8:45 – Snacks / Visiting

9:00 – Program

A short business meeting will follow, along with packaging school supplies

I hope by the time you are reading this message that things have cooled down a bit. I am growing weary of temperatures in the upper 90s feeling like over 100° with the high humidity. I certainly remember that for more than half of my 37-year teaching career I worked in schools without air conditioning! I’m glad to know many teachers and students in our area work in schools that do have air conditioning today.

A  
Message  
from the  
President



We have many things going on with SCRTA to raise funds for the 2024 teacher mini grants we hope to present in January. Our Possum Lodge cookout was a major success. LaVonne Chaney deserves much of the credit for getting this event to happen. Please thank her the first chance you get for all she does for us in so many ways. We have also been given a green light by Mark Shanks for a Monical’s Community Day Event in late September or October like we had last year. I hope that all of you will encourage participation in the event. We will be getting mini grant applications out at the beginning of October.

I want to mention the Virtual Area 5 Conference that LaVonne, Nancy, Kim, and I attended on 8/9/23. Most of the discussion was around membership, financial security of our retirement funds and the proposed changes to the IRTA Constitution to be voted on during the biennial IRTA convention to be held on October 16 & 17, 2023. One of the most concerning proposals involves the discontinuance of Regional Directors. If this proposal should pass, I believe the level of communication with the area director and county associations would break down. I am planning to attend the convention in October along with another delegate so that we may cast a vote on this proposal and a few others. I welcome any discussion from our officers and members regarding a position on any of the proposed changes. Go online to: <https://www.irtaonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023-Proposed-changes-with-Rationales-final.pdf> to review the proposed IRTA Constitutional changes.

Finally, I hope that all of you will mark your calendars to attend the September 6th meeting to be held at the Lake Shelbyville Visitors Center starting at 9AM, led by vice-president Nancy Wilhelm. Unfortunately, Kim and I will not be in attendance as our daughter and new son-in-law have made arrangements for us to be with them in Colorado. The slate of candidates for SCRTA officer positions will be announced by the Nominations Committee headed up by chairman Bud Wilhelm. Voting will take place at our November meeting. As always, please feel free to reach out to me or any of our officers with any questions, concerns or suggestions.

Jim Sparks  
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(217) 259-2669

## School Supplies Needed

Each September SCRTA collects school supplies for elementary special education students in Shelby County. If you would like to donate, bring supplies to the meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup>. If you are unable to attend the meeting and want to donate supplies, you can give them to any officer.

### Please donate these supplies:

|                             |                    |          |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------|
| Pencils (mechanical & lead) | Erasers            |          |
| Pencil Grips                | Pencil Bags        | Ink Pens |
| Highlighters                | Waterproof Markers |          |
| Crayons                     | Colored Pencils    |          |
| Loose Leaf Paper            | Sticky Notes       |          |
| Folders with pockets        | Glue Sticks        |          |
| Notebooks (wide ruled)      | Rulers             |          |

### Meeting News

Bring along your beverage and join us for our September 6<sup>th</sup> meeting at the Visitor Center. We will have snacks and bottled water available. And it's not too late to volunteer to be an officer. Contact Nominations Committee member Bud Wilhelm at 774-4537 if you're interested.

### **Our next meeting will be November 1**

Keep up on SCRTA news -

<http://www.shelbycountyretiredteachers.com>

and IRTA news -

<http://www.irtaonline.org>

### Zoom -

If you want to join the September meeting through Zoom, a link will be emailed closer to the 6<sup>th</sup>.

As Jim has said in the past, we are committed to helping members feel comfortable using Zoom. LaVonne and Jim use Zoom regularly and are quite familiar with it. Both have helped many first-time users in the past and either of them would answer your questions or help you with any concerns.

Jim Sparks (217) 259-2669

LaVonne Chaney (217) 246-5049

Rep. Brad Halbrook will be speaking about legislation in Springfield, especially those bills affecting retired teachers.



Joe Houk from the Shelbyville Police Department spoke to us in April 2022 about purchasing a dog to serve as a new K-9 unit. He will be back on September 6 with SPD's dog to give us an update.

# June Meeting



We invited the recipients of our mini grants to come to our June meeting to share with us how they used the grant funds in their classrooms. Jennifer Gergeni and Caleb Mathis from Moulton Middle School in Shelbyville showed robots that students made and programmed. Emily Boehm purchased a membership to Fluency and Fitness which provides activities incorporating movement to review essential literacy skills in the classroom. We heard reports on other projects including a power point presentation from Shari Bruyn of Okaw Valley High School who purchased ear protection for students using power tools in her Geometry in Construction class.



Paul Strid from AMBA gave a presentation on IRTA member benefits available to us. These included insurance programs such as vision, dental, long-term care and medical transportation in addition to lots of discounts on products and services. More information can be found at

<https://www.myambabenefits.info/ilrta/discounts>

IRTA Area Representative Jim Barr presented a \$2,000 scholarship to Sadie Gardner of Shelby County. She is studying elementary Education at EIU.



We welcome new member Joanne McHenry



Current & former Cowden-Herrick teachers visit

- Many IRTA members are not members of SCRTA. If you would like to join or if you are unsure if you have paid 2022 local dues, please contact Treasurer Ginnie Hostetler at [gh1610@yahoo.com](mailto:gh1610@yahoo.com). Members may pay \$5 for one year or pay \$100 for a lifetime SCRTA membership.

- If you are getting this newsletter through USPS mail delivery and would be willing to switch to email delivery, contact Nancy Wilhelm ([njwilhelm@yahoo.com](mailto:njwilhelm@yahoo.com))



Fundraising for the 2023-24 teacher mini grants began on August 26. Possum Lodge donated profits from a Saturday sandwich sale to our cause. SCRTA members Alta May Fry, Ginnie Hostetler, LaVonne Chaney, Norma Walters, Brenda Bogart, and Jim & Kim Sparks wrapped sandwiches and filled orders. We hope the funds raised Saturday will help make our grant program bigger and better.



We are hoping to earn even more with a fundraiser at Monical's this fall. Since it will take place before our next newsletter, we will be contacting you by email to ask for your help. Helping is easy. All you have to do is tell your friends and family to order from Monicals on our fundraiser date and give them a sheet to present when they order. For each sheet they get, Monicals will give us a percentage of that total bill. And it's easy to tell your friends when you use social media like Facebook. We'll let you know when we have a firm date.

-from Summer 2023 TRS Topics and Report Newsletter

## TRS News

The \$50.6 billion state budget for the fiscal year 2024 that took effect in July not only includes the state's minimum contribution to TRS – \$6.04 billion – but also \$230.4 million in additional funding for the System. Gov. Pritzker proposed \$200 million in extra funding for TRS in February and that amount was increased by 15% during negotiations with legislators. In fiscal year 2023, the governor and lawmakers added \$200 million to the minimum \$9.6 billion appropriated to TRS and the other four state-funded retirement systems. And in the previous fiscal year 2022, the additional funding added \$300 million to the state pension allocation of \$9.4 billion.

As TRS and state government begin fiscal year 2024 in July, here is a quick review of some key financial indicators for the System:

- In fiscal year 2024, TRS will pay more than \$7.6 billion in benefits on time and in full to more than 128,000 members and their families.
- At the beginning of 2023, the System held \$63.3 billion in assets. Three months later at the end of March 2023, TRS held \$64.8 billion in assets.

### Long-Term Investment Returns Remain Strong

Because TRS has relationships with its members for several decades, the System focuses on long-term investment return rate. Currently, the 40-year rate of return was 9.3%, which bests the System's estimated long-term investment rate of 7%

### Expanded Post-Retirement Work Limits Extension

Public Act 103-0088 extends the law permitting retired TRS members to accept work as teachers or administrators in public schools without affecting their pensions until June 30, 2026. This bill keeps the current work limits at 120 days or 600 hours. The original work limits were 100 days and 500 hours. The extension took effect with the governor's signature.

TRS is reminding members to stay alert for potential scams. We are monitoring the internet and other forms of communication to spot trends and potential unauthorized activity directed at our members. TRS will never call or contact you to endorse any company's product or service relating to your TRS pension. We will take appropriate action when we become aware of individuals or businesses using misleading tactics to give a false impression that they are affiliated with TRS. Members may help by contacting TRS with tips about activities they find suspicious.

Even though TRS is showing growing assets, and their rate of return is strong, the state of Illinois ranks as one of the worst in the nation for funding pensions. Illinois legislators are discussing a measure that would provide an additional \$500 million a year for the state's pension systems to address unfunded liabilities. House Bill 4098 would allow the Illinois treasurer and comptroller to transfer \$500 million from the General Revenue Fund to the Pension Unfunded Liability Reduction Fund each fiscal year to make additional contributions to the pension funds for retired state employees. Hopefully the state will find a way to reduce these liabilities without resorting to strategies discussed in the past such as adjusting our cost of living raises. IRTA will keep us informed of any changes that would affect us.

## TRAIL Insurance Open Enrollment Period

The TRAIL Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug (MAPD) Open Enrollment Period for the 2024 plan year will be held this fall from mid-October through mid-November. In the fall, CMS will send out information about the TRAIL Program including any upcoming changes for the new plan year.

Visit the Total Retiree Advantage Illinois (TRAIL) Program page at [MyBenefits.illinois.gov](https://MyBenefits.illinois.gov) for more information.

## News from the IRTA



The IRTA Convention will be held on October 16-17, 2023, at the Crowne Plaza in Springfield, Illinois. Delegates will vote on several proposed constitutional amendments (listed below) as well as elect new officers. The slate of officers includes Michael Schmidt for president, Rainy Kaplan for vice president, Donnie Ostrom for treasurer, and LaVonne Chaney for secretary. To learn more about the convention visit <https://www.irtaonline.org/association/convention-2023>. To learn more about proposed changes in the Constitution visit the IRTA Action newsletter from Spring 2023 at <https://members.irtaonline.org/news/action-spring-2023>.

The proposal that affects you most directly concerns a change in dues. Treasurer Ostrom has pointed out that the IRTA has always maintained a balanced budget and has been frugal with our dues. IRTA dues haven't been changed in ten years. Ostrom said, "The costs of operations and lobbying have been impacted by increases in salaries, inflation, mailing, travel, utilities, and technology. If the IRTA is to continue to be successful in securing our pension and insurance benefits, this proposal's passage is imperative." Most of us would see the following changes: Monthly deduction - \$2.50 to \$3.50, Annual dues - \$40 to \$50, and Annual Recurring dues - \$38 to \$46.

Other proposals give all members, not just convention delegates, the right to vote on the election of IRTA officers & Area Representatives and on proposed constitutional amendments. And others cover the make up of the Board of Directors / the schedule of their meetings, the make up of each Region / the selection of the Regional Directors, and the make up of standing committees / their names.

### Discover the Ultimate App for Illinois Retired Teachers Association!

Attention all IRTA members! We're thrilled to unveil the brand-new Illinois Retired Teachers Association app, brought to you by Guidebook. By downloading this powerful tool, you'll gain exclusive access to the latest and greatest information pertaining to your association. Take action now by [visiting this link!](#)

There you can click on the App Store or Google Play to download the app.