

*"Where flowers bloom so does hope."
~ Lady Bird Johnson*

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

What gets you excited during this time of the year? I love watching the renewal of the earth as the weather gets warmer, the trees getting greener, the flowers blooming, and the animals having babies. School is out for the summer and kids are getting into summer activities and teachers are getting a break in routine and a chance for their own renewal. Those of us that are retired are enjoying gardening, golfing, going to the lake, watching grandkids, and also trying new activities.

But not everything is sunshine and roses! I hope that you have been active in following the state and national political scene as there have been so many changes lately – some are good, but many are not so good. I have been trying to keep in touch with our state and national legislators to encourage them to keep our public schools strong and to make them a place where students can get the best education possible, to have access to books and school supplies, to have good nutritional food for all of them to eat so they can concentrate on learning, and a place where they can be safe.



On April 7th my husband and I joined the second Lobby Day group that was sponsored by ND United to participate in Lobby Day at the ND Capitol building and watch our Legislators in a committee meeting, and on the floor of both the House and Senate. The two bills we were the most interested in were SB 2400 which was a voucher bill for aid for private schools, and it got a "Do Not Pass" out of committee because many rural and smaller school districts said they did not have the resources to support private schools. The second bill was HB 1540 which was also a voucher bill that received a "Do Not Pass" for the same reason.

A highlight of the day was sitting beside Governor Kelly Armstrong as he signed HB 1238 which reduces the years needed for teachers to acquire a lifetime license from 30 years to 25 years! This legislation was helped in large part by the overwhelming supportive testimony of the ND United members. The second bill he signed was HB 1530 which directs legislative management to study special education teacher shortages. NDU members played a big roll crafting this legislation and getting it passed.

I would like to thank our NDRTA Board Members for all of their hard work in keeping our organization alive and well! I would also like to thank all of the officers of the local Retired Teachers units for all of your hard work in making your meetings meaningful and fun and keeping our organization strong. You are important to all of the teachers who are still in the classrooms and working hard for our students. Thank you also to all members who are or have been officers, who bring new members to meetings, and to all who attend our conventions! You are our lifeblood!

Please consider attending the ND Retired Teachers Convention in Grand Forks on Sept. 9 -10th! Your attendance helps keep our organization active and vibrant! Have a good summer!

Sherryl Weisenberger



Marking the 90th Anniversary of Social Security

On August 14, 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act. A vital lifeline for tens of millions of Americans everywhere – including 146,521 North Dakotans – Social Security is about to mark its 90th anniversary. And with that milestone comes a responsibility to strengthen the program and determine how we can help it age in the healthiest way. As the bedrock of retirement in America, our financial future depends on protecting Social Security for decades to come.

Social Security will never “go broke.” That’s a fact. Social Security is a pay-as-you-go system. As long as workers are paying into Social Security, Social Security will be available for those collecting benefits. The program is funded by payroll taxes and will continue to pay benefits. But the program does face funding challenges. The most recent Social Security Trustees’ Report finds that the surplus will run out in 2035. To prevent that shortfall, Congress must once again step up – as it did when it reformed the program in 1983 – before millions of Americans are left with less than they’ve earned.

Customer service is an additional concern. Congress hasn’t provided the funding necessary to ensure Social Security can deliver quality customer service. In fact, funding has dropped by 9 percent since 2018, wait times are on the rise, and low staffing levels have created challenges for Social Security recipients.

Social Security lifts 40,000 people out of poverty in North Dakota every month. The program helps people live and retire with dignity, offers crucial support to those with disabilities, and serves as a financial lifeline for families navigating the loss of a loved one.

For 90 years, Social Security has been the foundation of retirement in the United States. It’s imperative to ensure the strength of Social Security not just for another 90 years, but for generations to come.

Join AARP North Dakota as we mark the 90th anniversary at events in August. Find events near you at aarp.org/local.

Learn more about Social Security at aarp.org/SocialSecurity.



**By Marnie Piehl,
Associate State Director for Communications,
AARP ND**



"Old age is not a defeat, but a victory, not a punishment, but a privilege."

- Ethel Percy Andrus, founder of the National Retired Teachers Association and AARP



PENSION WATCH



New Executive Director

North Dakota's State Investment Board (SIB) has appointed Jodi A. Smith as the executive director of the \$24 billion North Dakota Retirement and Investment Office (RIO).

Smith has been serving as the interim executive director for the past five months, overseeing the RIO's operations, including the coordination of all SIB activities and the administration of the Teachers' Fund for Retirement (TFFR).

"Over the past five months, Smith has demonstrated her strengths as a respected communicator and collaborative leader with a deep commitment to sound governance and public service," said Dr. Rob Lech, vice-chair of the SIB and president of the TFFR board. "We're confident that the Retirement and Investment Office will thrive under her leadership."

She brings to the role more than two decades of leadership experience in finance, operations, and strategic planning across public and non-profit sectors. She successfully managed multi-billion-dollar budgets and investment portfolios.

Prior to joining RIO, Smith served as the director of lands and compliance at the Metro Flood Diversion Authority for three years and as the State of North Dakota's Land Commissioner for four years. Before that, she was vice-president of the Sanford Health Foundation and foundation director at Trinity Health.

The SIB's portfolio includes the assets of the \$12 billion North Dakota Legacy Fund and 28 government pension and insurance client funds. The \$3.5 billion TFFR serves over 25,000 participants, including approximately 12,000 active members employed by public schools and the state and 12,000 retired educators.

Hell 1 – Snowballs 0

As you may have heard, the extra money for retired educators having a tough time because of inflation was resoundingly defeated by the North Dakota Legislature. I don't see any sympathy from the legislature for any future money for retired educators. The good and bad thing about your pension is you get a check every month, but the amount doesn't change from the month you retire to the month you die. I still think retired educators and active educators should be working now for a cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) to begin when we clear up the shortage in our pension funding in about 20 years.

My Retirement

It may be somewhat early to announce my retirement from the TFFR board in the summer of 2027, but time flies when you are having fun. If you are looking for a challenging change in your life, think about becoming a member of this board. Requirements for this position: retired teacher, member of NDRTA, and willingness to work diligently with and for retired educators. If you want more information, email me at mtburton@midco.net.

Mike Burton

"Do what you can, with what you have, where you are."

- Theodore Roosevelt



**Chad Roberts**

MyTFFR Pension Administration System launched

The North Dakota Teachers' Fund for Retirement (TFFR) launched the MyTFFR pension administration system in February. Nearly four years in the making, the project represents a significant commitment to the long-term financial well-being and quality customer service delivery to fund members. With the launch of MyTFFR, active, retired and deferred members, and their account beneficiaries have true retirement account transparency.

Using the automated system speeds up processing times and adds a layer of security to personal and financial information. Retired members can use MyTFFR to update their contact and direct deposit information, download their 1099-Rs, adjust federal or state tax withholding, view account beneficiaries and obtain an income verification.

To access the new system, visit the Retirement and Investment Office (RIO) website at www.rio.nd.gov and select the "Member Login" button. For step-by-step user guidance, after logging into MyTFFR, select the "Help" button on the dashboard to access the Member Help Center. Alternatively, "How to" videos are available on RIO's YouTube Channel.

TFFR Fund Performance

TFFR investments continue to perform well. The image below, from a presentation to the TFFR board, shows that as of February 2025, returns over the most recent 5- and 10-year periods for the \$3.4 billion fund exceeded the policy benchmark by .5% (50 bps).

As of February 28, 2025 TFFR \$3.4 Billion	Year to Date	1 Year	3 year	5 Year	10 Year	Risk (5 Year)
Total Fund Return - Net	2.1%	9.0%	4.5%	8.3%	7.1%	9.4%
Policy Benchmark Return	1.9%	8.9%	4.2%	7.8%	6.6%	9.8%
Total Relative Return ¹	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%	0.5%	0.5%	

To learn more about fund performance, you can review TFFR's performance reports online at www.rio.nd.gov/state-investment-board-clients.

Legislative Update

The 69th Legislative Assembly concluded in early May. During the session, three bills were considered that impacted the TFFR program:

- HB 1117: Aligns North Dakota's Required Minimum Distribution rules with the federal SECURE 2.0 Act. The bill was signed into law March 24, 2025.
- HB 1285: Proposed a one-time supplemental payment to TFFR retirees. The bill failed in the House on Feb. 11, 2025, and was not reconsidered during the session.
- SB 2134: Allows the Superintendent of Public Instruction and State Treasurer to appoint designees to serve on the TFFR Board. The bill was signed into law March 24, 2025.

"Retirement is not the end of the road. It is the beginning of something else." - Fred Rogers



NORTH DAKOTA UNITED



By Nick Archuleta, ND United President

It is a treat to be able to write this column for the NDRTA members. If I may, I want to give a brief review of the education issues that ND United supported and fought against in the 69th Legislative Session. While there were some very difficult fights, teachers had a very good session.

Here is the recap:

- In a recent survey, 68% of our K-12 teacher members said they would support a ban on cell phones during school hours. Thanks to Governor Armstrong, that will be the reality in public schools across ND.
- Public charter schools are now allowed in ND. I testified against charter schools because I do not believe they are necessary in ND, given the reality that anything a public charter can offer, a traditional public school can already do. Also, public charter schools have the option of not allowing their teachers to join the Teacher Fund for Retirement (TFFR), which puts retirement security at risk.
- ND United successfully stopped six voucher bills with the euphemistic Education Savings Account (ESA) moniker. Each of these voucher schemes would have diverted public monies to pay for private school tuition, a notion that 68% of North Dakotans oppose, 52% of them strongly. Proponents of these ESAs referred to them as promoting School Choice, but North Dakotans know that they are more accurately known as a School's Choice, because private and parochial schools choose who they will educate and which students they will not.
- On proposed legislation regarding vouchers, book bans, funding, tenure, and the lifetime teaching licenses, ND United members and friends of public education sent almost 25,000 mails to elected officials. All those are issues that ND United put in our "Wins" column, along with the defeat of vouchers.
- The most glaring and significant disappointment is that the state is providing only a 2.5% increase to the Per Pupil Funding Formula for each year of the next biennium. Such an increase is less than the rate of inflation and without a direct investment in teacher salaries, it will be hard to recruit and retain our excellent education workforce. All public employees deserve higher salaries, and this is an issue we will not be silent about.

I want to close by thanking everyone at the NDRTA for your service in building a strong system of public education in our state, and to encourage you to stay in the fight for great public schools.



We hope you had a happy and safe Fourth of July!

Enrich Your Retirement: Discover OLLI at BSC

Retirement marks a new chapter, a time to explore passions, pursue knowledge, and connect with a vibrant community. For those seeking to keep their minds active and engaged, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at Bismarck State College (BSC) offers an exceptional opportunity. OLLI at BSC is a dynamic program designed specifically for adults, providing a rich array of non-credit courses, social activities, events, and opportunities for travel that foster intellectual curiosity and camaraderie.

At OLLI, learning is purely for the joy of it – there are no tests, no grades, just the enjoyment of education. Our diverse curriculum covers a wide range of subjects, from history and current events to art appreciation, technology, and literature. Taught by enthusiastic instructors, OLLI classes are not just about receiving information; they are about engaging in lively discussions, sharing experiences, and enriching perspectives with like-minded individuals.

One of the key strengths of OLLI at BSC is its commitment to accessibility and community. We offer a blend of both in-person classes and social activities held right here on campus, as well as engaging events within the wider community. This allows members to enjoy the traditional classroom experience, building connections and participating in discussions face-to-face.

However, we understand that not everyone can attend in person. That's why OLLI at BSC also provides a robust selection of online course options. These virtual learning opportunities ensure that geographical distance is no barrier to intellectual engagement, allowing us to reach and serve retirees across the entire state. This flexibility empowers individuals to learn from the comfort of their homes, fostering a sense of community even when physical attendance isn't possible.

Whether you prefer the vibrant atmosphere of a classroom or the convenience of online learning, OLLI at BSC provides the perfect platform to continue your lifelong journey of growth and connection. It's more than just classes; it's a community where curiosity never retires.

To learn more, explore our current class offerings, or join our vibrant community, visit: bismarckstate.edu/OLLI or call 701-224-5600.



4 ladies learning with Osher (OLLI) at BSC

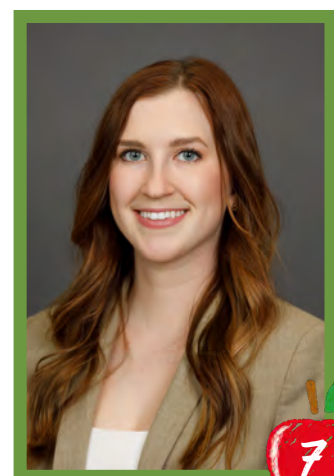


OLLI Travel participants

Bailee Bulman is the program manager of OLLI BSC. She's a graduate of Bismarck State College and North Dakota State University, holding a bachelor's degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management. Bailee has been with the OLLI program since 2018, starting as the office coordinator before stepping into her current management role in 2022. She truly enjoys working with the OLLI community and loves seeing the joy members get from learning and connecting.

Bailee Bulman

*Program Manager
Continuing Education and TrainND
Bismarck State College
701-224-5690*



PAPA MURPHY'S FUNDRAISER



PAPA MURPHY'S TAKE 'N BAKE PIZZA holds fundraisers for organizations and groups. The organization receives 20% of the proceeds. For more information, please contact Sierra at pmndpizza002@gmail.com

The procedure is easy: Book a date; Spread the Word; Eat Pizza; and Raise Money.



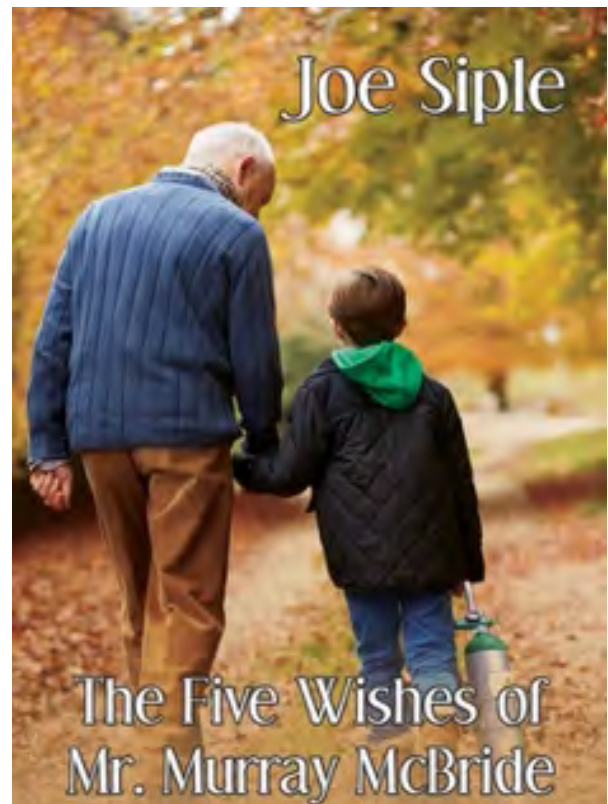
You can promote your day with flyers and social media- don't worry, they will help you with that. Most of the Papa Murphy's in ND participate in this fundraiser.

The Fargo RTA Unit has raised money for scholarships using this Program. They usually choose National Teacher Week, but it could be any time that works for you and Papa Murphy's schedule. The funds raised could be used for any worthy need.



One of President Sherryl's favorite books is The Five Wishes of Mr. Murray McBride.

She writes, "100 year old Mr. Murphy McBride finds a note from 10 year old Jason Cashman with 5 wishes of things he wants to do before he dies because he needs a new heart. Murray tries to help Jason make them all happen. It is a great read!"



Book cover photo was taken from Amazon.com



SUMMER

PLEASE join us
IN Grand Forks
September 9-10, 2025

because
Sticking Together,
We



NDRTA BOARD

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Grand Forks, ND

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"NDRTA Board members, Sherry Heilmann, Sherryl Weisenberger, Mary Carlson, and Barb Patzman, at Lobby Day 2.0 on April 7, 2025."

Cover Photo was
taken by **Mary
Carlson** a few years
ago while visiting the
Don Vitko Cacti and
Succulents Collection
at the Conservatory
and Interpretive
Center, International
Peace Gardens.



Visit Our Website:
ndretiredteachers.com





North Dakota
RETIRED TEACHERS
ASSOCIATION

2025 State Convention – Alerus Center – Grand Forks



Tuesday, September 9th

Amount Enclosed

Convention Registration (All-Inclusive) One person per registration form, please. **\$130** \$ _____
(Registration check-in starts at 8:00 am – Tour bus leaves and Workshops begin at 9:15AM)

Tour -- Bus leaves at 9:15 am – Bus Returns at 11:15 - Lunch will be on your own

UND's John D. Odegard School of Aerospace Sciences _____ Mark if planning to go on tour

Tour the Virtual Reality Lab, Physiology Training, Air Traffic Control, Drones, and much more

Regional Advisory Council Meeting (11:30)

Mark if You Will You be a Representative of Your Local Unit at the Council Meeting _____

Name of Unit _____

Evening Banquet - 6:30 PM - Please indicate your choice (Price Included in Registration).

_____ Chicken Normandy A sautéed Chicken Breast smothered in an apple, bacon, brandy cream sauce

_____ Beef Sirloin Tips Marinated Sirloin Tips sautéed in butter, accompanied by green peppers, red peppers, onions, and mushrooms, smothered in a rich au jus sauce

_____ Moroccan Vegetable Couscous (Vegan) Fluffy couscous tossed with fresh vegetables and beans

Wednesday, September 10th

Luncheon with Closing Session - 11:30 AM Taco Bar Buffet

(Price Included in Registration) Served with tortillas, seasoned beef, shredded lettuce, diced tomatoes, diced onions, olives, peppers, shredded cheese, Pico de Gallo, taco sauce, nacho chips, and guacamole

***For any questions about registration, meals, or room reservations, please text or call Rita Freeberg at (701) 226-7446.**

Anyone attending any part of the convention or any meal must have the registration fee paid in full. Thank You.

Registration MUST be received by August 25, 2025. No cancellations after September 1st.

Registrant Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Contact Phone Number _____ Email _____

Special Needs/Requests (dietary restrictions, wheel chair...) _____

Room Reservations: Both the Canad Inn and Sleep Inn have very nice, handicap accessible rooms upon request.

Canad Inn (Connected to Alerus) (701) 787-2501

Sleep Inn and Suites (Close to the Alerus) (701) 757-2900

Please, mail registration form and check payable to GGFRTA (Greater Grand Forks Retired Teachers' Association) to Sandra Kerr, GGFRTA, 514 28th Ave South, Grand Forks, ND 58201

To be received no later than August 25th. Thank You!



North Dakota State Retired Teachers Convention Program

"STICKING TOGETHER, WE STAY SHARP"

Hosted by Greater Grand Forks Retired Teachers Association at the Alerus Center in Grand Forks
Tuesday, September 9, and Wednesday, September 10, 2025

Tuesday, September 9, 2025

- 7:30 AM Registration -- Coffee w/ Muffins – Ballroom 4 Pre-Function
- 9:15 Tour Bus Leaves Outside of Entrance 5 – UND Aerospace Center
- 9:15 Concurrent Workshop Session
Workshop 1 – Eric Ripley, Career & Technical Education – Oriole Meeting Room
Workshop 2 – Dr. Shelbie Witte, Dean of UND College of Education and Human Development – Mourning Dove Meeting Room
- 10:15 Concurrent Workshop Session
Workshop 1 – Eric Ripley -- Oriole Meeting Room
Workshop 2 – Dr. Shelbie Witte – Mourning Dove Room
- 11:15 Tour Participants Return to Alerus
- 11:30 **Regional Advisory Council Meeting – Pheasant Meeting Room**
(Representatives from the 12 Local ND Retired Teachers Units Meet to Share News from each Local - Major Events, Regular Meetings, Scholarships, Recruitment, Publicity, Volunteer and Charitable Activities). If representing your local unit, your Reservation on the Registration Form, is appreciated. ND RTA provides lunch for representatives
- Noon Lunch on Own
- 1:00 PM - **Opening Session – Ballroom 4** (Door Prize Drawings throughout Convention)
Presentation of Colors - JROTC
National Anthem OR Pledge of Allegiance - All
GGFRTA President, Brad Srur, Welcome
Welcome from Mayor of Grand Forks
ND RTA State President, Sherryl Weisenberger, Welcome / Information
TFFR – State Retirement and Investment Reports
North Dakota United – Nick Archuleta
- 2:15 PM **Coffee Break – Pre-Function Ballroom 4**
- 2:30 PM **NDRTA Business Session – Ballroom 4**
Call to order, NDRTA President, Sherryl Weisenberger
Secretary's Report
Treasurer's Report
Other Officers' Reports and Resolutions
AARP Update / Presentation – Margaret Fitzgerald
- 6:30 PM **Banquet – Ballroom 4**
Entertainment – Tamara Bertram and Little Dakota Celtic



Wednesday, September 10, 2025

- 8:00 AM **Registration – Ballroom 4 Pre Function**
Coffee - *(Before Attending Sessions -- Reminder: Motel Room Check-Out)*
- 9:30-10:20 Concurrent Workshop Sessions --
Workshop 3 – Lillian Ellsinga, My Family's Part in WWII Resistance Movement – Oriole Room
Workshop 4 – All Seasons Gardening Center – Succulents and Cacti – Mourning Dove Room
- 10:30-11:20 Concurrent Workshop Sessions --
Workshop 5 – Exercises for Strength and Balance, Oriole
Workshop 6 – Connie Sherwood, Journey Home-Pet Rescue & Fostering – Mourning Dove
- 11:30 AM **Luncheon & Closing Session – Ballroom 4**
Awards, Volunteer Hours Drawing,
ND Retired Teachers Memorial –
Installation of Officers,
invitation to 2026 Convention,
President NDRTA, Sherryl Weisenberger –
Closing Comments and Adjournment



2025 Convention Highlights



Photo Credit
<https://aero.und.edu/space/index.html>

The **Tour Bus** leaves outside of the Alerus Entrance Door #5 at 9:15AM on Tuesday, September 9, 2025, for the UND Aerospace Center tour. The tour is about an hour and a half, with walking involved as it will be a tour through the four Aerospace Campus buildings that are connected via the skywalk system. There are some steps included, but also there are elevators, and places to sit and rest as needed.

A tour for educators to see the training areas up and running. Areas include Virtual Reality Lab, Physiology Training, Air Traffic Control, and Drone education (to name a few).

Two **workshop sessions** will be available to convention attendees at the Alerus Center starting at 9:15 and repeating at 10:15 on September 9. **Dr. Shelbie Witte** is the Dean of UND's Education and Human Development. Dr. Witte started her career as an English teacher in a small city in Oklahoma. Dr. Witte has taught every level of adolescents and adults, from middle school through doctoral students, in rural, urban, and suburban communities. She has a special interest in digital literacy.

The newly built **Career Impact Academy (CIA)**, the **regional Career and Technical Education building**, will be preparing students in specialized-skill development for high-paying, in-demand jobs. **Eric Ripley** explains how education, industry, and business interests will come together to provide exceptional training in the following areas at the CIA: Automotive, Precision Technologies, Culinary Arts, Building Trades, Architecture, Engineering, Robotics, Aviation, Information Technology, and Medical Careers.



Photos credit. Eric Hylden /
Grand Forks Herald.



Our convention banquet entertainment will be Little Dakota Celtic, a North Dakota-based ensemble that brings the spirit of Celtic music to life with a vibrant blend of Irish, Scottish, and American folk traditions. Founded by accomplished violinist and fiddle player Tamara Bertram, the group is known for its energetic reels, heartfelt ballads, and joyful stage presence.

Tamara, an international performer (originally from Australia) and longtime educator, leads the group with deep musical roots and a passion for connecting people through music. The ensemble features: Tamara Bertram – violin, fiddle; Vedant Srivastava – guitar; and Matthew Fower – percussion. Their repertoire spans traditional jigs and reels as well as beloved folk songs such as The Wild Rover and Loch Lomond, and crowd favorites like Toss the Feathers and Dueling Violins. With every performance, Little Dakota Celtic invites audiences on a musical journey, full of rhythm, history, and heart.



Lillian Elsinga inspires listeners when she tells about her family's involvement in the Resistance Movement during WWII in the Netherlands.

Lillian served UND for over 37 years as the Associate VP for Student Services and Dean of Students

All Seasons Garden Center staff will present a workshop on succulents. When a member of the Greater Grand Forks Retired Teachers Unit suggested a Cactus theme for the convention, planners were charmed by theme statements such as "Everybody has their Good Points" and "Sticking Together, We Stay Sharp." Learn what's great about succulents!



Connie Sherwood volunteers by fostering cats and kittens with Journey Home and will tell us about the work of this great organization. ND Retired Teachers Association loves to highlight and honor the great volunteers in our organization.



Strength . Balance . Strong Bones
We'll have a workshop with tips and ideas for your physical health, too.

Please plan to attend the 2025 State Convention!
Inspiring. Informative. and tailored to Retired Teachers!

Rita Freeberg, Convention Chair



UNIT FOCUS

Turtle Mountain Area RTA

Becky Hanson and Bob Abrahamson, Co-Presidents

Our small but dedicated group has had a year of entertaining programs featuring local interest, planned by our members. Our organization, Turtle Mountain RTA, is open to all retired teachers and guests in this area and meets quarterly in June, September, December and April at various venues in the area.

Last September we had an informative and spirited discussion time with a panel of the candidates running for North Dakota state Legislature and Senate. Many questions were sparked and asked especially concerning educational topics in the state and also TFFR pension concerns. It was akin to a town hall session to meet the candidates.

Amanda LaCroix, a local travel agent from Bottineau, joined us in December. She made us aware of many travel opportunities and destinations which are available, particularly those which might appeal to our age group and which she could arrange. It was fun to learn of all the possibilities for adventure in our retirement years.

Our group has been following the progression of the Dakota College at Bottineau, the nursing program and the renovation of Old Main, and has held several meetings there over the past several years of construction. In April, we toured the now completed, and beautiful, functional facility with a guided tour. Especially intriguing was the "state of the art" equipment like the lifelike mannequin patients available to the nursing students.

We moved to Westhope for our June meeting. After lunch at Shawna's Place, we reconvened at the Westhope Standard which has been printing news in the Westhope area since 1901. The newspaper editor and owner, Benjiman Cartwright, told us about the remodel of the old newspaper office into a coffee shop, "News and Brews," and a 21st Century newspaper shop, which is all done on computer. Ben is also the local expert on 3-D printing which he has brought to the Westhope School. It was fascinating! None of us had any exposure to the process and its capabilities. As one member said, "I was totally blown away!"

Through our \$25 yearly dues, our group sponsors a \$500 scholarship for a Dakota College at Bottineau student entering education, supports the Dolly Parton Library in Bottineau and Rolette Counties and gives a donation to the Anne Carlson School in memory of any member who passes away. We also sponsor quarters for Bingo prizes for local Nursing Homes.

Sherry Heilmann, NDRTA Treasurer and Membership Chair, and Mary Carlson, NDRTA Past President and Editor of the NDRTA Educator Plus, attended the June meeting in Westhope. They enjoyed visiting with members and the impressive and informative program. They appreciated the invitation to attend the meeting.

We look forward to another exciting year of exploring local treasures!



CCARTA celebrated its 59th year of service to Education and Community this year. We met on a monthly basis, on the 2nd Thursday of each month beginning on Sept. 12 and concluding on May 8th. We are an unusual group with representation from a number of school districts and a wide variety of backgrounds in education including administration, classroom teachers, librarians, counselors, and paras just to name a few. The opportunity to come together to share educational and life experiences is a wonderful gift. Our lives are filled with memories of students that we have had the opportunity to share in the joy of learning and who still remember us. Our monthly gatherings provide that opportunity to share precious moments and we continue to come together to learn. What a journey!

To help us on that journey, our Vice President, Nancy Peterson, orchestrated another exciting year of programs for the third year in a row. They varied from "Learning to See" with a focus on photography presented by one of our own, Lowell Wolff, to a Dakota Brass Christmas concert, to the wonderful climax of presenting \$1,000 scholarships to four promising teachers-to-be.

Two additional items were part of every business meeting. The first was to recognize someone from the past who had dedicated their lives to education and the second was a "tongue in cheek" couple of jokes, mostly "Ole and Lena" related. A good laugh is the best medicine you can absorb.

Donations to the Emergency Food Pantry continue to be a focus at each meeting. The committee identifies particular needs for each month, such as in October it was soap, (dish, laundry and hand). Seeing tables fill up at the rear of the meeting room each month is very gratifying to all.

Here are some photos from the 2024-25 year with CCARTA. Enjoy.



UNIT FOCUS

Williston Area RTA

Delyte Lee, President

Hello from Williston Area Education Association (WARTA).

The year was full of many educational and informative events. Our first meeting included a tour of the new Career and Technical Education Center (CTE), an addition to Williston High School. The culinary class invited us back for lunch later in the year.



Members of WARTA touring the health center at the new Career and Technical Center.



Delyte Lee, president of WARTA, with culinary student and former fourth grade student, Sage Huwe.



WARTA member, Joetta Koeser, ringing the bell for Salvation Army, an annual service project.

In October, Codi Austriem, president of Williston Coyote Foundation, spoke about educational scholarships and ways WARTA can support and contribute to the cause. As a result, we donated \$500 to a senior entering the field of education.

In November we returned to the CTE center for lunch of soup, bread and cheesecake prepared by the culinary students.

December's event was the annual Christmas party and gift exchange. Mary Reinholt was also presented the NDRTA Silver Apple award by former president, Lynn Christen.

In April, we met at Handy Andy's Nursery and attended a class on how to prepare for spring planting.

The last activity of the year was an art activity instructed by WARTA member and former art teacher, Clif Sundt. Participants created and painted flower pots and planted succulents to complete the project. It was a successful and informative year.



WARTA member Clif Sundt giving instructions on creating a clay flower pot.



We had a variety of programs this year. We started with Jeremy Berger in September. He is owner of Smart Computers in Dickinson. He spoke about AI (Artificial Intelligence). He shared how it is being used in business, medicine, education, and other areas. It can create many jobs and may also reduce other jobs. It seems that its uses are endless.

Cameron Weigel talked about Medicare and Open Enrollment for 2025 at our October meeting. He used the Medicare and You booklet to explain what many things meant and answered questions for our members.

Moving on to November, we had Dustin Young talk about the Southwest Gallery and Science Center. He explained how it has developed in the past year and what they are planning for the future. They can be followed on Facebook.

Early in December, 7-10 members volunteer to read the Christmas Stories for the Dickinson Press. We spend the afternoon reading and judging the stories. Our members also donate to the local Dolly Pardon Imagination Library and the Dickinson Area Community Concert Association in Dickinson. We receive 2 sets of 2 tickets that our members can draw for during the meeting before the next concert.

We celebrated our Christmas party with Bingo and delicious treats brought by our generous members. We played Bingo as our past co-presidents called the numbers and told Christmas jokes. One of our co-presidents handed out decorated Hersey candy bars to the Bingo winners and made sure everyone received one before they left.

On a cold blustery day in January, we traveled to north Dickinson to the CTE building for a meal and tour of the newly complete Building C. We enjoyed a 3 course meal prepared and served by the cooking class coached by Chef Wehner. Aaron Anderson, the director for the Career and Technical Education, was our tour guide. Last year we toured Buildings A and B. Such a great learning opportunity for students with a more hands on approach that will enable them to choose an appropriate career for themselves.

Dickinson Police Department School Resource Officer for Dickinson State University, Justin Fridrich, was our next speaker in February. Justin covered many topics concerning scams, keeping your identity safe, and safety tips for seniors. He handed out some booklets from the police department about scamming.

All American Travel was represented by Kaye Roller and Rachel Buresh in March. Kaye explained all the opportunities by air, the different vacation package opportunities and cruises that have expanded in many countries. Several tips were shared to make travel easier and less stressful for the traveler. Rachel shared some travel books and answered questions about travel.

Alicia Erickson, Executive Director of the Dickinson Convention & Bureau, was our April speaker. She gave a presentation on what is going on in Dickinson and the surrounding area. She handed out the new booklet, Dickinson's Visitors Guide, that show cased area attractions.

We wrapped up our year with some end of the year topics. We signed up members for the host and hostesses and asked for ideas for speakers for the next year. We talked about forming a book club that we would have after our monthly meetings starting in the fall. We will have an informal meeting with the people that are interested at a later date and will discuss some book ideas. Invitations were given to all the retiring teachers from Dickinson Public Schools. Others were sent out to all retirees in the neighboring towns. We discussed the State Retired Teachers Convention in Grand Forks this fall. We nominated Darlene Henning for the Silver Apple Award.

**Alicia Erickson from Dickinson
Convention and Visitor Center**



Zucchini Casserole

~ Read the Tips and Hints part first ~

Slice 4 medium zucchini - $\frac{1}{2}$ " coin-shaped slices (Can be made with frozen zucchini)

Sauté* in 6 tablespoons butter

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup diced onions

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup shredded carrots

(then the sliced zucchini)

Mix in 1 can of cream of chicken soup

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sour cream

2 cups herbed (seasoned) croutons

Pour into baking dish & cover w $\frac{1}{2}$ cup croutons (*or your pre-measured amount)

Bake at 350° for 1 hour

Tips and Hints:

The "seasoning" for this casserole come from the croutons, so when you are shopping, if you get the plain croutons, you'll have to add your own herbs / spices, or choose the seasoned croutons with spices that you like.

*Start with something like a 3 qt saucepan or a 4 qt pot to sauté the onions, carrots, & zucchini (a frying pan is NOT going to be big enough)

Before you add the croutons to the zucchini mix, put a layer of the croutons into the baking dish... however many that you'd like to top the casserole... Then pour those out into a bowl, and add the remaining croutons to the zucchini mix. After the zucchini mix is in the baking dish, you can top the casserole with the croutons from the bowl.

To make this an entrée, mix in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cooked, cubed chicken for each person.

Reheating... The best way I found to reheat a portion is to put the portion on an oven-safe dish and heat it in the oven on convection or in an air fryer. Next best way... reheat the portion on an oven-safe dish in the oven on bake.

If using the microwave to reheat a portion of the casserole, mix the top croutons into the zucchini mix, and then reheat. The croutons won't be crunchy.

**From
Rita
Freeberg's
Kitchen**

I planted just one little seed,
But the harvest was wild, indeed.
Now zucchinis abound,
They cover the ground.
Help! They're learning to sprout with speed!

AI Limerick

**GIVE A MAN A FISH
HE EATS FOR A DAY.
TEACH A WOMAN
TO GARDEN, AND THE
WHOLE NEIGHBORHOOD
GETS ZUCCHINI.**

Thoughts on NDRTA Memberships

"In service, we discover shared values and collective strength."

Why should a retired teacher join NDRTA; what are the benefits, what does a member get for their \$30 yearly membership dues? As the current Treasurer and Membership Chair for NDRTA, I have given this some thought.

There are all the reasons that a person joins any organization, like staying connected with people in the profession, camaraderie with friends, and learning about the new trends and innovations. Also, it is a way to share information about legislation that affects our profession and organization. Specifically staying knowledgeable about our TFFR pension and benefits is of vital importance. Communication at local unit meetings, and the state convention help facilitate this exchange of information, as well as the twice yearly NDRTA "Educator Plus" magazine.

But, as I considered why I joined NDRTA, I knew that it is most likely the main reason for others. We join because we want to be of help to others. In service, we discover our shared values and the collective strength of our group. We want to increase the influence of our organization with our membership. We want to share our unique stories, talents and skills with like-minded colleagues. We join because we make the organization stronger and more interesting. Every member is an asset to NDRTA.



I realize that I am, of course, writing this to all of you who are members. So I am asking that we all reach out to retired teachers who are not members to encourage them to join. They need to know that they are needed and valued by the NDRTA.

And I want to thank all of you for your continued membership, whether by check or TRRF withholding. It would be awesome to meet you all. If you can't get to the state convention in Grand Forks (Sept. 9-10) this year, I hope we can meet down the road someday.

***Thank you, Sherry Heilmann,
NDRTA Treasurer and Membership Chair***

NDRTA
North Dakota Retired Teachers Association

NDRTA
Voice of Retired Teachers in North Dakota!

NDRTA
Represents ND's 9,000 plus Retired Teachers exclusively.

NDRTA
Promotes personal, social, and economic welfare of its members, promotes retiree participation in community service, and promotes improvement of education for children in North Dakota.



Happy
90TH
Birthday
SOCIAL SECURITY





NDRTA Newsletter
Mary Carlson, Editor
PO Box 1865
Minot, ND 58702

Please cut and return

NDRTA Membership Enrollment Form

Name _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Year Retired _____ SSN _____ - _____ - _____ **or** TFFR Person ID _____
(Required for payroll deduction)

Choose One Method of Payment - Membership to take effect July 1st of each year.

☐ **Preferred method:** I request voluntary withholding of \$30.00 for annual membership dues in the North Dakota Teachers' Retirement Association from my July annuity payment from the North Dakota Teachers' Fund for Retirement to remain in effect until I choose to terminate by written notice to the North Dakota Teachers' Fund for Retirement prior to June 15th of any year. (Request for voluntary withholding must be received by June 10th.)

OR

☐ Enclosed is \$30.00 for annual membership payable by June 30th of each year.

Signature _____ Date _____

Mail to: NDRTA PO Box 1865, Minot, ND 58702