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FROM OUR PRESIDENT



2018-2019 ORTA President,
Bee Lehner

Final Greetings, ORTA Members!

It's so hard to believe that a year and a half has passed since I stepped into the "presidential seat" of ORTA! What a wonderful learning experience it's been. I've had a great time getting to know chapter members and chapter officers from all over Ohio. You've welcomed me into your meetings, shared ideas, concerns, and accomplishments, and you have worked hard to bring new members into the ORTA family. **THANK YOU** to all of you for your hard work and dedication to the ORTA mission!

As we took a summer recess from our adult Sunday School class a few weeks ago, our leader challenged us to choose a word—just one word to focus on this summer. A word to help us filter decisions, calm emotions and face each day with resolve. The word I chose was "**TIMING.**" I have a quote on my refrigerator door that states, "*Life is about timing and timing is every thing in love and loss.*"

As many of you know, when you lose a spouse, a parent or another loved one, your life spins out of control for a while and then you float back down to the earth where you, once again, gain your footing and find a new purpose to move on! At least that's how I felt several years ago when my husband passed. It was that "timing thing" that prompted me to say "yes" when I got the call from an ORTA officer to take the state presidency—so glad I did!

I believe the timing was right for me to step into this position, to share responsibilities with the other ORTA officers, ORTA staff, and regional liaisons, as well as to become involved in a meaningful mission with other Ohio retired educators! Thank you for walking beside me through this journey! I am looking forward to my year as Past President with our new ORTA president, **Gale Adkins**, and President-Elect, **Kara Mendenhall**! Best wishes to them for a successful year in ORTA!

A final closing remark on "timing!" We send our very BEST to Past President, **Randy Overbeck**, who has just published his second book, ***Blood on the Chesapeake***. Randy spoke at Coshocton's CCRTA last week and is available to attend your chapter meeting. He will present a fascinating program on ghost sightings around the globe, as well as talk about his latest publication! He's also in the process of writing his next new novel and his timing is perfect as he retires from ORTA. It's "TIME" to give him a call!

Thought for the Day: "*The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.*" —William Arthur Ward

Yours truly!

Bee Lehner, ORTA President

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dr. Robin Rayfield, ORTA
Executive Director

Greetings ORTA Members!

STRS Update

As you probably already know, the STRS Board of Trustees already voted to adopt a new funding policy statement. The new funding policy includes language that allows the board to consider plan changes that the Board's actuary determines will not materially impair the fiscal integrity of the system. These plan changes may include increases in benefits that the Board's actuary believe will not endanger the pension system. The Board may consider such plan changes once the system is 85% funded.

The new language sets a target at a funding level of 85% as opposed to 100%. Now, before we retirees make plans to spend the 'increases' we all believe we are entitled to, we must recognize that the current funding level is at 77%.

There is a great deal of improvement that must take place before the system is at a level of 85% funded.

I think it is important to recognize what has happened over the last several years and where the STRS pension system is at, presently. Some key things to keep in mind:

- Currently, the STRS system has 1.1 active contributors for every retiree. As such, STRS is considered a 'mature system'. Just 20 years ago STRS had 1.8 active contributors for every retiree.
- STRS collects less from active teachers than it pays out in retiree benefits each year. This, even though active teachers contribute 40% more from their paychecks than most retirees paid. Additionally, active contributors must teach longer than most of us had to work to receive full retirement benefits.
- To put this into easy to understand terms the pension system brings in about \$3 billion from active contributors but spends about \$7 billion in retirement benefits. This 'negative cash' balance of \$4 billion must be made up through investments. If our investments earn the assumed rate of return (.745%) much of that earnings amount is spent on current retirees. If all things go as planned and the investment folks at STRS are successful at reaching their goal, the STRS system will gain a little over 1% on the funding ratio over the course of 1 year. If, on the other hand, the investment people do better than expected the gains could be larger. Truly, our retirement is dependent upon the return on our investments.
- What I have suggested to STRS, legislators, and almost anyone that will listen to me is that the STRS system needs to push for increases in the employer contributions. When pension reform efforts were initiated in 2009 and 2012 several changes were made. Some of those changes included: increases in employee contributions (from 10% to 14%), forcing teachers to work longer, and reductions in COLA provisions. Something that was not included was any increases in employer contributions. STRS Ohio has a very low employer contribution rate when compared to other public pensions in the state and around the country. It seems logical to me that since STRS has suspended COLA for retirees, increased the active contribution rate for active employees, and required the length of service requirements for active contributors, the next step would be to increase the employer contribution rate.

As we work through the myriad of problems with the STRS system please recognize that ORTA is working every day to protect and improve the retirement benefits for STRS retirees.

ORTA Helps Active Educators

I received an email from the President of Preble Co. RTA informing me that his chapter was reaching out to assist the teachers at Northridge Elementary School near Dayton. Harold Niehaus informed me that the teachers at Northridge Elementary lost most of their personal items used for teaching as a result of the tornadoes that hit the Dayton area. His chapter is seeking donations of items and or money to assist the staff at this school as they prepare for next year. If you have items (books and related supplies) that you would like to donate, please contact Harold Niehaus President of Preble Co. RTA at harold.niehaus@yahoo.com. What a nice thing for a local chapter to do to help its fellow educators.

Legal Action Brought Against STRS

Perhaps you have seen reports of a legal action brought against STRS related to the loss of COLA in your news. On May 23rd, 2019 two retired teachers from the Cincinnati area (Dean Dennis and Bob Buerkle) filed a class action lawsuit against STRS Ohio challenging the loss of COLA promised to Ohio STRS beneficiaries. Their suit claims, among other things, that the action to suspend COLA violates Ohio's constitution, the U.S constitution, and Ohio Revised Code. Of course, such a challenge is a drastic measure, but these two retirees (and many other retirees across the state) feel that they have no other recourse to fight against the STRS' decision to break their agreement with retirees. Although ORTA is not a principle in this legal action; all STRS beneficiaries are a part of the class that the plaintiff represents. I urge each ORTA member to read the lawsuit and understand as much of this as possible. As a diverse group, ORTA members opinions on this matter will vary. I have received many comments on this action, most of them supportive of the action. 'Finally, someone is doing something about the COLA' probably represents a majority of opinions from those that have contacted me. Of course, I have also heard from people that are suspect of such a move and the unintended consequences such an action might bring about. I will do my best to keep ORTA's membership informed on what is happening with this lawsuit.

Protect our Pensions Group

Many in the STRS beneficiary group have received, yet another, letter from the Protect Our Pensions (POP 5) group. I remind ORTA members that this group is NOT affiliated with ORTA in any way. I also remind our membership that, in the 2 years I have attended the STRS meetings, HPA meetings, and ORSC meetings, I have not seen anyone from POP 5 present. One statement in the most recent membership request from this group is that 'older retiree associations have not been able to accomplish much for you, recently'. I would suggest that, while ORTA efforts have not accomplished the goal of having COLA restored, ORTA has been effective in several areas including:

- ORTA was effective in having the language in the loss of COLA changed from eliminated to suspended. This was no easy task as the STRS folks had determined that COLA was to be eliminated, forever. As things stand our COLA is being reconsidered each year.
- ORTA was successful in getting the STRS Board to change the funding policy (the policy that controls our COLA) from requiring a system that is 100% funded to 85% funded. This is significant when one considers that the STRS system has NEVER been funded at 100%. 85% is a tall order but 100% was simply not realistic.
- ORTA was successful in maintain the \$30 per month subsidy for all Medicare eligible retirees. This was scheduled to cease in January of 2019 but continues as a result of ORTA (and others') hard work.

(con'd from last page)

Another statement that I find troubling in the POP 5 letter is that the retirement system is a 'well that is running dry'. I disagree. In fact, our system is better funded now than the historical average funding level. So, a picture intended to frighten retirees into paying dues to an organization that is absent from all meetings concerning STRS is dubious.

STRS Budget

The budget for fiscal year 2020 (beginning July 1, 2019) for STRS will be voted upon at the meeting of the STRS Board of Trustees on June 20, 2019. Probably the most interesting aspect of the proposed budget is the increase in compensation for STRS employees. When factoring in a decreasing headcount in the number of employees at STRS and a 3% compensation increase, the employees at STRS will see a 4.8% increase in pay. This does not include the increases proposed to the 'performance-based incentives' that the investment people will receive. These increases in wages to the people that manage our retirement system are controversial, to say the least. ORTA has spoken against the 'optics' of giving raises to the STRS employees in the face of reductions for retirees (loss of COLA) and increases in contributions of actives. To be clear, these raises for STRS employees would not provide sufficient funding for a COLA, however, the notion of shared sacrifice is important. ORTA has suggested that everyone involved with the STRS system, active contributors, retirees, and STRS employees should share in the sacrifices that are required to strengthen the pension system. ORTA will continue to voice opposition to the loss of COLA, while witnessing the steady increase in wages for STRS employees.

Best Regards,
Dr. Robin Rayfield, ORTA Executive Director

EARNING IN ERIE CO.

At the June 14th **Erie County Retired Teachers Meeting** (ECRTA) our grant recipients presented how they used the funds in their classrooms. Three of the nine recipients were able to attend the remainder sent letters of appreciation and explanations of how they used the funds. Members were very proud of one of the recipients, Leah Lacrosse, from Huron McCormick Middle School 8th grade science. She was unable to attend as she was selected to present her funded project at a national science conference. Several others were at Montessori training in Cincinnati.

The recipients were: **Linda Biddlecombe, Katie Corcoran, Nicole Hoag, Aimee Johnson, Beth Krupp, Leah Lacrosse, Kelsey Maas, Kelli Malone, and Janet Michel.**

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



Pictured are L to R are Katie Corcoran (Montessori), Linda Biddlecombe (Sandusky City Schools) and Janet Michel (Montessori). They are displaying several of their grant purchases.



MORE IN MAHONING CO.

Mahoning Retired Teachers met on March 13 at Drake's Landing in Canfield. **Sara Churchill**, digital services librarian for the Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning County, presented the online services available at the library. This month's Community Service donations were collected for the Mahoning Public Library's summer literacy program. President Susan Harris congratulated the newest MRTA member, Wanda Smith. MRTA now has 692 lifetime members and 72 annual members. Stay tuned for information from their May 8th meeting.

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



Above: Sara Churchill, guest speaker from Public Library of Youngstown and Mahoning Co



Above: Phil Butto pictured with Sara Churchill

SCHOLARSHIP IN SENECA CO.

The Seneca County Retired Teachers Association announced the winner of their 2019 scholarship. **Madilyn Slingline**, a 2019 graduate of Clyde High School, is this year's recipient of the SCRTA scholarship for someone entering the field of education.

Madilyn Slingline will be attending Bowling Green State University this fall. She plans to pursue a career in early business and marketing education. Her parents are Marc and Erika Slingline.

The Seneca County Retired Teachers Association has awarded a scholarship for the past fourteen years to a graduating student residing in Seneca County who plans to pursue a career in education. Since Madilyn lives in Seneca County, she qualifies for the scholarship even though Clyde High School is not in the county. She is the first Clyde High School student to win the scholarship. SCRTA winners in the past have been from the following schools: Bellevue, Fostoria, Hopewell-Loudon, Mohawk, New Riegel, Old Fort, St. Wendelin, Seneca East, and Tiffin Columbian.

The scholarship is funded by voluntary contributions from members of the association.

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

NEWS IN NOBLE CO.

Noble County Retired Teachers met for a regular meeting on June 13, 2019 at Patty's Place near Caldwell. Members of Noble County CARES (Community Access Resources Education Services) were invited to be our guest speakers. Noble County CARES is the county's volunteer drug coalition and giving the presentation were four members of their **QRT** (quick response team). The QRT is comprised of local clergy, members of behavioral health agencies and local law enforcement. Our guests explained how the coalition got started and the roles of the team members. We were informed of the steps that are taken once the team receives a confidential referral about someone struggling with addiction. The team then makes a home visit and offers support, resources and treatment options to help get them well. They emphasized the need for the public to "spread the word" about this coalition so they can get referrals of those who are in need of help with addiction.

Noble County Retired Teachers awarded a \$500 Book Grant to Maria Blaker, a Caldwell High School senior. Maria will be taking online courses from Western Governor's University this fall if financially possible (she would like to pay for college on her own). If not in the fall, most likely in January of 2020. She will majoring in Special Education.

"Since I was little, I have always been told I am a natural-born leader."

Maria has also been inspired by Caldwell High School's special education teacher whom she had the honor of observing in the classroom setting. One of the most valuable lesson she was taught - ***"to love the kids like they are your own."***

Cynthia Stallings, retired teacher and chairperson of the NCRTA Scholarship Fund, recognized Maria as the recipient of the award at the Caldwell High School Awards Assembly on May 17, 2019.

To learn more about the Noble Co. chapter, please visit their website.



Pictured above the following QRT members present at the meeting: from left to right - Tammy Stillion, Pastor John Powell, Deputy Norman and Sheriff Pickenpaugh



Pictured above: Maria Blaker and Cynthia Stallings

LORAIN CO. GIVES BACK TO STUDENTS

On Wednesday, May 8th the **Lorain County Retired Teachers Association** chapter held its luncheon and awarded three college students majoring in education—each were presented with a **Mary Elizabeth Keller** scholarship in the amount of \$1325.00.0.

The awarded college students were **Maisey Breese** of Elyria High School class of 2017 and currently studying early childhood education (Pre K-3) at the University of Akron; **Lauren Kuch** of Midview High School, class of 2016 and currently studying early childhood education (Pre K-3) with endorsements for grades 4-5 at the LCCC branch of Ashland University and **Gabrielle Post** of Avon High School class of 2017 and is currently majoring at Ursuline College in Adolescent and Young Adult English and Language Arts (7-12).

Along with the college students, three area high school students were also awarded. Each high school senior was given an **Orrin R. Findley** scholarship in the amount of \$1,000. *This award in particular has been awarded since 1985 to students who are the children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews of teachers.*

The recipients of the Orrin R. Findley scholarships included **Gabrielle Ballard** a senior from Midview High School who plans to attend Heidelberg University to double major in both criminology and theatre; **Calli Frank** a senior from Elyria High School soon to be attending the University of Kentucky and majoring in middle school education and **Brennan Scheck** of Black River High School who will attend Heidelberg University to earn a double major in history and criminology. To learn more about the Lorain Co. chapter, please visit their [website](#).



Pictured Above: Maisey Breese, Lauren Kuch and Gabrielle Post



Pictured Above: Gabrielle Ballard, Calli Frank and Brennan Scheck



All of the selected Lorain Co. Scholarship winners

SANDUSKY CO. CELEBRATED 50 YEARS IN SEPTEMBER!

Sandusky County Ohio Retired Teachers Association (SCORTA) is now 50 yrs old. Members celebrated this event with a luncheon on Sept. 13, 2018. Speaker was President of SCORTA, **Jeanette Gleba** speaking about the history of SCORTA. Mayor **Danny Sanchez** declared the day-Retired Teachers Day. ORTA Rep. Bruce Hodges spoke on the importance of membership.

Although the chapter celebrated this milestone in September of 2018, we are thrilled to still honor this achievement within their chapter, and are toasting to a 51st anniversary this fall.

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



Officers of SCORTA with Mayor of Fremont, OH, Danny Sanchez and ORTA Rep. Bruce Hodges. In order-left to right-- Ellen Honsperger, Maxine Posey, Mayor Sanchez, Jeanette Gleba and Bruce Hodges



President Jeanette Gleba with ORTA Rep. Bruce Hodges

VENTURING TO VINTON CO.

Members of **Vinton County Retired Teachers Association** are pictured with liaison, **Don Ullmann** at a recent meeting. Among other things, the group shared of their success in recruiting new members last year. Plans are in the works for another gathering of retired teachers for fellowship and possible recruitment this coming August.

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



Members of Vinton Co. retired Teachers with guest and Central Liaison, Don Ullmann



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MORROW CO. UPDATE

Dr. Robin Rayfield, Executive Director of the **Ohio Retired Teachers Association (ORTA)**, spoke to the **Morrow County Retired Teachers** at their luncheon meeting June 1st held at Trinity UM Church. Dr. Rayfield reported on his and ORTA's efforts to achieve restoration of a cost of living adjustment (COLA) for retired teachers which was discontinued in 2012. Though ORTA has offered several plans the **State Teachers Retirement System (STRS)** refuses to restore a COLA until the pension system is 100% funded. This would require increased contributions by both employers and active teachers which the **Ohio Education Association (OEA)** opposes. Dr. Rayfield urged MCRTA members to attend STRS board meetings and express their opinions. A Facebook Forum has filed a class action lawsuit on the issue.



Pictured above: Dr. Robin Rayfield, and Pat Maxwell, President of MCRTA

Dr. Rayfield also said this is the second year of ORTA's strategic plan which divided the state into five regions rather than twelve districts. Morrow County is part of the Central Region.

President **Pat Maxwell** presided for the business meeting and welcomed members and a guest, **Nancy Hale**.

Past president **Bonnie Hildebrand** reported on the successful results of the teacher grants offered to county teachers by MCRTA for the first time this year.

Committee reports included: Legislative chairman **Lindsay Kohlenburg** urged members to follow her lead in lobbying on critical issues and to contact our representatives at the state and national levels. **Linda Ruehrmund** said good things are happening at Seniors on Center with new activities including the forming of a Senior Choir. **Angie Hamilton** appealed for Red Cross volunteers and for donations of coffee for the "**Java for GI's**" program.

Mary Kay Meyers was thanked for decorating the tables in a butterfly theme. Pat Rinehart's black raspberry pie was auctioned with proceeds benefiting the Teacher Grant Fund.

Upcoming events include: Executive Board meeting-**Aug. 19th 10:30** am at Edison UM church; Central Region Leadership Conference-**Aug 21st**, ORTA office; Fall Luncheon-**Oct. 7th**-Trinity UMC, noon.

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

GIVING BIG IN BUTLER CO.

At the May 18 **Butler County RTA** general membership meeting, three high school seniors each received a \$1000.00 scholarship in the name of **Jill Tague**. Jill had been the chairman of the Scholarship Committee for 15 years. The recipients of the **Jill Tague Memorial Scholarship** were **Rory Adryan, Trinity Miller** and **Kily Richardson**. Rory plans to attend Miami University in Oxford to major in primary education; Trinity and Kily plan to attend Morehead State University to major in elementary education and elementary special education.



Pictured are the scholarship winners along with members of the Scholarship Committee; Dianne Aiken, Susan Smith and Beverly Worley.

Before the presentations of the scholarships, **Tyler Bradshaw**, a former BCR-TA scholarship recipient, spoke of the three teachers that had helped him receive his degree and become a member of Miami University's Admissions Department. **Sandy Brunner** reviewed the adventures of Jill Tague's teaching career. Sandy taught and sold split-the-pot tickets with Jill for many years.

Dianne Aiken spoke of Jill's involvement with chairing the Scholarship Committee for BCRTA.

We congratulate the recipients of the Jill Tague Memorial Scholarship!

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



Scholarships awarded in memory of Jill Tague, BCRTA Scholarship Chair 2001-2014

MONEY FROM MERCER CO.

The Mercer County Retired Teachers Association scholarship recipient for 2019 is **Mariah Schlater**. Mariah graduated from Marion Local High School with a cumulative GPA of 4.0. She ranked 3rd in her graduating class. Mariah will attend Wright State University Lake Campus and major in Early Childhood Education.

Congratulations to Mariah and best success in her upcoming college years.

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



Mariah Schlater, pictured with her mother, Renee

WE'RE MOVING!

After 30+ years at 8050 N. High, we are excited to move the ORTA offices to a new location.

We are currently finalizing the details, and we will certainly inform our members of our new address information as we approach our moving date (August 1st).

Please stay tuned to learn the latest on our new facilities, and more please visit us at www.orta.org.



WHAT'S ORTA UP TO?

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



Wednesday, July 3
11:30am Athens Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting
Thursday, July 4
Independence Day
Monday, July 8
5:30pm Henry Co. Retired Teachers Association
Wednesday, July 10
12:00pm Auglaize Co. Retired Teachers Association Meeting
Monday, July 15
12:00pm Lawrence Co. Retired Teachers Association Chapter Meeting
Friday, July 19
12:00pm Alliance Area Retired Teachers Association Meeting
Thursday, July 25
12:00pm Butler Co. Retired Teachers Association Chapter Meeting

TIME TO RENEW?

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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!

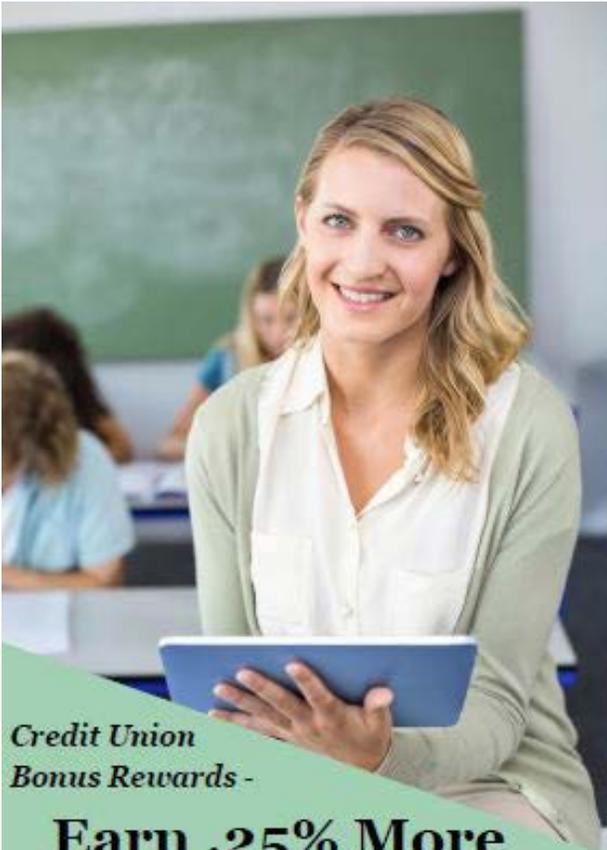
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Columbus, OH 43235**

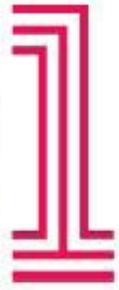


****Remember, the date we process your payment is your new due date for the following year (i.e. 5/18/19, new due date is 5/18/20). if you pay your ORTA dues to your local chapter, your payment is applied upon receipt to our office.**





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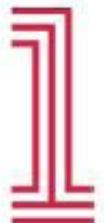
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IN MEMORIAM:

Lake Co.-

Jean A. Stevens, Lake Co. Member
January 30, 2019

Trumbull Co.-

Louise Joyce Sackett, ORTA Life Member
April 13, 2019

Robert Davis, ORTA and TRTA Life Member
May 28, 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



We want to put you and your chapter
in the monthly e-newsletter!
Contact Alissa at publications@orta.org,

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Columbus, Ohio 43235

We can't wait to share your stories!