

EDUCATOR^{PLUS}

SUMMER 2026 | VOLUME 10 - ISSUE 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

President's Message

AARP

Pension Watch

TFFR

ND United

Convention Presenters

2026 State Convention

Registration and Agenda

Unit Focus

NDRTA Board

Proposed Amendments to

NDRTA Constitution

Celebrating
250 Years of
Independence

A voice representing over 9,000 retired teachers throughout North Dakota

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The other day I was visiting with a friend and discussing someone who had just retired at the age of 82 (not a teacher). We talked about how she may or may not be enjoying, or adjusting to, her retirement. I said that I imagine that she may be having an "identity crisis" ... well, maybe not as strong a word as "crisis," but definitely an identity challenge or dilemma. When a sense of self is tied up for that long in one work-identity, retiring, perhaps, can be difficult.

Serendipitously, another friend was telling me about when she and her husband had both retired at the same time. She said that they would have a glass of wine with dinner and would finish the bottle of wine, or maybe even more, as they stayed up much later than they ever had before they retired. They discovered "binge watching" and would often say, "Just one more episode" before calling it a night because, after all, they were retired, and they didn't have to get up in the morning. "If we got up before lunch, we would go out to eat, and then come home and relax, but for many days, it would be mid-afternoon before we got dressed for the day."

I asked her what turned it around because they certainly aren't the binge-watching, sedentary couple she had described. She said, "Someone from our church called and asked if we could help with the food pantry. Suddenly, we had a reason that we had to get to bed earlier, get up, and get going." She continued, "Then we saw that others could lift and carry the cases of food easier than we could. We realized that we'd probably lost some muscle, and decided to put some exercise into our routine."

Those two conversations reminded me of some of the difficulties that we face when we retire, and as we progress along in our retirement. Identity ... "Who am I now that I'm not a teacher?" And, "What's my purpose now that I'm retired?" A fellow retired educator said the other day, "I won't be able to be at Bible Study because I am Grandma DayCare." Clearly, she has a fulfilling identity and purpose. As those grandchildren grow up, she may have to adapt her identity and purpose, but right now, she is definitely enjoying her retirement. If you are reaching for purpose, and you don't yet volunteer, look around for volunteer activities in areas of interest to you.

Talking with fellow retired teachers at our last local meeting, they've offered the advice for this article, "Decide early what you want to do when you retire." From personal experience, I had thought that I would love to teach at the university level. Shortly before I retired, I taught a couple of 400 level classes at the university, and I was surprised by the fact that I really didn't like it at all. Better to try something and find out early, than to commit to an activity, or an identity, as such, that you'll regret taking up precious time in your retirement years.

One retired teacher mentioned that I should write the advice, "If you want to travel, do it while you are physically able; don't put it off." This brings me to another aspect of retirement that many of us have to face, and one we may not think about often. We may have been looking forward to something we would enjoy doing, only to find that if we wait too long, we physically can't do that. The advice is, "Do it now!"

Even if we can't physically rally the energy necessary to teach kids for an extended time, we can still make exercise and movement decisions that will keep us healthier than not moving. I hope that you can find a fitness center or a routine that fits with the kinds of exercise that can become a habit for you.

The concluding bit of advice, is to gather with friends, in our case, fellow retired teachers, to visit and learn new things. Obviously, I'm partial to our local retired teachers' meetings (along with our state conventions) and the interesting presenters we get to hear. Connections are so vital to our happiness in retirement, and I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that getting involved by helping organize and work with your local retired teachers group, or helping with a state convention, is a great chance at a fun, fulfilling pursuit, and an appreciated identity. My sincere hope is that you are comfortable in your retirement identity, have healthy routines, and feel a sense of uplifting purpose.



Rita Freeberg, NDRTA President



THE STATE OF SOCIAL SECURITY & MEDICARE

By Josh Askvig, AARP ND State Director

Before we were AARP Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus established the National Retired Teachers Association in recognition of the challenges faced by retired educators who struggled financially. The organization became AARP – a more encompassing organization focused on ensuring older Americans live with independence, dignity and purpose.

That mission still matters today, especially for retired teachers who understand both the value of earned benefits and the importance of keeping promises across generations.

For many North Dakotans, Social Security and Medicare are the foundation of retirement security. Social Security provides monthly income that people have earned over a lifetime of work, while Medicare helps make health care more affordable in later life. Together, they support financial stability, access to care and peace of mind.

While Social Security remains strong and continues to pay benefits on time, it faces long-term financing challenges. According to the 2025 trustees report, if Congress does not act, the combined trust funds are projected to cover full scheduled benefits only until 2034; after that, ongoing revenue would still cover about 81% of benefits. Social Security is not disappearing, but lawmakers need to act to protect the full benefits people have earned.

Here in North Dakota, Social Security is essential. About 146,521 residents receive benefits, including more than 113,000 retired workers. The program helps keep roughly 40,000 older North Dakotans out of poverty and brings billions of dollars into our state economy each year. For many households, it is not extra income -- it is all that some households have to pay for groceries, housing, utilities and other basic needs.

Medicare is just as important. It remains a dependable source of health coverage for older adults, but it also faces pressure. The 2025 Medicare trustees report projects that the Hospital Insurance trust fund for Medicare Part A will be able to pay full benefits until 2033. At that point, Medicare would still collect enough revenue to pay most covered costs, but Congress must act to strengthen the program for the future

AARP North Dakota is fighting to keep Social Security intact and Medicare strong. We regularly host events to help older North Dakotans understand Social Security and navigate their Medicare choices. Additionally, we advocate at the state and national level to protect earned benefits, improve access to information, and make sure the voices of older North Dakotans are heard. We'd love your support in this work.



Would you scan the QR code and pledge to be a Social Security Voter?

When you sign on, you tell candidates across the nation that you are one of a powerful bloc of voters committed to voting for candidates in the 2026 elections who will protect and strengthen Social Security.

If you want to learn more, connect with AARP North Dakota. Your voice can help protect Social Security and Medicare for today's retirees – and for the generations that follow. Learn more at aarp.org/ND.

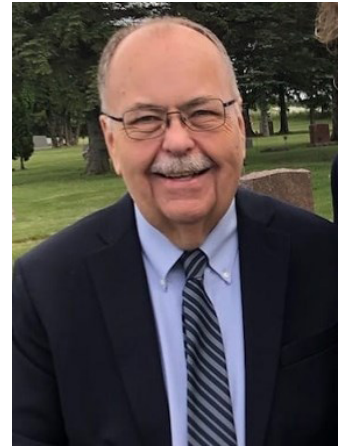
Josh Askvig is the State Director for AARP North Dakota. He had previously served as the Associate State Director for Advocacy for the organization. Josh has a broad background in advocacy and election work, having worked on Capitol Hill, as a campaign consultant, lobbyist, appointee and served two terms in elected local office as a Bismarck City Commissioner. He received his Master's degree from the Graduate School of Political Management at The George Washington University. He is an avid endurance athlete who has completed 2 Ironman triathlons, multiple ½ Ironman triathlons, the Escape from Alcatraz, and time qualified and completed the Boston Marathon. Josh resides in Bismarck, with his wife Crystal and his 3 children.



PENSION WATCH

They are or may learn a lesson.

Most public employees, about 87%, have access to defined benefit (DB) pension plans. Two states, Alaska and Rhode Island, that switched to a defined contribution (DC) have had a very difficult time retaining public employees: teachers, police, firefighters, paramedics, and other first responders. Alaska spends up to \$150,000 training first responders and then they leave and at one time 100's of aspiring teachers would show up at job fairs now only a handful attend. Rhode Island is having the same problems since moving to a DC plan in 2011. Alaska's legislature tried to reinstate a DB plan in this last session, but was vetoed by the governor. North Dakota is in the second year of its switch from a DB to a DC plan. We will have to wait to see if North Dakota will somehow be different from Alaska and Rhode Island. In fact, North Dakota offers an interesting study as public employees have a DC plan and teachers have a DB plan. Will it be more difficult to attract and retain public employees than it is to attract and retain teachers? With a starting salary of \$45,252 which is 37th in the nation and an average salary of \$60,704 which is 41st in the nation, it may be difficult to compare. This lowering of teacher salary rank has affected TFFR as the possible future salary increases are less than anticipated. Maybe it's a study for an aspiring PhD candidate.



Mike Burton

We aren't the only state with pension plan problems.

Arizona HB 2313 would terminate and remove the pension of a teacher striking or organizing on public property.

California's CalSTRS, their teacher retirement plan with about \$390 billion in assets and around 75% funded, is battling about whether to and how much to invest in private equity, alternative investments, and governance reforms.

Colorado's governor is proposing a reduction in the amount going into the teacher retirement program to reduce the state budget gap. The governor has been warned this will cause future problems with the teacher's retirement program.

Kentucky's legislature spent a great deal of time addressing reemployment after retirement to help solve teacher shortages and how this would affect their teacher retirement program.

Oklahoma's legislature has which they think is a great idea. They will increase money for teacher pay, literacy initiatives, books, scholarships for aspiring teachers, and the education formula which sounds great. Then how will they pay for it? They are doing this by removing \$250 million from yearly teacher retirement payments.

Washington is doing something that doesn't directly affect teachers' retirement, but does bear watching. To help reduce the state budget shortfall the legislature proposes to remove money from the public employee's retirement which is 160% funded. This is strongly opposed by said employees.

"In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." —Benjamin Franklin



Behind the Scenes at TFFR: How Your Retirement System Works for You

When you log in to your Teachers' Fund for Retirement (TFFR) account or call the North Dakota Retirement and Investment Office (RIO), the experience is meant to be welcoming and easy. Ensuring that experience is a coordinated effort by people, partners, and systems that work every day to make sure your retirement benefit arrives on time, accurately and securely. In this article, I want to pull back the curtain and share what goes on behind the scenes.

The People Serving You

TFFR is administered by RIO with a dedicated team based in Bismarck. The Retirement Services group is your day-to-day point of contact. They answer the phone, process retirement applications, calculate benefits, and help you navigate life events including moves, name changes, and beneficiary updates.

Guiding the program is the TFFR Board of Trustees, a seven-member board that includes the State Treasurer, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, two active teachers, one active school administrator, and two retired members. The Board sets policy, reviews investment performance, and ensures the program is administered in your best interest.

A Statewide Program at a Glance

Currently, TFFR serves almost 26,000 members, including 9,664 retirees and beneficiaries, 12,012 active educators, and 4,262 inactive members. The program works with 204 participating employers, including public school districts, special education units, vocational education units, and state agencies.

In Fiscal Year 2025, more than \$271 million was distributed to retired North Dakota educators. With an average retiree age of 74 and average service of nearly 27 years, those benefits represent decades of classroom dedication across our state.

How a Benefit Payment Comes Together

Each month, TFFR follows a careful rhythm. Employers file salary and contribution reports by the 15th of the month. Retirement Services staff process new retirement applications, review beneficiary forms, and finalize benefit calculations. By the last working day of the month, benefit payments are issued so they arrive on the first working day of the next month, every month, without interruption.

Supporting this rhythm is TFFR's actuary, GRS, which performs an annual valuation of the fund; an investment consultant, NEPC, that advises the State Investment Board (SIB) on long-term strategy; and the SIB and RIO's investment team members, who manage the investment of TFFR's approximately \$3.6 billion in assets.

Looking Ahead

RIO continues to focus on strengthening the TFFR's systems and services that support you. That includes ongoing improvements to MyTFFR, your pension administration system; refining how we communicate with members; and preparing for the 2027 Legislative Session.



Chase Kauffeld,
Chief Retirement Officer

If you'd like to see TFFR at a glance, the FY2025 Fast Facts publication is available at rio.nd.gov. And as always, if you have a question about your benefit or your account, our Retirement Services team is always here to help. You may contact them by phone at 701-328-9885 or 800-952-2970, by email at rio@nd.gov, or through MyTFFR, rio.nd.gov/mytffr.

Thank you for the careers you spent in North Dakota classrooms.
It is a privilege to serve you in retirement.

"Every journey begins with the first step."
— Ancient Chinese Proverb



NORTH DAKOTA UNITED

If there is one thing educators understand, it's that progress never just "happens." It takes people showing up, paying attention, asking questions, and sometimes pushing a little harder than they should have to. That's exactly the work ND United continues to do on behalf of educators, retirees, students, and public employees across North Dakota.

As we head into another election season, a big part of our work involves carefully vetting candidates for public office. That means our members sitting down with candidates, asking direct questions, and finding out where they really stand on issues that matter to our members and retirees. We want leaders who genuinely support public education, respect public employees, and understand the importance of protecting retirement security and affordable healthcare.

Quite honestly, there is too much at stake for any of us to simply hope things work out. Decisions made in Bismarck affect our schools, our retirement systems, our healthcare costs, and our communities every single day. ND United wants to make sure our members and retirees have clear, trustworthy information when it comes to voting.

NDU is also spending a lot of time talking with North Dakotans about the constitutional amendment that would provide universal school meals for every student in the state. This issue resonates with people from all levels of society because it's really about something simple: kids learn better when they aren't hungry.

For working families, this could also mean real financial relief by potentially saving families more than a thousand dollars per child each year. Anyone who has worked in schools knows that when students have reliable meals, classrooms work better, students focus more, and there's less stigma attached to those who qualify for help. Feeding kids shouldn't be controversial.

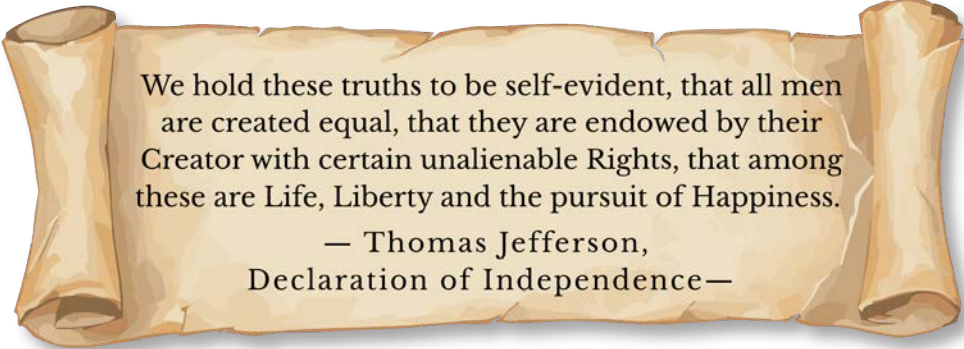
Another issue top of mind for our members is the rising cost of healthcare. When teachers are able to negotiate raises in salaries, they too often find that rising healthcare costs negate any increases they were able to achieve. ND United continues collaborating with policymakers and partners to find ways to make healthcare more affordable and sustainable for both active and retired public employees.

And of course, we continue to defend the Teacher's Fund for Retirement. For generations of North Dakota educators, the defined benefit pension plan has been a promise: dedicate your career to students and public education, and you'll have stability and dignity in retirement.

Across the country, we've seen attempts to chip away at pension systems like ours, often replacing them with riskier options that leave retirees carrying more uncertainty. ND United knows that the Teacher's Fund for Retirement remains one of the best tools we have for recruiting and retaining quality educators while honoring the commitment made to those who have already served.

Retired educators have always played a vital role in advocating for public education and public service in North Dakota. Your experience matters. Your voices matter. And your continued involvement matters.

At ND United, we're proud to keep doing this work alongside you.



We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

— Thomas Jefferson,
Declaration of Independence —



**by Nick Archuleta,
ND United President**

2026 NORTH DAKOTA STATE SPELLING BEE

by Barb Patzman

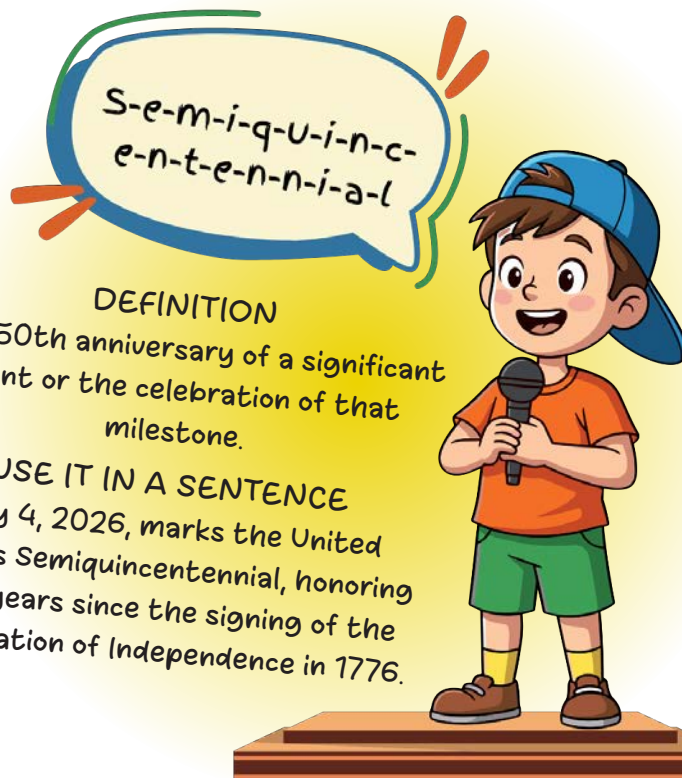
On March 23rd, nineteen energetic Retired Teachers gathered at the Bismarck Event Center to assist with the 2026 North Dakota State Spelling Bee. Our help ranged from assisting with registration, assistant pronouncer, judges, and correctors. Each position is important to the success of the program and naming a North Dakota State Champion.

Each county in ND holds local Bees to determine the two individuals that will represent their county. By 9:00am ninety-nine eager contestants ages 11-13 gathered for the written sections and vocabulary section of the event. In these preliminary rounds, all contestants receive the same words. In a separate room twenty-six people awaited the first 25 written word tests. Each test is corrected three times by three different people to insure accuracy.



After the first 25 word tests are finished the second 25 written words are ready for correction. Finally the vocabulary section is ready. This massive correcting marathon takes about two and a half hours of intensive work. After all tests are corrected the top twenty-five highest scorers are announced. These individuals advance to the afternoon Oral Round.

At 1:30 the twenty-five finalists are randomly seated and ready for a nerve-racking couple of hours of oral spell down. At the podium is the lead Pronouncer and seated by her side is the Assistant Pronouncer. At another table are the three judges. At this portion of the competition spectators are allowed. Each competitor steps to a microphone, and is given his/her word to spell. If the word is spelled correctly the head judge congratulates them; if the word is spelled incorrectly and all three judges agree a bell is rung to indicate an incorrect spelling, then that person joins the audience, and the next speller steps forward. This procedure is followed until there are only 3 competitors left.



DEFINITION

The 250th anniversary of a significant event or the celebration of that milestone.

USE IT IN A SENTENCE

July 4, 2026, marks the United States Semiquincentennial, honoring 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

Up to this point, all words given in the written, vocabulary, and several rounds of oral section, students have access to and are able to study and prepare for the State Spelling Bee, if they so choose. When the final three competitors start the final rounds the words are taken directly from a list compiled by the Scripps National Spelling Bee, that only the Bee Officials have access to, adding more tense nerves. When the last person standing spells his/her final word correctly, he/she is then declared the WINNER. All three finalists are given a trophy and several other amazing gifts. The winner also receives an all expense paid trip to the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington D.C. Chilaka Ugobi from Minot won both 2025 and 2026 State Spelling Bee. In 2025 he finished 20th at the National Bee. You can tell he studied the words, word origins, and parts of speech intently throughout the year.

The 2026 winning word was "eviscerate", in the 14th round!



2026 CONVENTION PREVIEW



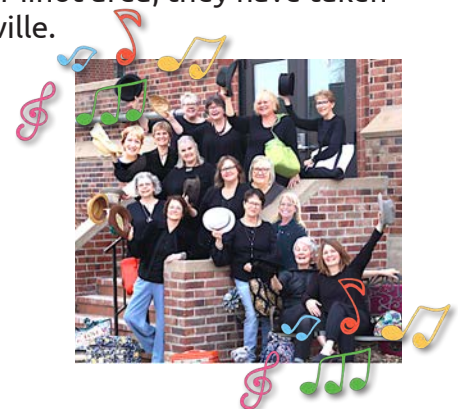
This delightful free tour to the **Magic City Discovery Center begins at 10:30 A.M. on Tuesday, September 15, 2026.** Magic City Discovery Center is a STEAM-focused hybrid children's museum and science center! This premier destination brings children and families together in an interactive environment that inspires creativity, encourages play, and enhances education. **There is no cost, transportation is on your own, and it is a very short drive from the Grand Oasis Hotel. The address is 1545 First Street NW,** high on the hill east of the Grand Oasis Hotel. You can get help with directions at Registration, if needed. It will be a fun, fantastic event!

Marcie Woehl, Manager of Public Programming and Education at the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library (TRPL) in Medora, ND is the Banquet speaker on Tuesday evening at 6:00 P.M. at the Grand Oasis Hotel. A North Dakota native, Marcie began her academic journey at Bismarck State College and University of North Dakota before pursuing her Ph.D. in English at the University of Rochester. She is excited to return to ND with and her partner, Brenden. In her free time, she enjoys listening to podcasts, visiting museums and historic sites, and pursuing her lifelong goal of learning to play the banjo. What a treat to have her speak to us about the newly opened Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library!



Tonya Hunskor, Executive Director of the North Central Educational Cooperative, works for the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders, and is Director of the ND Student Associations. She was a teacher, athletic director, and coach before becoming a retired K-12 Principal. She is a third-generation educational leader as her grandmother taught in a one room school house and her father was also a teacher in North Dakota. **"Curiosity Never Retires: Discovering How AI Tools Can Help You"** is the her breakout session. AI is becoming an increasingly important topic across ND and beyond. Tonya will introduce practical resources that make everyday tasks easier, support lifelong learning, and help you stay informed and connected.

ENTERTAINMENT ENJOYMENT: Learn and laugh at how three couples pack for a journey in a **"How to Pack for Your Travel,"** comedy skit at the noon lunch on Wednesday, September 16, and enjoy the popular singing and dancing group made up of active and retired educators with the **Delta Kappa Gamma Nu Notes at the Tuesday Banquet.** Beyond local gatherings in the Minot area, they have taken their show on the road to communities such as Medora, Spearfish, and Nashville.



2026 CONVENTION PREVIEW



Move Better, Feel Better: Gain Strength and Energy **Sherry Heilmann, RYT (Registered Yoga Trainer)**

This participation session will focus on movements to strengthen and stretch our bodies. The movements can be done standing and/or sitting.

Drawing from 20+ years of training, studying, practicing and teaching yoga with a variety of people (ages and abilities), Sherry will present movements that provide safe and effective strengthening of our bodies. Moving the body also enhances the nervous system and the brain.

Participants will be encouraged to listen to their bodies and do what is appropriate for their situations. Consistent practice can keep us independent and able to do our favorite activities!

Linda Christianson and her husband departed from Minot on January 5, 2025, heading south to where it was summer—Antarctica. On January 8, they boarded the SH Diana, a Class 6 icebreaker, for a 12-day expedition. As they explored the continent, they encountered thousands of penguins, several species of seals, humpback whales and orcas, along with endless views of icebergs, glaciers, and snow-covered landscapes. Linda's breakout sessions on Wednesday will highlight their adventures in Antarctica often considered the world's most spectacular continent. A Minot State graduate, Linda began her 35-year teaching career in 1972. She and her husband share a passion for adventure, travel, and discovering new places. "Do it while you can!" is their personal motto.

Expedition Antarctica



MORE SUPER BREAKOUT SESSIONS

FINLAND AND UKRAINE: STORIES, CULTURE, AND DISCOVERY



Micah Bloom, Minot State University Professor, will present **"Ukraine: History, Humanity, Hope" on Wednesday, September 16.**

Micah enjoys connecting with strangers, especially while traveling. During his four trips to Ukraine, he has gathered many stories about the people he met there. When not traveling, Micah teaches art at Minot State University in Minot, ND.

Making music on the banks of the Tiasmyn River, Ukraine



Sara Medalen will present "Happiness by Design: Lessons from Finland" **on Tuesday, September 15.** Her presentation on Finland will explore its education system, culture, and quality of life. You may leave inspired to visit Finland which is often ranked as the happiest country in the world.

Sara, North Dakota's 2020 Teacher of the Year, has represented the state in educational programs around the world, including China, South Africa, and Finland. An award-winning educator, Sara is passionate about helping children succeed and inspiring a lifelong love of learning. She has created programs such as Books and Braids, the Sunshine Ice Cream Truck, which gives away free books and free ice cream, the Sunnyside After-School Running Club, and has served for many years as a Companions for Children mentor.



CONVENTION REGISTRATION



2026 State Convention
Grand Oasis Hotel - Minot, ND

Tuesday September 15

Convention registration (All Inclusive) \$**130**

Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

(Registration check-in starts at 8:30 am - Opening session begins at 1:00 pm)

Tour - Magic City Discovery Center - 10:30 am (Please mark if you are planning to attend.) _____

- No cost, transportation on your own, a very short drive from The Grand Oasis
- Caravan will depart The Grand Oasis at 10:15 am

Regional Advisory Council Meeting (11:30am)

Mark if you will be a representative of your Local Unit at the council meeting _____

Name of Unit _____

Evening Banquet - 6:00 pm. Please indicate your choice. (Included in registration.)

_____ Pancetta Chicken (gluten free) - chicken breast topped with cream cheese, garlic, spinach, sun-dried tomatoes wrapped in pancetta and covered in a garlic cream sauce

_____ Beef Tips - Tender beef tips with beef gravy, red & green peppers, onions, & mushrooms

Wednesday September 16

Continental Breakfast - 8:00 - 8:45 am (Included in registration, mark if planning to attend) _____

Luncheon with Closing Session - (Included in registration, mark if planning to attend) _____

Soup and Sandwich Bar

*For any questions about registration, meals, or room reservations, please text or call Jeri Grant at (701) 833-7867.

Registration MUST be received by August 28, 2026. No cancellations after September 4, 2026.

Registrant Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Contact phone number: _____

Email: _____

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

Room Reservations: The Grand Oasis Hotel - (701) 852-3161

Ask for the \$104 NDRTA Convention rate

Please mail registration form and check payable to MARTA (Minot Area Retired Teachers Assn) to:

Tracey Lawson, 509 19th Ave SW, Minot ND 58701





2026 NDRTA Convention
Life's a Journey...Enjoy the Ride
 Sept 15-16, 2026
 The Grand Oasis Hotel, Minot



Tuesday, Sept 15

8:30	Registration
10:30	Tour: Magic City Discovery Center Located across from The Grand. Transportation on your own. Free Admission.
11:30	Regional Advisory Council Meeting <i>Lunch on your own.</i>
1:00	Opening Session Presentation of Colors Pledge of Allegiance NDRTA Welcome MARTA Welcome City of Minot Welcome
1:15	TFFR ND United
2:05	Coffee Break
2:20 – 3:00	Break-Out Sessions Attendees may choose two. Financial Fraud Panel Lessons from Finland Move Better, Feel Better
3:05-3:45	Break-Out Sessions Repeated
4:00	NDRTA Business Meeting Call to Order 2025 Convention Minutes Financial Report & Budget Proposed Updated Constitution Resolutions Committee Report Election of Officers NDRTA Update Memorial Service
5:30	Social w/Cash Bar
6:00	Banquet Speaker & Entertainment

Wednesday, Sept 16

8:00	Registration
9:00	Continental Breakfast Opening Session AARP DPI
9:50	Coffee Break
10:05-10:45	Break-out Sessions Attendees may choose two. Artificial Intelligence Ukraine: History, Humanity, Hope Expedition Antarctica
10:50-11:30	Break-out Sessions Repeated
11:45	Luncheon Invocation Entertainment Closing Session Silver Apple Awards Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus Award Installation of Officers Invitation to 2027 Convention MARTA Closing NDRTA Closing Comments Adjournment



Cass County Area Retired Teachers Association, CCARTA, celebrated 60 years of existence this year. In 1966 dues were \$1, teacher pensions went from quarterly to monthly and the minimum pension was raised to \$60 a month. This year's meetings began with Karen Eriksmoen as president; Bobbie Krenz and Nancy Peterson, VP's; Laurie Schlenker, President-Elect; Bob Rohla, Treasurer and Vel Rae Burkholder, Secretary. This year we gained six new members with a total of 69 members. The CCARTA meetings are being held at the Ramada Inn in Fargo on the 2nd Thursday of each month.



At our first meeting in September, we had a report on the wonderful 2025 NDRTA Convention in Grand Forks! Also, a CCARTA member and his wife, Ken and Kathy Tinquist, presented the program, "Unsettled Haiti", and talked about their family members living in Haiti as missionaries and their experiences and recent departure due to the violence.



There were a great variety of programs all planned by VP Nancy Peterson. The Homeward Animal Shelter explained its partnership with the Vet program at NDSU and the new facility they are building. Sylvan Loegering spoke about Farm Life in the 1940's and 1950's and his writing about his experience growing up in a large family and a one room schoolhouse. In December we sang holiday carols led by member, Sue Jordahl. Gifts were collected for children served by the Red River Childrens' Advocacy Center by Rose Krumwiede and her committee. January's program was Ryan Haug who shared pictures and stories about competing in the 2023 Iditarod Trail Bike Ride (350 miles) and his plan to

do it again this year. In February CCARTA and FRTA had a joint meeting at the Holiday Inn and heard about research on Memory and Aging being done at NDSU and learned how to keep our minds and memory healthy. In March we heard from the Exec. Dir. of Riverkeepers, Christine Holland, about the amazing work they do celebrating and protecting our Red River. Our April speaker was ill, so we improvised and members shared stories about their experiences with fraud and scams. Vel Rae Burkholder invited everyone to her 90th birthday celebration in May.

Shirley McCaslin and her committee presented CCARTA's scholarships to our four recipients who are pursuing degrees in education (*images below*). The students and their families joined us for lunch and scholarship presentations. Each recipient received a \$1000 scholarship for college. What an inspiration!! This year CCARTA gave its 105th scholarship and has been giving scholarships since 1999. In January 2021 CCARTA members voted to have the FM Area Foundation manage its scholarship funds.

CCARTA members bring monthly donations for the FM Emergency Food Pantry and volunteer to work many shifts throughout the year. In March, "CCARTA Coffee" was established as another way for members to connect. On the third Tuesday morning of each month, members have coffee at a local coffee shop. CCARTA Coffee will continue all year, even in the summer. CCARTA has a Facebook page for members to join to keep up with news and events for CCARTA members. CCARTA continues to serve the community and its members in Cass County. We've had a great 60 years!



UNIT FOCUS

Missouri River Basin RTA
Charlotte Rohde, Vice President

This year is full of hands-on learning events. In April, Basic China Painting was presented by LuAnn Allsworth and Linda Maize. Paleo Art-Iculations Jewelry by Jeanette Reim was the May 18th lesson.

Bonnie Woodworth will share honey facts and demonstrate making popcorn balls with the MRBRTA members for our July 20th meeting. On September 21st, we will "step up" to Bone Builders at the Hazen Senior Center. Knowledge about wood turning will be shared at Linda Maize's home October 19th.

We will wrap up the year with "Christmas in November." Charlotte Rohde will host this event with a delicious brunch and Christmas Bingo at her home in Halliday. At this meeting, we discuss the agenda for the following year.

After each lesson is presented, we have a business meeting, followed by lunch. The MRBRTA offers a \$500 scholarship to a graduating senior who plans to major in education.

(left) Members of MRBRTA
at Basic China Painting
Lesson in Riverdale

(right) Maugeurite Kilber's
Painted China Mug



Edith Roosevelt's Fat Rascals

This was one of Theodore Roosevelt's favorite recipes

- 1 cup dried currants or raisins
- 2 cups (240g) all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup (50g) granulated sugar, divided
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) unsalted butter, cut into cubes and chilled
- 2/3 cup heavy cream, half-and-half, or whole milk, plus more for brushing



From the National Geographic National Parks Cookbook: Dishes Inspired by America's Great Outdoors

Soak the currants:

Place the currants in a small bowl and cover with hot water. Let soak for 10 minutes, then pour through a fine-mesh strainer to drain. Rinse quickly with cold water to cool, and drain well again.

Preheat the oven to 450°F.

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Mix the dry ingredients:

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, 3 tablespoons sugar, baking powder, and salt until combined. Add the butter. Combine the mixture using your hands, breaking the butter into pea-size pieces. Mix in the drained currants until evenly distributed.

Make the dough:

Make a well in the center of the mixture. Slowly pour in the cream, and use a fork to incorporate it into the flour mixture to make a shaggy dough. Use your hands to gather and gently press the dough together, incorporating any remaining flour. (Do not overwork.)

Roll and cut out the dough:

Transfer the dough to a clean surface, then roll into 1-inch thickness. Use a 2-inch biscuit cutter to cut into rounds. Transfer the rounds to the prepared baking sheet, evenly spaced apart. Gently re-roll the dough scraps and cut out more rounds.

Brush the tops of the rounds with cream and sprinkle with the remaining 1 tablespoon of sugar.

Bake until golden brown, 12 to 14 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack to cool slightly; serve warm.

Henry Ford said, "Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young." Our TMRTA has had an interesting year which should help to keep us young!



Filipino teachers from Dunseith, ND sharing their experiences.

Last September, our group visited Dakota College at Bottineau for our lunch and meeting. Our guest speaker was Corey Gorder, the new acting dean of the college. He gave a very informative talk about his life journey to his current position. He highlighted the new nursing program in the newly renovated state-of-the-art Old Main Building. Our organization has been following the progress of this remodeling project and the development stages of the nursing program since its beginning. It was gratifying to hear of its completion and success. Mr. Gorder also invited us to use the college as a meeting place going forward. Through our \$25 yearly dues we are able to sponsor a \$500 scholarship each year for a DCB student who plans a future in education. The 2025 recipient, Elizabeth Chisholm, was able to attend the meeting and tell us of her plans for an Elementary Education degree, with emphasis on K-1. We were happy to meet her and impressed by her enthusiasm.

Our December meeting was also held at DCB with a Christmas theme. Quarters were collected to donate to the nursing homes in Rolette and Dunseith for Bingo prizes. We enjoyed playing Christmas games with prizes. Bob Abrahamson surprised us all with a lovely handmade wooden keychain for each member which he had laser engraved with his or her name. We were happy to welcome several new members to the group. It was an inspirational time of fun and giving.

Our April meeting was especially engaging. The 2026 scholarship recipient, Cal Mission, paid us a visit. She is pursuing a secondary education degree and hopes to teach Vocational Education. She spoke about a special teacher who made an impact on her life and made her want to help other students, reminding us of the importance teachers play in guiding and influencing young lives.

Next, Tonya Hunskor, a member who is also the director of the North Central Education Consortium, gave a presentation on what is being accomplished through this organization in our area. One concern which she covered is the shortage of teachers in key subject areas in North Dakota. To fill this deficit, many teachers from the Philippines have

been employed in the last several years. Two Filipino teachers, a married couple, who are presently teaching in Dunseith, ND, were able to come and share their experiences here in our state. It was fascinating to hear about the vast differences they see between teaching in the U.S. versus their home country. The biggest contrasts between the two which they cited are the students' attitude toward education and class discipline. In the Philippines, education is very highly valued at home and students are under much pressure to achieve and revere teachers. A typical class size may be up to 60 students, who can be handled because they are so well-behaved. This is not the situation which they have found in the United States. In spite of culture shock, the weather, and the difference in food and customs, the couple is very happy to be here and were captivating speakers!

Our TMRTA has plans to hold some "field trip" meetings in surrounding towns in the next year as we keep enjoying each other and learning!



Officers with Cal Mission, scholarship recipient.



September 2025 meeting with scholarship recipient, Elizabeth Chisholm

The Slope Area Retired Teachers Association meets every fourth Thursday from September through May at the Pizza Ranch meeting room in Dickinson. Throughout the year we welcomed several new members. Community concert tickets are drawn at every meeting.

The first speaker of the year was Mike Lefor, the Majority Leader of the House for North Dakota, giving us an overview of the 2025 legislative session.

The October speaker was Bob Fuhrmann, the Director of the Dickinson Museum, informing us of changes at the museum. In November we welcomed members of the Dickinson Fire Department who shared valuable information on fire prevention and safety.

Our annual Christmas party was held in December. We played games, had a sing-along, and enjoyed Christmas treats. A group of us did the judging for The Dickinson Press annual "Christmas Storybook" contest.

January's speaker was Kyle Smith from the Dickinson State University Heritage Foundation who discussed changes at the University. Subsequent speakers were Kelly Kreig, discussing behavioral health and Brian Kopp, who talked about his experiences with electric cars.

Chris Blackwell from the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library was the April speaker. He talked at length about the facility and what the museum has to offer for programs. They are excited for a July 4, 2026, opening. There is talk of some U.S. Past Presidents visiting the library in the coming year.

We closed out our year being entertained by Bill Lowman, the Cowboy Poet.



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Visit Our Website:
ndretiredteachers.com



Sara Medalen is a reading and math interventionist at Minot's Sunnyside School and passionate about helping children and making a difference in their lives.

Hello Sunshine!

The goal of "Hello Sunshine Ice Cream & Books" is to reach high-needs neighborhoods, along with Minot Parks, to get books into the hands of kids and spread literacy across our community, one child, one book, and one ice cream treat at a time. It truly is magical when I cruise into neighborhoods, turn on the ice cream truck music, and children come running for free ice cream and free books!



I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream...and books! There's something pretty special about an ice cream truck on a summer day. That magical sound of the ice cream truck drawing neighborhoods out into the street for some ice cream happiness is the inspiration behind "Hello Sunshine Ice Cream & Books."

Many low-income families have little to no books at home for their children. While the average child in a middle-class family may experience 1,000–1,700 hours of one-on-one reading time, children in less economically stable homes may only experience around 25 hours. One of the most effective ways to improve reading achievement is simply by increasing children's access to books.

As a teacher from a high-poverty elementary school, it has been my mission to get books in the hands of kids. What better way than to get into neighborhoods? My search began for an ice cream truck! I hopped online, and before long, I found a beautiful, bright yellow ice cream truck with more than 266,000 miles on it. The bottom was rusting out, the seats were battered, and it was absolutely PERFECT. Before I knew it, it was on its way to Minot.

I wasn't sure how I was going to keep up financially with giving out FREE books and ice cream, but the pieces started falling into place after working with generous community organizations, including the Minot Area Community Foundation. Soon, the ice cream truck had bookshelves, a spiffy wrap, a rug covering the rusted interior floor, and most importantly—BOOKS. Lots and lots of books!



Please read this revision of the Constitution. We will be voting to accept this at the NDRTA Business Meeting at the 2026 NDRTA Convention in Minot on September 15, 2026.

For comparison, the **current North Dakota Retired Teachers Association (NDRTA) Constitution** appears on the NDRTA web pages at <https://ndretiredteachers.com/constitution>

The Constitution Revision Committee Reviewed and Revised the constitution throughout **2025 and 2026, for final adoption at the 2026 Convention.**

North Dakota Retired Teachers Association CONSTITUTION

Article I. The **name** of this association shall be the

NORTH DAKOTA RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION (NDRTA).

Article II. The **purpose** shall be to:

- a. Bring all retired educators in North Dakota into closer relationship with each other in order to work for mutual interest and advancement of common goals.
- b. Work for better legislation to maintain and improve the financial status and social welfare of retired educators.
- c. Establish local units which will help strengthen the status of retired educators and disseminate information of value to members.
- d. Cooperate with the National Retired Teachers Association (NRTA) and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) by promoting membership, legislation, national projects and programs.
- e. Encourage and support any movement to improve educational opportunities in the state.
- f. Preserve the history and heritage of the North Dakota Retired Teachers Association through archived minutes, documents, and treasurer's reports submitted to the North Dakota Heritage Center, General Collections/Archives in Bismarck, ND, by the end of every odd numbered year.

Article III. **Membership** shall include retired and former educators. Members who reenter teaching are eligible for continued membership. Membership shall consist of three categories:

- a. **Active members** shall be retired educators or surviving-beneficiaries of retired educators.
- b. **Associate membership** shall be open to spouses of active and former NDRTA members
- c. **Honorary membership** certificates may be awarded to nonmembers by the Executive Committee to persons they deem worthy of the honor.



Article IV. **Officers** -- the **elected officers of the NDRTA** shall be:

- a. **President,**
- b. **Vice-president,**
- c. **Secretary / Historian,**
- d. **Treasurer and**

- 1) Each of the above shall serve two years or until a successor is elected or appointed (in the event of an officer being unable to fulfill the entire length of office).

Article V. **Appointed positions** include

- a. ***Educator Plus*** Magazine Editor,
- b. **Web Page Editor,**
- c. **Membership Chair**
- d. Other appointed positions as deemed necessary by the Executive Committee

Article VI. **The Executive Committee** shall be composed of

- a. Elected officers of the NDRTA plus the
- b. Immediate Past President and
- c. The Editor of the NDRTA ***Educator Plus*** magazine.

Article VII. **The Executive Committee shall meet**

- d. At least once during the year to consider the business of the Association.
- e. In addition, the Executive Committee will meet in the interim at the call of the President.

A. Vacancy

Should a vacancy occur in any office during the year, the president, with the approval of the Executive Committee, shall appoint a member to fill that office until next annual meeting, at which time, it shall be filled by election for the remainder of the term.

- 1) **The Nominations Committee Chair will call for nominations for open offices, via personal contact with prospective officers and in the winter edition of the *Educator Plus***

- a. A slate of nominations will appear in the summer **edition of the *Educator Plus*** magazine published just prior to the state convention
- b. Persons submitting nominations must ensure that the person who is being nominated has accepted their nomination and will be willing to be an officer.

- 2) **Elections and Terms of Office**

The following officers shall be elected at the annual meeting of the Association by the members in attendance:

- a. **President,**
- b. **Vice-president,**
- c. **Secretary (traditionally elected in odd-numbered years), and**
- d. **Treasurer (traditionally elected in even-numbered years).**
- e. **All shall be elected for a two-year term.**

- 3) **The following officer shall be appointed by the President with approval of the Executive Committee:**

- i. **Editor of the NDRTA *Educator Plus* magazine**
- b. **Shall serve for two years or until a successor has been elected or appointed.**



B. All officers shall begin their terms of office at the end of the annual convention.

Article VIII. The NDRTA shall meet in **convention once a year**

- a. At a time and place selected by the Executive Committee.
- b. A quorum shall consist of the members in attendance.

Article IX. A **local association (local unit) of retired educators** may become affiliated with the NDRTA upon written request.

Article X. **Finance**

A. The fiscal year shall begin July 1 of each year.

B. The amount of annual membership dues will be determined by the Executive Committee. The President shall send a Renewal letter to all Self-Paying Members.

C. The NDRTA state dues are payable annually:

- a. By unit and non-unit members directly to the NDRTA Treasurer
- b. By automatic deduction from the member's July TFFR pension payment. July notice to Teachers Fund for Retirement (TFFR) for *new* automatically deducted dues shall be due to TFFR, by June 10*, and dues will be deducted by the most efficient way compatible with the TFFR office and equipment. *Date is determined by ND TFFR and may be different than this date without the need for a change in this constitution.
- c. By unit members to the treasurer of their unit, who will transmit the dues and member information to the NDRTA Treasurer

D. Special funds may be established for specific purposes, e.g., promotion of legislation, education or cultural projects, etc. Monies contributed to such funds must be kept apart from the general fund. At the request of the Executive Committee, monies may be placed in a separate NDRTA account.

Article XI. This constitution may be amended

- a) At an annual meeting, by a majority vote of the members in attendance.
- b) Notice of the proposed amendment(s) shall be submitted in writing to the President and NDRTA ***Educator Plus*** editor early enough for publication in the issue of the summer NDRTA ***Educator Plus*** magazine printed prior to the convention.

The Constitution has been previously amended at Annual NDRTA Conventions on the following dates: 29 September 1982, 25 September 1987, 21 September 1989, 16 September 1992, 21 September 1994, and will be voted upon on the 15th day of September 2026.

This Constitution revision will be submitted by the Executive Committee for consideration to the 2026 Summer edition of the ***Educator Plus*** magazine and at the 2026 convention. Final adoption will be acted upon at the 2026 NDRTA Convention.





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



Please cut and return

NDRTA Membership Enrollment Form

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____ Year Retired _____

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.)

Last 4 #s of SSN _____

OR

(Required for payroll deduction)

☐ **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