



Austin Retired Teachers Association

Regular Monthly Meeting

Friday, December 12, 2025

Hybrid Meeting: in Person or Zoom at Faith Lutheran Church



AGENDA

ZOOM LOG-IN/SOCIAL TIME: 9:15 a.m.–9:45 a.m.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85025126693?pwd=JBbLTGRS9mmlbQ9rFzkobSRrRhVfVJ.1>

Meeting ID: 850 2512 6693 Passcode: Retired

*****ARTA Meet & Greet Commitment!*****

GATHERING:

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| 1) Call to Order/Announcements | Norma Jost |
| a. Pledge of Allegiance to the U. S. and Texas flags | Lucia Facundo |
| b. Inspiration | Linda Harvey |

2) PROGRAM:

Introduction of Speaker	Leilani Clark
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“Stress Strategies for the Holidays”
Nancy Barr, Counselor and Group Coach

----- Holiday Exercise with **SURPRISE** -----
 Five Door Prizes with Catherine van Zanten/Break

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|--|--------------------------------------|
| 3) Introduction of Guests/New Members | Betty Zschiesche |
| 4) ARTA Foundation Report/Memorial Tributes | Glenda Black & Linda Harvey |
| 5) BUSINESS and COMMITTEE REPORTS: | |
| a. Approval of November 14, 2025, Minutes | Marcia Caldwell |
| b. Treasurer’s Report | Tony Dishner |
| c. Membership Report | Bonnie Cross & Terry Morganti-Fisher |
| d. Volunteer Services/Community Involvement Update | Marsha Lyons-Gray |
| e. Legislative Update | Craig Campell & Gloria Lenoir |
| f. March 25 TRTA House of Delegates Live | Joe Ramirez |
| g. Jumpstart Read for the Record – Signups in January for 2/26 | Norma Jost |
| h. Announcements and Reminders | Norma Jost |
| i. Door Prizes | G. Lenoir & C. van Zanten |
| 6) Adjournment | Norma Jost |

Next Meeting: January 9, 2026, “How Seniors Can Age In Place”
Johanna Stahl Mandel, Executive Director of Capital City Village

TRTA Photo Policy: If a TRTA member wishes not to be photographed, recorded, or appear in TRTA promotional items, the member should avoid any cameras in the area.
Refer to the meeting packet for the full text of this policy.

Follow us at our ARTA Website, Facebook & Instagram sites:

Website <https://austirta.org/>, Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/TRTA.org>, Instagram https://www.instagram.com/austin_rta





Austin Retired Teachers Association Meeting Highlights, November 14, 2025 In Person at Faith Lutheran Church and on Zoom

Joyce Clendennen, ARTA Historian



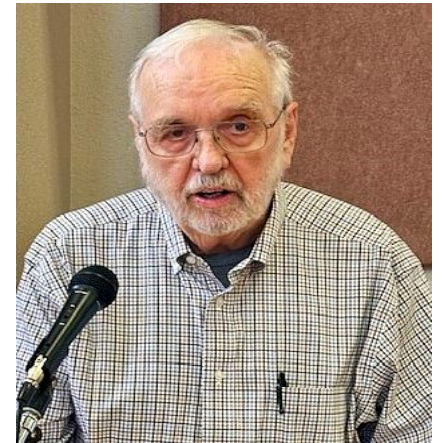
ARTA President Norma Jost called the meeting to order and reminded members to donate to TRTF today.



Rudy Munguía led the pledges of allegiance to the United States and Texas flags.



Bill Dolman presented "National Museum of the Pacific War: 80 Years After the End of World War II."



TRTA District 13 President Joe Ramirez said the TRTA House of Delegates virtual convention would be live on March 25th.



President Jost recognized veterans present today: Gilbert Cantu, Ed Williamsen, Rudy Munguía, President Norma Jost, Wayne Bowen and John O'Sullivan.



Social Committee Co-Chairs Linda Burns and Patty Young.



Academy 4 Coordinator Dora Cervantes explained the 4th grade mentoring program.



Volunteer Services/Community Involvement Chair Dr. Marsha Lyons-Gray said hours are due December 31st.





Austin Retired Teachers Association
Minutes of the Regular Monthly Meeting
Friday, November, 14, 2025
Via In person/Zoom



The regular monthly meeting of the Austin Retired Teachers Association was held November 14, 2025, in person and via Zoom. In attendance there were 87 in person and 11 on Zoom for a total of 98 attendees.

GATHERING

Call to Order/Announcements: President Norma Jost called the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m. She reminded members to silence their cell phones.

Pledges of Allegiance to the U.S. and Texas flags: Rudy Munguía led the pledges.

Inspiration: Sheila Sargent quoted Abraham Lincoln, who reminded Americans to give honor to the soldiers and the sailors.

Recognition of ARTA Veterans: President Norma Jost called the five ARTA veterans present up to the front to be recognized: Wayne Bowen, Gilbert Cantu, Rudy Munguía, John O’Sullivan, Ed Williamsen.

PROGRAM:

Program Introduction and Presentation: Dr. Rosemary Morrow introduced Bill Dolman, who spoke as a representative of the National Museum of the Pacific War located in Fredericksburg, Texas. He provided members with detailed historical information about the 80 years since the end of WWII to the present, including the foundation and organization of the Museum of the Pacific War. He was an original participant in the project and still advises the museum. He gave an overview of the events leading to American involvement in the war, summarized specific milestones during the war, and recounted the history of the creation of the physical museum itself. He also provided a handout for the members with the above information.

Veterans Day Singing: Glenda Black led and accompanied the singing of “Songs of the U.S. Military.”

BREAK/Exercise with Connor Grady

Social Committee Update: Patty Young asked members to sign up for refreshments for the December meeting.

Introduction of New Members: Betty Zschiesche recognized and thanked new members Cathy Jurgens and John O’Sullivan for attending today’s meeting. She reported that there were 98 members present in person and on Zoom.

ARTA Foundation Report/Memorials: Linda Harvey asked for more donations to the ARTA Foundation; the fund is currently at about 50%. Glenda Black led the memorials for Rodney Craig Brown, Sandra Kay Hubbard, and Melba Stewart-Denny. Their biographical information is in the meeting packet. A moment of silence followed.

BUSINESS and COMMITTEE REPORTS

Approval of October 10, 2025, Minutes: The minutes were approved as printed.

Treasurer’s Report: Treasurer Tony Dishner presented his report, which will be filed for audit.

TRT Foundation Collection: Dr. Rosemary Morrow, District 13 TRTF Representative, asked for donations to the Texas Retired Teachers Foundation, which provides grants for programs such as first-year teacher scholarships. A total of \$236 was collected at the meeting.

Volunteer Services/Community Involvement: Dr. Marsha Lyons-Gray reminded members that ARTA’s 2025 goal of volunteer hours in-kind donations is three million dollars. So far, 277,000 hours have been

turned in to Marsha. She also asked members to donate socks for the December meeting. She provided a handout for new and ongoing volunteer opportunities.

Membership Report: Terry Morganti-Fisher announced the current number of members is 671. She said we need eight new members by February 28, 2026, in order to begin earning a monetary rebate from TRTA.

Legislative Update: Dr. Craig Campell reminded members that public schools are funded by property taxes. He urged members to pay attention to what candidates are saying about future property taxes and to vote accordingly.

March 25 TRTA House of Delegates Live: District 13 President Joe Ramirez suggested members might want to be present in San Marcos for the House of Delegates virtual convention to learn about what is coming up for the next year. There is a proposed amendment to raise dues from \$35 to \$50.00. He also emphasized checking out the Sistine Chapel Experience at the former Sears location at Barton Creek Square Mall on December 11, 2025.

Jumpstart Read for the Record: President Norma Jost announced that Read for the Record will take place on February 26, 2026, at Padrón and Galindo elementary schools.

Door Prizes: Door prizes were awarded.

Adjournment: President Norma Jost adjourned the meeting at 11:37.

Marcia Caldwell, Secretary

Norma Jost, President

AUSTIN RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

TREASURER'S REPORT

November 1–30, 2025

Money Market

Initial Month Balance	\$	2,170.44		
Income/expenses	\$	0.63		
Ending Balance	\$	2,171.07	\$	2,171.07

Member Savings

Initial Month Balance	\$	524.32		
Dividend	\$	4.16		
Ending Balance	\$	528.48	\$	528.48

A+ Checking

Initial Month Balance	\$	14,984.53		
Deposits	\$	482.78		
Expenses	\$	(209.89)		
Ending Balance	\$	15,257.42	\$	15,257.42

Start-Up Certificate	\$	1,000.00	\$	1,000.00
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12 month Certificate

Initial Month Balance	\$	2,358.27		
Dividend	\$	7.62		
Ending Balance	\$	2,365.89	\$	2,365.89

24 Month Certificate

Initial Month Balance	\$	2,344.42		
Dividend	\$	7.71		
Ending Balance	\$	2,352.13	\$	2,352.13

Total			\$ 23,674.99	
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Tony Dishner

Treasurer



TRTA PHOTO POLICY

At public TRTA events (such as convention), including at the local, district, and state levels, photos may be taken by TRTA staff and/or volunteers. TRTA may use likenesses of its members in photographs, videos, or other digital or social media (“photo”) in its publications, including web-based publications, without payment or other consideration. If a TRTA member wishes not to be photographed, recorded, or appear in TRTA promotional items, the member should avoid any cameras in the area.

This should be in your directory, on every printed agenda, and/or posted at a sign-in table, and/or posted on screen if using technology projection, and/or announced at the beginning of meetings for every TRTA event you host or participate in.

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

It’s hard to believe that 2025 is almost over—what a whirlwind this year has been, filled with meaningful accomplishments and memorable events. At our October regular meeting, we amended our ARTA Standing Rules, effective July 1, 2026, to align the responsibilities of the Second Vice-President and Treasurer with the current TRTA Bylaws. Throughout the year, we welcomed many dynamic speakers, and—as usual—March was especially busy. We held our Day at the Capitol, delivered ARTA volunteer hours and in-kind donations representing **\$2,807,696.05** to the Texas Deputy Comptroller/Chief of Staff, and celebrated our **73rd Anniversary** at Chez Zee honoring ARTA Sweetheart **Betty Clough**. With our partnership with AMBA, we welcomed new members through many wonderful opportunities, and in May, we held our first **ARTA Committee Fair**, allowing us to receive ARTA Yearbook committee updates ahead of schedule.

As I began my last term as your president this past summer, we continued our momentum. In August, we held our first **Area Superintendent Luncheon**, reaffirming our commitment to partner with district leaders during these challenging times. In September, we invited **Tim Lee**, who urged us to “Get New

Members!” considering current legislation. We supported Faith Lutheran Church’s **75th Anniversary** with an ARTA Trunk or Treat, gaining a new member. We also met with **TRTA’s Deputy Director Rosalind Johnson**, to discuss fundraising possibilities for ARTA items and determined the importance of working closely with the ARTA Foundation as we plan for new initiatives. Throughout the year, **Laurie Barber** and **Connor Grady** energized us with activities that kept us moving. We plan to continue offering programs that stimulate both mind and body this spring.

I am especially excited to join TRTA members for the **FREE Sistine Chapel Experience** at Barton Creek Square Mall on **December 11**. I can’t wait to take our ARTA picture there!

As we close out the year, please remember to recruit friends for membership and submit your volunteer hours to **Marsha Lyons-Gray** by **January 10**. I would love it if we could achieve the following:

1. Welcome **two more first-time members** so ARTA can begin receiving the **\$10 TRTA rebate** per new member.
2. Add **six more members**, giving ARTA a **10th delegate** to the TRTA Virtual House of Delegates on March 25.
3. Surpass **\$3 million in-kind donations** from 2025 ARTA volunteer hours.
4. Have an amazing ARTA nominations slate of 2026-2028 ARTA officers!

Please join me in celebrating the holiday season on **Friday, December 12**, at Faith Lutheran Church (6600 Woodrow Avenue), either in person or via Zoom. We are delighted to welcome **Nancy Barr, Counselor and Group Coach**, who will share *Stress Strategies for the Holidays*. Please save the date for our first meeting of 2026 on **Friday, January 9**. I promise it will be an exciting start to the important work ahead.

Thank you for your support and collaboration throughout this busy year. I truly appreciate everything you’ve contributed to making our work successful.

I send you my best wishes for a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and Happy



Kwanzaa. Here's hoping your New Year is filled with good health, happiness, and peace.

I look forward to seeing you soon.

*Norma Jost
ARTA President 2024-2026*

We are ARTA/TRTA Members, and we:

- pay dues early or on time – our term is 7/1-6/30,
- advocate for Education; and
- publicize Who We Are and WHAT We Do for TEXAS- Volunteer Hours impact the TX Economy 1/1-12/31!

WELCOME, NEW ARTA MEMBERS!

Welcome to the first-time ARTA members who joined after our November 14 regular meeting! Your fellow members are honored that you are now part of our organization.

We have plenty of committees that you can join. Do not hesitate to contact me at **njost2@yahoo.com** if you are interested in joining any of our committees. I will then place you in contact with the appropriate committee chairs.

Please welcome the following new ARTA members:

- Jim Acker
- Kathy Diehl-Shores
- Rosario Juarez
- Kathy Jurgens
- Josie Rodriguez
- Gracie Segura

*Norma Jost
ARTA President*

IN MEMORIAM

Katherine Anne Roper Higgins was born in New Home, Texas, in 1934 and grew up on the family farm in that area of west Texas. She first entered McMurray College, where she earned a BS degree in elementary education, and then Texas Tech University, where she obtained a Master's degree in education. She taught in Lake Charles, Louisiana, and Lubbock and Round Rock, Texas, before retiring in 1991. She married Carlos Higgins, a U.S. Air Force pilot, and they lived in England and France. After retiring, she helped found the Cedar Park Retired Teachers Association and joined ARTA

when that chapter disbanded. She served as president of TRTA District 13. For 15 years, Katherine was Girls State Chairman for the American Legion Auxiliary Unit 447 in Round Rock, TX. She died November 19, 2025, at age 91. She was an ARTA member from 2016 to 2019.

*Glenda Black
ARTA Foundation President*

ARTA FOUNDATION

We have only December to finish collecting for our fourteen ARTA Foundation scholarships—\$16,800 total needed. Donations are tax deductible since the foundation is a 501(c)(3). Include your foundation as part of your yearly donations. We need all to pitch in to support future educators. We need your donation.

*Glenda Black
ARTA Foundation President*

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

The **Social Committee** is thriving with your help. The October table was spooky, well stocked, and well manned by Linda Burns, Sandy Doughty, Cathryn Harris, Marsha Lyons-Gray, Janie Maldonado, Marcy McNeil, Marjeanne Rutt, Debbie Sansom, and Diane Wright.

Unfortunately, our November celebration of Veterans Day did not have a full complement of volunteer signees, and the food disappeared quickly, so thanks to the valiant volunteers who served that included Linda Burns, Leilani Clark, Bonnie Cross, Terry Morganti-Fisher, Maria Martinez, Gloria Munguía, Judy Reinhart, and Marjeanne Rutt.

Remember that 70 to 90 people attend our in-person meetings. and everyone wants more than one bite, so each volunteer needs to bring enough for 30-45 bites or small servings of their dish. Fortunately, after a personal request from the dais, the sign-up clipboard went around, and December came back with a few extra volunteers, so this month should be bountiful and joyous. Also know that we have only three more opportunities to help the committee this year and that we will need a new chair for the 2026-2028 biennium. Please don't forget to sign



up for those last meetings, and if you are interested in becoming more involved in ARTA, come see me near the kitchen so we can talk.

*Patty Young
Social Committee Chair
ARTA 2nd Vice-President*

ARTA MEMBERSHIP

Do you know of someone who's retiring in December? The first three (3) members who sign up a **new member by our Dec. 12th meeting** will have their 2026-27 local dues paid, so please reach out to fellow retirees. We are on the search for new members! We need to reach at least 797 members by February 28th to receive our membership rebate! Please share the ARTA membership form or our website link with a retired friend. Be sure to let the membership chairs know when you have recruited a new member. Double the offer for both rewards, and your name will be entered in a drawing with other District 13 members for a chance to win a \$50.00 check in March 2026.

Many thanks to the 679 members who have paid their TRTA/ARTA dues. If you're reading this and are one of the 62 members who still needs to renew, it's not too late. If you're not sure, just contact Bonnie or Terry. Remember you should join ARTA as well as TRTA. Dues may be paid online at our ARTA website: <https://austinrta.org/membership> or by cash, check, or debit/credit card at our upcoming ARTA meeting. Paper forms will be available at the treasurer's table. Please help us by sharing the membership form and our website link with a retired friend. Please contact us with any questions.

Thank you for your membership and support.

*Bonnie Cross & Terry Morganti-Fisher
ARTA Membership Committee Co-chairs*

TRTA DISTRICT 13 HOUSE OF DELEGATES LIVE!: MARCH 25, 2026

In lieu of a traditional state convention this year, TRTA will be holding the TRTA House of Delegates Live! which will be broadcast to 20 different sites across the state on **Wednesday, March 25**. District 13 delegates will meet at the San Marcos Activity Center (501 E. Hopkins St)

in San Marcos from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. This year's theme is "TRTA: Celebrating Our Connection to You!"

Delegates from the 14 chapters in our district will vote electronically on the election of TRTA state officers for the 2026-2028 biennium as well as on proposed amendments to the TRTA Bylaws. At this point, Austin RTA is projected to have nine voting delegates along with alternates. However, if ARTA can get four more members who have not renewed \$50 TRTA/ARTA dues or four additional first-time members to join both organizations before February 28, our chapter will receive a tenth delegate.

ARTA President Norma Jost will work with membership to determine who will serve as voting delegates. **It is imperative that members from 2024-2025 renew their dues now so that we can have at least one more delegate representing you on March 25.**

ARTA delegates must communicate with our membership before March 25 to address one of the proposed amendments to the state bylaws. The TRTA executive committee is proposing an amendment to raise state dues from \$35 to \$50 beginning on July 1, 2027. Your feedback is essential on how the ARTA delegates will cast their votes on this amendment.

Regardless of whether you are serving as a voting delegate or not, I invite all of you to attend the House of Delegates Live! session followed by an abbreviated District 13 Spring Conference after lunch. There is no charge for lunch, and incoming District 13 officers will be installed during the afternoon conference.

*Joe Ramirez
TRTA District 13 President*

TRTA: CELEBRATING OUR CONNECTION TO YOU!

HOUSE OF DELEGATES LIVE! MARCH 25, 2026

COMING TO A CITY NEAR YOU!

RIO GRANDE CITY | CORPUS CHRISTI
EDNA | CYPRESS | BEAUMONT
HUNTSVILLE | JACKSONVILLE
PITTSBURG | WICHITA FALLS | ALLEN
WHITE SETTLEMENT
WACO | SAN MARCOS | ABILENE
BROWNWOOD | AMARILLO
LUBBOCK
MIDLAND | EL PASO | SAN ANTONIO



TRS STUDY REVEALS FUND NO LONGER MEETS 'ACTUARIAL SOUNDNESS' STATUS

The Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS) conducts annual actuarial valuations through an independent consulting group. These valuations offer important insights into the health and long-term outlook of the pension fund. The most recent results, presented at the TRS Board of Trustees meeting on December 5, delivered disappointing news for retirees hoping for a cost-of-living increase.

Over the past year, TRS's unfunded liability grew by nearly \$5 billion, reaching a total of \$64.9 billion. This unfunded liability is a key benchmark for determining "actuarial soundness," which is defined as the point at which TRS is projected to pay off its unfunded liabilities within 31 years. That projection has now increased to 35 years. Achieving actuarial soundness is essential, as it is the threshold required for TRS to approve a cost-of-living increase for retired educators.

Actuaries emphasized that long funding periods introduce substantial risk. The longer it takes to pay the unfunded liability, the greater the chance that market downturns or demographic changes can make the problem worse. With liabilities projected to grow for another 13 years before they begin to decline, the window for something to go wrong widens dramatically.

TRS has long been making progress toward reducing its unfunded liabilities, buoyed by strong investment returns. In fiscal year 2025, TRS posted a positive 9.8% return on its investments. However, the Texas Legislature's passage of House Bill 2 in 2025—which increases public school funding and salaries—has negatively affected the pension fund's actuarial status. No additional contributions were made to TRS to offset the cost of these higher salaries.

One of the clearest messages from the valuation was this: TRS will require additional funding to get back on track when the 2027 legislative session comes around.

TRTA will be pushing for more funding as well as help for retirees who are suffering from years of inflationary pressure and from the affordability crisis.

To learn more about what this valuation means for you and the prospect of future cost-of-living increases, look out for our full analysis in our fourth quarter news bulletin, *The VOICE*, which is available to our members.

*Tim Lee,
TRTA Executive Director*

ARTA LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

At this time, what is happening in Washington, D.C., may affect what happens in the states. In response to major changes to the U.S. Department of Education, NEA's President Becky Pringle prepared a press release. This is the link from 11/22/25:

<https://www.nea.org/about-nea/media-center/press-releases/trump-administration-robbs-students-educational-opportunity-announcement-dismantle-department>. This step is what might be the most pertinent impact that affects K-12 education, and whatever impacts public education can weaken the Texas Teacher Retirement System by way of continued contributions from working public school educators.

How Students & Families Will Pay if Public Education is Guttled

If we dismantle public schools and the Department of Education:

- Class sizes will surge**, leaving students with less one-on-one attention and support.

- Rural, suburban, and urban communities across the country will lose needed funding**, hitting our most vulnerable families the hardest.

- Students with disabilities and their families will lose support** needed at school and home.

The Texas Tribune has been an excellent source for information.

Dr. Craig Campbell would like to add that, "who we will vote for Congress depends on court rulings as politicians are choosing their voters rather than the voters choosing their representatives."

*Gloria Cisneros Lenoir
Legislative Committee Co-chair*



MEMBER BENEFITS COMMITTEE

Quick reminders:

1. From the TRS.org website: *Starting Jan. 1, 2026, TRS-Care participants eligible for Medicare must enroll in and pay for Medicare Part B in order to enroll and remain in a TRS-Care health plan — no exceptions. If you want to enroll in and keep TRS-Care coverage on or after Jan. 1, 2026, you must enroll in Medicare Part B and keep paying the premium. You will lose your TRS-Care coverage if you don't pay for Medicare Part B.* Call TRS Health at 1-888-237-6762 for more information or help with your TRS-Care Medicare Advantage enrollment.
2. Be sure to check your balance for Over-the-Counter medication and health aides benefits on the UnitedHealthcare website before it expires on December 31, 2025. A new quarter begins with a new balance on January 1, 2026.
3. Visit the TRTA.org website to review your benefits. If you have not created an online membership account yet, you will need your TRTA ID number, which is on your mailing label of *The Voice* above your name, or you may contact Tony Dishner, ARTA's treasurer.
4. On the TRTA website under benefits, Boscov's Travel has TRTA unique travel experiences designed for your needs and convenience.

*Laura Grayson & Lucia Facundo
Member Benefits Committee Co-chairs*

NAVIGATING FALL SAFETY

[copied from the TRTA website]

All safety considers preventing injuries and illnesses during transitional weather.

Be Aware:

- when walking outside, be aware of falling leaves that may be slippery,
- of any slippery surfaces,
- of changing daylight hours,
- of changing temperatures. Check your heating system.

Driving Safety

- Be cautious of back-to-school traffic: Children are active in school zones.
- Be mindful of daylight changes. Short days mean less visibility.

Home Safety

- Check your heating system: Make sure it's working safely.
- Prepare for inclement weather: Prepare an emergency kit, including flashlights, batteries, first-aid kit.
- Practice ladder safety: REFRAIN from using a ladder.
- Be aware of fire hazards: Keep candles and space heaters away from flammable materials and have a working smoke alarm.

Remember:

- Wear reflective clothing when walking at night.
- Keep walkways and stairs free of clutter.
- Add grab bars in bathrooms for extra support.
- Consider using a cane for added stability.
- Inform others of your location when you are working alone.

*Gladys Havel
Health & Safety Committee Co-chair
ARTA President, 2016-2018*

**VOLUNTEER SERVICES/
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Sharing With Others Is a Blessing to the Giver and Receiver

Austin Retired Teachers Association offers a wide range of volunteer opportunities designed to match individual members' interests and skill sets. Volunteering not only strengthens our community, but it also enriches our own lives, creating meaningful connections and fostering personal growth. Every hour contributed has an influence on others, and together, we have the power to achieve remarkable outcomes.

Last spring, we set a goal of three million dollars in-kind services to the community. As of December 1, 2025, we have had only thirty-two members of our seven hundred members turn in service hours. With this number of participants submitting hours, we have accumulated 15,889 hours equivalent to \$552,778.31.

Please submit your hours to Marsha Gray by **January 10**. You may either mail, text, or phone.

Email: marsha_gray@att.net

Text: 512-924-2049



Phone and leave a verbal message: 512-343-8546

U.S. Postal Service: 3901 Amy Circle; Austin, Texas 78759

Please continue to support our ARTA membership projects: **Austin Pets Alive!**, **SAFE Alliance**, and the **Lions Club**. In addition, ARTA members have learned about opportunities including, but not limited to:

- Area Superintendents’ mentoring program
- TRTA Children’s Book Project
- East Side Community Mission
- Women’s Storybook Project of Texas
- Moore-Hancock Farmstead
- Pioneer Farms
- Academy 4 program
- Sistine Chapel Experience attendance or as a volunteer

Childcare, elder care, bringing a meal to someone in need, or checking on someone who is ill or facing difficulties all count. You may count your service up to 12 hours per day, and remember the time counts from the time you leave home until your return. Attending ARTA meetings and TRTA functions in person or on Zoom count towards our goal. If in doubt as to what counts, contact Marsha Gray.

Thank you for all you do in the community and especially in supporting ARTA goals of service to others.

*Marsha Lyons-Gray, Chair
Volunteer Services/Community Involvement Committee*

Better ATX (formerly known as the Assistance League of Austin):

Better ATX THRIFT HOUSE, located at 4901 Burnet Road, is the third and current location of our high quality and affordable resale store. Inside, you’ll find gently used items—from clothing and furniture to books, art, and collectibles—all generously donated by our community, and when we have more than we can sell, we partner with other nonprofits to share those goods, helping neighbors in need and keeping usable items out of the landfill.

*Holiday closings: December 22nd–January 4th; reopen for donations January 5th.

Better ATX programs include (more info at our website): <https://www.betteratx.org/>

- *Better ATX Clothes for Kids*
- *Better ATX Toy Cart*
- *Better ATX School Communities*
- *Better ATX Families*
- *Better ATX Scholars*
- *Better ATX Assault Survivors*
- *Better ATX Waste Not*

Three Ways to Join the Better ATX Mission

1. Volunteer:
<https://www.volgistics.com/appform/663843163>
2. Donate:
https://secure.lgiforms.com/form_engine/s/x1_NcmnFyc3C7HnpQjQMag
3. Shop at the **Better ATX THRIFT HOUSE**; 4901 Burnet Road, 78756
Shopping Wednesday–Saturday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Donations Monday–Saturday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Stay in the Know

Follow us to view weekly Better ATX THRIFT HOUSE finds and learn more about our programs:

Facebook Link:

<https://www.facebook.com/BetterATX>

Instagram Link:

<https://www.instagram.com/betteratx/>

Stay Connected Link:

<https://www.betteratx.org/#sign-up>

Every purchase, every donation, and every visit moves our mission forward.

ACADEMY4.ORG

DORA CERVANTES BILINGUAL PROGRAM MANAGER | Austin, Texas
Office: 817-744-8707 | Cell:512-592-1603
685 John B Sias Memorial Pkwy, Ste 215
Fort Worth, TX 76134

Please view these videos for more information and talk with Linda Burns about Hart Elementary Academy 4!

Spark Clubs: [video](#)

Academy 4 Friday: [video of a typical A4 Friday](#)

Jumpstart Read for the Record 2/26/26:

See Marcus Grow, by Marcus Bridgewater & Reggie Brown

Sign up at the January 9th ARTA meeting!

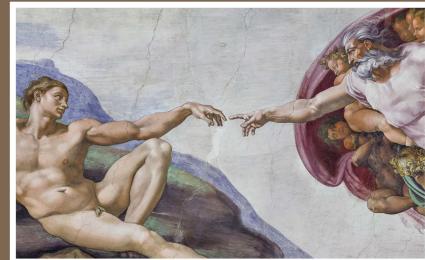


THE SISTINE CHAPEL EXPERIENCE



THE SISTINE CHAPEL EXPERIENCE

INVITES YOU TO:



MICHELANGELO'S MASTERPIECE LIKE NEVER BEFORE!

AS PART OF OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH THE ORGANIZERS, TRTA MEMBERS AND AFFILIATES WILL RECEIVE 25% OFF THEIR TICKETS BY USING THE SPECIAL QR CODE OR LINK PROVIDED BELOW.

WE ARE ALSO SEEKING LOCAL TEAM MEMBERS TO JOIN OUR STAFF DURING THE FIVE-MONTH AUSTIN ENGAGEMENT. POSITIONS INCLUDE GUEST SERVICES, RETAIL, HOSPITALITY, AND OPERATIONS SUPPORT — A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY TO BE PART OF A WORLD-CLASS CULTURAL EVENT!



TO APPLY FOR EMPLOYMENT, PLEASE CONTACT MARTHA WATANABE AT MCWATANABE@SCEXLLC.COM. OR (512) 983-0456

WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU TO THIS ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME EXPERIENCE CELEBRATING ART, FAITH, AND HISTORY!



PARTIES, EVENTS, PROMOTIONS, PRIVATE EXPERIENCE

**TRTA DISTRICT 13 DAY AT THE SISTINE CHAPEL EXPERIENCE - DECEMBER 11:**

TRTA members are invited to attend the Sistine Chapel Experience at Barton Creek Square mall on **Thursday, December 11**. Austin is the worldwide launch site of this interactive display, which is the only one on the Sistine Chapel that has been approved by the Vatican.

Our tour will begin at **12:45 p.m.** and should last approximately 60 to 90 minutes. You can learn more about the Sistine Chapel Experience at <https://sistinechapelexperience.com/austin/>. You can also review the detailed visitors' guide that was emailed through the ARTA Listserv in late November.

What If I Can't Attend the December 11 Event?:

Members who are unable to attend on that day can use the flyer found in this month's *Newsette* and have the QR Code scanned for a discounted rate during the exhibit's scheduled run from December 5 to April 26. The Sistine Chapel Experience is open Wednesdays through Sundays from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. while it is here in Austin.

Directions for Parking and Entry:

The Sistine Chapel Experience will take place in the former Sears department store located on the south side of the mall. Members should enter through the south entrance of that store on the ground floor level. Parking is available immediately to the south of that entrance as well as in the lot between the exhibit and the AMC movie theater complex. There is no need to enter the main part of the mall.

Check-In, Registration, and Chapter Shirts:

District 13 members attending the December 11 event should register at the main table by the exhibit entrance **before 12:45 p.m.** ARTA members are urged either to wear their red vests or to dress in red. This will make it easier to identify our members and speed up the registration process. It will also make the photos that will be used on the *TRTA and Me* section of the TRTA website more visually appealing.

Free and Discounted Tickets:

The first 100 TRTA members who register at the site will receive free admittance to the exhibition. Remaining members who attend on the 11th will receive a special rate set for TRTA (approximately \$20).

Purchases at the Exhibit:

NO CASH will be taken for souvenirs, refreshments, or the special TRTA admission rate. All purchases at the exhibit must be made with a credit or debit card.

Volunteer and Job Opportunities for TRTA Members:

TRTA members can either apply for paid or volunteer positions with the Sistine Chapel Experience during the time it is on display at Barton Creek Square mall. A detailed list of potential opportunities can be found in this edition of the *Newsette*. Interested members need to contact Martha Watanabe at mcwatanabe@sceyllc.com or call at (512) 983-0456.

Joe Ramirez
TRTA District 13 President



VOLUNTEER AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRTA MEMBERS

Note: Employment and Volunteer Opportunities are not limited to the December 11 TRTA Day. TRTA members can do these throughout the time the exhibit is in Austin (December 5 – April 26).

Role	Primary Focus	Hourly Rate / Monthly Range	Notes
Greeter / Usher	First point of contact; manages guest flow and ticket validation	\$17–\$20/hr	Sets tone for guest experience; reliability essential
Tour Guide / Experience Host	Leads tours, provides educational commentary, manages crowd pacing	\$20–\$25/hr	Strong communication and storytelling skills required
Barista / Café Attendant (<i>if applicable</i>)	Prepares drinks/snacks; maintains cleanliness and POS accuracy	\$18–\$22/hr + tips	Experienced Barista preferred
Merchandise Store Representative	Sales, product display, POS transactions, and inventory accuracy	\$17–\$21/hr	Encourages collaboration and upselling
Maintenance	Maintains cleanliness, restocks restrooms, and ensures safety and presentation standards by performing repair tasks	\$16–\$19/hr	Experience with minor repairs

*Start date is December 5, 2025, for a commitment of 5 months (the duration of the exhibit)

*Exhibit hours are from 11–7 Wednesday –Sunday at Barton Creek Square mall in the old Sears space lower level

*Private parties will be held after exhibit hours and on Mondays and Tuesdays. Times and Dates TBD

To apply, contact Martha Camarena-Watanabe at mcwatanabe@scexllc.com or call at (512) 983-0456. These same opportunities can be done for community volunteer service hours if you are not being paid.

Membership Form: AUSTIN RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION (ARTA)
 ANNUAL ARTA & TRTA MEMBERSHIP DUES – Supporting ALL Retired School Personnel

To be a member of ARTA, you must **ALSO** be a member of the *TEXAS RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION*(TRTA) Please pay **BOTH** your membership dues online at our ARTA Website:
<https://austindrta.org/membership>

or

IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO USE THE ARTA WEBSITE, please complete this form **AND SEND IT WITH** a check payable to **ARTA** for **\$50.00**

If you have your TRTA membership dues deducted monthly or annually by TRS, TRTA or AMBA, please **COMPLETE THIS FORM AND SEND IT WITH a check payable to **ARTA** for **\$15.00**

Mail to:

Tony Dishner, ARTA Treasurer
2218 Speidel Drive
Pflugerville, TX 78660-5067

NAME _____

PHONE _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP CODE _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

CIRCLE: Do you want to be contacted by the ARTA Telephone Tree for meeting reminders? **YES** **NO**

For new members only: Please list the name of recruiter: _____

→ If you would like to pay by credit card, complete your card information on page 2 of this form.

For treasurers' use only:


TRTA Member# _____	Payment Date: _____	Payment Amount: <input type="checkbox"/> Check # _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Cash _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Credit Card/Debit _____
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Page 2 Membership Form: AUSTIN RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION (ARTA)

➔ If you would like to pay by credit card, please complete your card information and mail to

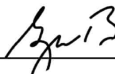
Tony Dishner, ARTA Treasurer
2218 Speidel Drive
Pflugerville, TX 78660-5067

Please charge my card: Card Number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Am Express <input type="checkbox"/> Discover <input type="checkbox"/> MasterCard <input type="checkbox"/> Visa
Expiration Date:	Amount: <input type="checkbox"/> \$52.00 (\$50.00 dues + \$2.00 fee)
CVC Code:	or
Zip Code:	If you have your TRTA membership dues deducted monthly or annually by TRS, TRTA or AMBA, please pay
	Amount: <input type="checkbox"/> \$17.00 (\$15.00 dues + \$2.00 fee)
Signature _____	


 DATE 1234

PAY TO THE ORDER OF<| **ARTA** \$ **50.00**

Fifty dollars and 00/00 DOLLARS f

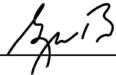
FOR **ARTA and TRTA dues paid together** 

⑆23456789 ⑆890 567⑆

 DATE 1234

PAY TO THE ORDER OF<| **ARTA** \$ **15.00**

Fifteen dollars and 00/00 DOLLARS f

FOR **ARTA dues** 

⑆23456789 ⑆890 567⑆