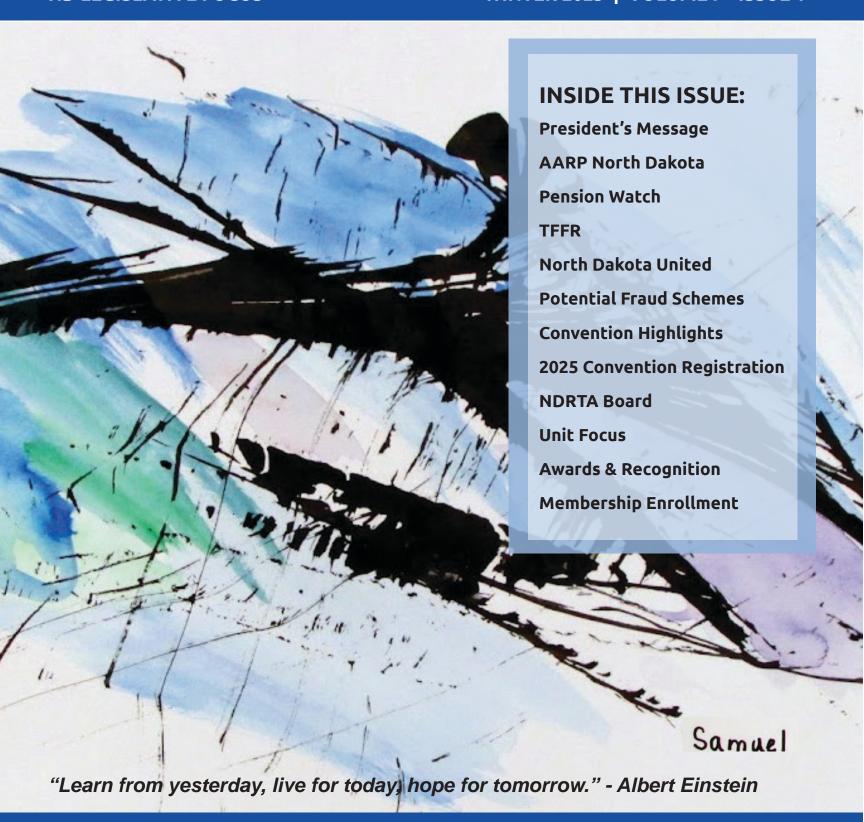


EDUCATOR

ND LEGISLATIVE FOCUS

WINTER 2025 | VOLUME 9 - ISSUE 1



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE





As I was reading the success stories of Teacher of the Year candidates in the "North Dakota United Year in Review," I got to wondering what I have done and am still doing to teach or lead people to improve their lives.

I was a physical education teacher and coach for 35 years. I taught 2 years at Dickinson High School, 1 year at Wahpeton Middle School, and 33 years at Schroeder Middle School in Grand Forks.

I grew up on a farm and went to a country school with 10 – 12 students. We played a lot of softball, played tag games, and square danced at recess time. I went to high school in Richardton with 84 students in all grades and 12 students in our grade. We did not have a qualified physical education teacher there. Our Home Economics (female) teacher got the honor of being the girls physical education teacher, and she did not have any background in physical education. We did not have any girl's sports except for cheerleading. Then I went to Dickinson State College and the only sports for girls were gymnastics and track which I did not participate in. I was planning on going into business as a major with physical education as a minor. I got hired as a Work Study secretary for the women's physical education professors all four years at Dickinson State. They were so friendly, kind and encouraging so I changed my major to physical education and my minor to business.

I have always liked being active physically and I enjoyed teaching and coaching. I had to learn a lot about the sports I coached because I had very little background in any of the sports I coached – gymnastics, track, volleyball, cheerleading and dance line.

The year that I retired from teaching our church was starting an exercise program for adults called Faithfully Fit Forever. They asked me if I would be interested in leading it, and I am still leading it 23 years later. I now have 20 people in my class with 5 men participating. The program started as a Silver Sneakers aerobic style class but now is a Bone Builders class which is easier for seniors with some physical and mobility issues.

So, I am still teaching and helping people improve their health and fitness. I am also the ND Retired Teachers Association President where I am hoping that I can lead and encourage retired teachers to participate in their local units as well as getting involved with AARP activities, ND United and NEA activities. These organizations are working so hard to make things better for teachers and retired teachers and we need to support them, especially this Legislative year. Keep in touch with your local legislators and let them know what issues you would like them to support and thank them for working for us! I would also like to encourage more of you to take on the challenge of being an officer in your local unit! Please say "yes" when asked.

Sherryl Weisenberger



AARP NORTH DAKOTA

The 2025 Legislature is off and running with a record number of bills on the docket. The AARP team is at the Capitol every day – laser-focused on the four priorities our members told us they care most about.

- **1. LOWER PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS:** The high cost of prescription drugs impacts all North Dakotans. In a 2023 AARP survey, 83% of respondents aged 45 and older said being able to pay for prescription drugs is important to them.
- 2025 Legislative Focus: Policy changes that make prescription drugs more
 affordable such as caps on out-of-pocket drug expenses and reference pricing.
 We support HB 1114: Health insurance coverage that would expand the cap on
 out-of-pocket expenses for insulin and related medical supplies to the private
 insurance market to \$25/month.



- **2. PREVENT FRAUD:** The Federal Trade Commission reported that in 2022, older adults lost more than \$1.6 billion to fraud, compared to about \$1 billion the year before. Consumers lost more money through cryptocurrency scams than any other payment method.
- 2025 Legislative Focus: Robust oversight and enforcement related to scams by the state of North Dakota, and new protections on gift cards, cryptocurrencies, and electronic payments to prevent fraud. We support HB 1447 a bill that will crack down on using crypto ATMs for fraudulent activity and enhance the safety of the machines. Solutions include licensing cryptocurrency ATM operators in the state, imposing daily transaction limits, posting fraud warning notices, and identifying steps to take when fraudulent activity is suspected.
- **3. ADDRESS AFFORDABLE HOUSING:** One of the top concerns of North Dakotans as they age is the ability to remain independent in their homes and communities. North Dakotans 65 and older are a growing segment and that translates into a greater demand for housing suited to their needs.
- 2025 Legislative Focus: Affordable, accessible housing available to all incomes, ages and abilities, and
 access to convenient home-and-community base services that allow older adults to remain in their homes
 and communities as their needs change. We support HB 1012: Department of Health and Human Services
 budget which includes enhancements to services to allow individuals to age at home; and SB 2030,
 providing additional resources for the Housing Incentive Fund (HIF).
- **4. LOWER PROPERTY TAXES:** AARP believes property tax relief should be equitable, cost-effective, and targeted to homeowners with low and moderate incomes burdened by their property taxes.
- 2025 Legislative Focus: Property tax relief programs that protect vulnerable homeowners from losing
 their property; homestead exemptions that reduce the taxes owed on a property, and property tax
 relief when the tax exceeds a certain share of homeowners' income. We support increasing the primary
 residence and homestead property tax credit and renters' relief programs included in HB 1176, Governor
 Armstrong's property tax relief and reform bill.

Continued on next page



With a record number of bills introduced this session, legislators have a lot on their plates. While they don't mind hearing from us, they prefer to hear from the constituents most affected by the issues they debate. Reach out to them to let them know how you feel. Find your legislator at <u>ndlegis.gov</u>, and let us help you stay informed.

- Tune into All Things Advocacy. AARP ND's brief, live update on the progress, actions and insights from the legislature airs live on youtube.com/AARPND/livestreams and the AARP ND Facebook page every Friday at 1 p.m. (CST)
- Sign up for our emails: Text **Yes2Email to 50757** to receive a one-time text message from AARP with a link to sign up for AARP emails. Message and data rates may apply. Terms apply: https://aarp.info/tcofr
- Go to <u>aarp.org/NDadvocacy.</u>

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



PENSION WATCH

There is an interesting bill you may want to pay attention to - HB1285. The bill has been introduced by five House representatives: Mike Schatz (R) District 39, Jim Jonas (R) District 13, Alisa Mitskog (D) District 25, David Monson (R) District 19, and Cynthia Schreiber-Beck (R) District 25. Two reps come from smaller towns and three reps come from mid-sized towns, at least by ND standards. Several seem to be former educators. The important question is: Does this bill have a snowballs chance of passing the house and senate and then being signed by the governor?

What is this bill all about? The bill is introduced as "A bill for an act to provide for state employee compensation adjustments and to provide for an appropriation and transfer to the Teachers' Fund for Retirement for cost-of-living adjustments." The bill if passed directs the Office of Management and Budget to develop guidelines for use by state agencies to provide compensation for classified state employees. It is the intent of this bill to transfer monies to TFFR. This is where this bill becomes very interesting and something I have never seen in my 54 years of being involved in education. Something like this happened several years ago when a 13th check was given to retired teachers. The big problem with this 13th check is that it was taken out of TFFR funds, which was a terrible thing to do. Remember one of the important goals of our pension fund is to get it fully funded by about 2040.

This bill proposes that \$49,200,00 be transferred from the general fund, not out of TFFR's funds, and then transferred to TFFR for distribution to retired teachers during this next biennium between July 1, 2025, and ending June 30, 2027. So, what does this mean for you? The simple math is this \$49,200,000 divided by about roughly 9700 retired teachers is about \$5000 to each retired teacher. Now does this mean that every one of you will get \$5000 sometime between the above dates, probably not. There may be some adjustment with members that have been retired longer getting slightly more as they have gone longer with no adjustment to their pension amount and more recent retirees getting slightly less. This still means that every retired teacher would potentially get several thousand dollars as sort of a one-time cost-of-living adjustment.

As I said, it is an interesting bill to watch. Its first hearing was at 8:30 am on January 30, 2025. I hope this snowball doesn't melt.

Mike Burton

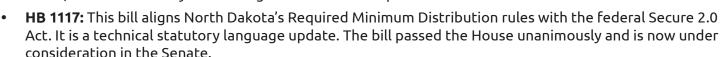


Progress and Milestones at the North Dakota Retirement and Investment Office

The North Dakota Retirement and Investment Office (RIO) and the Teachers' Fund for Retirement (TFFR) have made significant progress over the past few years. This article highlights some key milestones shaping the future of TFFR's retirement program.

Legislative Update

The North Dakota Legislature is currently in session for the 2025-2027 biennium, and RIO is closely monitoring three bills that impact TFFR:



- SB 2134: This bill allows the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Treasurer to appoint a
 designee from their office to represent them on the TFFR Board. It passed the Senate unanimously and is
 now before the House.
- **HB 1285:** This bill proposes a one-time supplemental payment to TFFR's retired members. It has been introduced in the House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee and is awaiting further action.

Internal Investment Management Initiative

In the previous legislative session, the North Dakota Legislature and the State Investment Board (SIB) approved funding for an internal investment initiative. As part of this program, RIO has recruited several skilled investment and fiscal professionals to internally manage a portion of the \$23 billion overseen by the SIB. By reducing the fees paid to external investment managers, the program is expected to generate considerable cost savings. The SIB's pension pool is projected to save \$6 million the first year alone. As the management of more investments are moved in-house, the savings will increase, benefitting all of the SIB's client funds including TFFR.

TFFR's Path to Full Funding

Following significant legislative changes in 2013—including adjustments to employer and employee contribution rates and benefit tiers—the TFFR Board prioritized achieving a fully funded status. A fully funded plan means that the fund's assets equal or exceed its liabilities.

TFFR has made steady progress toward this goal. According to the FY2024 actuarial valuation, the fund is now 71.6% funded. Projections indicate that TFFR will reach full funding by 2043, ensuring long-term financial security for North Dakota's educators.

Leadership Transition

After more than four years of dedicated service, Executive Director Jan Murtha resigned, effective Jan. 3, 2025. Under her leadership, RIO achieved significant modernization and improvements, and we are grateful for her contributions.

The SIB is conducting a nationwide search for a new executive director, a process expected to take several months. While the search is conducted, Jodi Smith has been appointed as RIO's interim executive director. Jodi previously served as North Dakota's Commissioner of Trust Lands for nearly five years under Gov. Doug Burgum, and we welcome her back to state service as she provides leadership during this transition.

MyTFFR: A New Era in Pension Administration

One of RIO's most significant milestones is the launch of MyTFFR, TFFR's new pension administration system, on Feb. 10, 2025. This project represents four years of dedicated effort by RIO staff, with substantial investment from both the Legislature and the TFFR Board. MyTFFR provides members—both active and retired—with unprecedented access, allowing members to easily view, update, and monitor their accounts. This system marks a major leap forward in both technology and customer service, enhancing transparency and providing self-service options. We encourage you to visit www.nd.rio.gov to explore the new system and experience the improvements firsthand!



NORTH DAKOTA UNITED



By Nick Archuleta, ND United President

As president of North Dakota United, it has been an honor and joy for me any time I am able to speak with the leaders and members of the North Dakota Retired Teachers Association on matters of mutual interest. I've been fortunate enough to have been invited to present at your annual conventions in years past, and I always look forward to seeing rooms full of the friendliest faces I know: those of our hard-working educators in the state of North Dakota on whose shoulders current teachers stand, and whose work is the predicate for future educators.

When ND United received an invitation to draft an article about the importance of being active, organized, and loud (utilizing those amazing "teacher voices" that only a career spent in education can provide) during the legislative session, to paraphrase the Godfather, I could not refuse. Just as our students needed us, as educators, to advocate on their behalf, our teachers on the frontlines of education in classrooms across this great state need a powerful voice to advocate for them, too!

Here are a couple of ideas for how any of you can be active during this legislative session and make your voices heard:

- Contact your legislators North Dakota is sometimes referred to as "one big, small town," and this
 feels especially true in our Legislature. Legislators tell me that, if they hear from more than 2-3 of their
 constituents on a specific bill, they start to take notice. Imagine how persuasive it can be, then, when
 hundreds of our retired educators are reaching out to legislators! We have set up a page on our website
 www.ndunited.org/contact-your-legislator where you can easily look up contact information for your
 national, state, and local officials, just by typing your street address and ZIP code into the box.
- Join us for Lobby Day & more If you are a member of both the NDRTA and NDU-Retired, I would like to extend an invitation to join us for our Lobby Day at the state Capitol, which we have scheduled for Sunday, Feb. 16 and Monday, Feb. 17. ND United members from across the state will be gathering in Bismarck, first for a day of advocacy training on Sunday, and then for a day of advocacy on Monday. Our goal is to educate legislators about the important work our state's educators and public employees do every day! To be a part of our NDU Lobby Day, you must be a member in good standing, though. If you have not yet signed up for NDU-Retired, it has never been easier than it is now. Just go to our website at www.ndunited.org/join and scroll down to the "Retired Professionals" category.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone at the NDRTA for everything you have done and continue to do for our state's most valuable resource: our students! As educators, we are entrusted with the responsibility of caring for the well-being, safety, and education of the next generation of North Dakotans, and the work you do to ensure a better future for all of us in this state is nothing short of astounding. Thank you, and I hope to see you around our big, small town soon.





POTENTIAL FRAUD SCHEMES TO WATCH FOR IN 2025

The new year doesn't always mean scammers change their tricks, but they update their scams by using new technology and taking ideas from old scams and big events happening in the world. Scammers always have the same goal—to get your personal information or money!

The ND SMP (Senior Medicare Patrol) program educates Medicare beneficiaries to prevent, detect and report health care fraud. The program, federally funded by the Administration for Community Living, not only protects beneficiaries, but helps to preserve the integrity of the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

Types of Medicare scams to watch out for:

- Unsolicited calls offering help:
 - > Beware of unsolicited phone calls claiming to help with your Medicare Part D benefits, especially if they ask for personal information like Medicare numbers or bank details.
- "Upfront payments" for new benefits:
 - > Scammers may tell you that to qualify for the new cap, you need to pay an upfront fee or "processing" fee.
 - > No legitimate Medicare program will ask you for payment before you access benefits.
- There is No Need for Extra Cards or Documentation:
 - > If enrolled in a Medicare Prescription Payment Plan, there is no need to show anything extra (like an additional card) when picking up prescriptions at the pharmacy.
 - > Current health or drug plans will bill beneficiaries.

Other types of scams to watch out for:

- AI (Artificial Intelligence) Scams
 - > Scammers might use AI to create fake people or change voices during calls.
- Cryptocurrency Scams
 - > People new to crypto investing are often targeted by fake investment offers.
- Romance and Celebrity Scams
 - > These scams use AI-generated profiles to seem more believable. Victims might think they've started a relationship or friendship with a celebrity, but it's all fake.
- New Medicare Card Scams
 - > Scammers pretend to be Medicare workers. They call and say they need to update your Medicare card, asking for information like your Social Security or bank account numbers.

How to Protect Yourself

- Do not share personal or financial information with unsolicited callers or emails.
- Check Medicare statements carefully for any errors or suspicious charges.
- Guard a Medicare card like it's a credit card.

Reporting Medicare fraud:

If you see anything suspicious, contact the ND SMP at nds.mp@minotstateu.edu or call 1-833-818-0029. For non-Medicare fraud issues, contact the ND Attorney General's Office at 1-800-472-2600.

Brenda Munson, ND SMP Project Director



2024 NDRTA STATE CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS



The Bismarck Mandan Area Retired Teachers Association (BMARTA) hosted a fabulous state convention on September 16 -17, 2024, at the Baymont, in Mandan.

The first Keynote speaker was **Dave Pearce**, an entrepreneur and philanthropist. In partnership with his family, they have established and grown Papa's Pumpkin Patch to be a must visit destination in Bismarck; and it has been rated as one of the BEST pumpkin patches in the nation. After his engaging presentation, we walked away feeling our profession as a teacher is as "perfect" as every pumpkin is perfect.

Next, we had three excellent breakout sessions. Jody Kerzman, an anchor and reporter for KFYR-TV shared a video and spoke about the "Good News" segments and how her experiences have inspired her to write a book, "Good News." Ann Vadnie's presentation topic was "North Dakota Immigrants". She shared inspiring stories of early North Dakota settlers. Ann is presently in the process of writing a nomination to have Linda Slaughter, an early pioneer and educator, named to the North Dakota Rough Rider Hall of Fame. Carolyn Geston titled her presentation "Repurpose/Recycle". She showed clever ways to transform throwaways to keepsakes. Both Ann and Carolyn are active members of Bismarck Mandan Retired Teachers.

We were entertained by the very talented Legacy High School Ensemble, under the direction of Mr. Mike Siel. The evening ended with Debi Rogers, an entertainer and musician, sharing stories and Scots-Irish songs.

Tuesday morning, **Josh Askvig**, representing AARP, **Nick Archuleta**, representing North Dakota United, and **Chad Roberts**, representing TFFR gave informative talks on issues that affect all retired teachers.

Our final Keynote speaker, Tyler Kurtz, spoke of a life changing event, a stroke at age 32. In learning to walk again, he has found gratitude, humor, and resilience in life's setbacks. Currently Tyler is a school counselor at Legacy High School in Bismarck. (He is also one of the BEST fourth grade students this teacher ever had!!)

The 2024 NDRTA Convention ended with the presentation of the Silver Apple Awards. Bismarck Mandan Area Retired Teachers feel the convention was a total success. Thanks in part to the two Convention Chairs, Pat Pins and Vicki Meyer. Special thanks to the BMARTA members for donating and putting together the door prize baskets. Every person attending the conference won a very special door prize basket.

Our hope is that more retired teachers will be inspired to become active in their local unit and attend future NDRTA State Conventions!! Mark your calendar for the 2025 NDRTA Convention in Grand Forks on September 9-10.

Barb Patzman, President of BMARTA









2024 NDRTA Convention pictures





















North Dakota RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION



2025 State Convention - Alerus Center - Grand Forks

Tuesday, September 9 th	Amount Enclosed
Convention Registration (All-Inclusive) One person per registration form	n, please. \$130 \$
(Registration check-in starts at 8:00 am - Tour bus leaves and Worksh	nops begin at 9:15AM)
Tour Bus leaves at 9:15 am – Bus Returns at 11:15 - Lunch will be on you	rown
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 Co	ntrol, Drones, and much more
Regional Advisory Council Meeting (11:30)	
Mark if You Will You be a Representative of Your Local Unit at the Connection Name of Unit	uncil Meeting
Evening Banquet - 6:30 PM - Please indicate your choice (Price Inc	cluded in Registration).
Chicken Normandy A sautéed Chicken Breast smothered	d 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	n au jus sauce
Moroccan Vegetable Couscous (Vegan) Fluffy cousco	us 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, slonions, olives, peppers, shredded cheese, Pico de Gallo, taco sauce,	
*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 registr	ration fee paid in full. Thank You.
Registration MUST be received by August 25, 2025. No cancel	lations after September 1st.
Registrant Name	
Mailing Address	
	te Zip
Contact Phone Number Email	
Special Needs/Requests (dietary restrictions, wheel chair)	
Room Reservations: Both the Canad Inn and Sleep Inn have very nice, har Canad Inn (Connected to Alerus) (701) 787	
Sleep Inn and Suites (Close to the Alerus) Please, mail registration form and check payable to GGFRTA (Greater Grand Sandra Kerr, GGFRTA, 514 28th Ave South, Grand Forks, ND	Forks Retired Teachers' Association) to

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



"STICKING TOGETHER, WE STAY SHARP" North Dakota Retired Teachers Convention September 9 and 10, 2025 Grand Forks, ND



While the focus of our ND Retired Teachers Association Conventions may have shifted from the days when we attended the NDEA State Teachers Convention as active educators, many of the core purposes remain unchanged.

One of the most enduring aspects is the "person-to-person" connections. For instance, at last year's convention in Bismarck-Mandan, I had the pleasure of reconnecting with a teacher friend from the early 1980s. A state convention provides the perfect opportunity to rekindle old friendships, build new ones, and form meaningful relationships with fellow educators. I'm especially grateful to the attendee who recommended a few great books. Conventions offer the chance to engage in one-on-one conversations, exchange ideas, and give and receive advice. These connections are a prime example of our theme of "Sticking Together, We Stay Sharp."

Professional development objectives have evolved into personal growth opportunities. At our conventions, we have the chance to hear from and share ideas with others who have similar backgrounds, interests, and challenges. Whether it's learning about yard and lawn care, discovering ways to upcycle household items, finding an inspiring book, or practicing exercises that benefit retirees—these are just a few of the diverse topics explored at recent conventions. When I was in the classroom, I attended conventions to gather new ideas, practical tips, and deepen my understanding of subjects I cared about.

Another aspect of conventions that I've always enjoyed is the change of scenery. Getting out of town for a few days and exploring a new city, along with the towns along the way, adds to the experience. The NDRTA Convention planners work hard to offer some of the best meals, and Grand Forks is no exception. Whether it's dining at the Blue Moose or Bernie's Scandinavian Café and Bakery in East Grand Forks, or enjoying a meal at Ely's Ivy or Harry's Steakhouse in Grand Forks, other area culinary options are a treat. For unique shopping, Grand Forks has boutique stores like Northern Roots (voted the best boutique in Grand Forks), Badman Design with its high-end handmade metal jewelry and art, Curious with its quirky finds, Kitsona, and Key Bliss. Plus, there are antique shops, coin stores, and thrift shops for those looking for treasures.

The state convention also provides an opportunity to hear updates on the Teachers' Fund for Retirement (TFFR), including any changes to our pension fund. AARP and North Dakota United offer valuable insights into topics affecting retired teachers, from speaker sessions to legislative updates.

Long after the convention ends, it's often the inspirational speakers whose words of wisdom, encouragement, and hope stick with us the most. Whether it's for your personal growth, the sense of community, or the exploration of new ideas, I truly hope you'll join us at this year's NDRTA Convention in Grand Forks.





AWARDS & RECOGNITION

NDRTA SILVER APPLE AWARDS 2023-2024

This award is presented to one member from each of the local units. The local decides on the person to receive the award. The local unit member must also be a member of the state organization, NDRTA. The recipient has given meritorious service to retired teachers or the organization's programs for teachers, children, or the community. The awards were presented at the NDRTA Convention in Mandan on September 17, 2024.



Carolyn Geston - Bismarck Mandan RTA
Shirley McCaslin - Cass County RTA

Ruth Elder - Fargo RTA

Sharon Rezac - Fargo RTA

Carol Fosse - Greater Grand Forks RTA

Lana Martin - Minot Area RTA

Steve Martin - Minot Area RTA

LeaRae Espe - Turtle Mountain Area RTA

Mary Reinholdt - Williston Area RTA

Pictured at right















UNIT FOCUS

Bismarck Mandan Area RTA Barb Patzman, President

The Bismarck Mandan Area Retired Teachers are a busy group. We are involved in many activities along with our monthly meetings. Thanks to the efforts of our Program Chair, Dianne Schaeffer, each month has a dynamic speaker with a program that is educational, informative, and/or entertaining. We meet the third Tuesday of each month, August through May, at the Bismarck AMVET's Club.



Our organization has a mission to support groups that focus on family, community and education. The two main recipients for our Charitable Dollars for the 2024-2025 year are The Miss Sparkle Foundation and Hope Manor. The Miss Sparkle Foundation focuses on providing storytimes, yard signs, and books to children to promote reading. Hope Manor's emphasis is on sober living. We also gave \$200 Christmas donations to twenty-two different charities in the Bismarck Mandan Communities.

In September, Bismarck Mandan Area Retired Teachers Association hosted the 2024 North Dakota Retired Teachers Convention, at the Baymont, in Mandan. We had engaging keynote speakers, fantastic breakout sessions, wonderful entertainment, and delicious food.

The recipient for the Silver Apple Award from Bismarck Mandan was Carolyn Geston. Carolyn is our creative decorator. Each month she adorns our monthly meeting tables with beautiful centerpieces from her vast collection. (I have been a member of BMARTA for 12 years and have yet to see the same center pieces!)

The Bismarck Mandan Area Retired Teachers are very involved in the fall with Papa's Pumpkin Patch. Even with the cool weather, many of our members enjoyed volunteering during the day, September 8th-October 19th. Our help ranged from admissions to concessions to helping with the multitude of diverse activities that attracted the nearly 8,000 visitors fromschools and families across the state for fun, fall entertainment. This is the major fund raiser for our organization.

Our monthly programs thus far have been very diverse. In August we had a presentation from MacAllistar Kemmer with the Bismarck Public Library. The September meeting consisted of work preparation for the State NDRTA Convention. Our October meeting was presented by Jana Maher, Miss Sparkle. The November program was the annual Remembrance of deceased BMARTA members led by Jeanne House. Ann Vadnie also gave a Veterans Remembrance presentation. December brought a lively Christmas music program presented by members of the Century High School Jazz Vocal Ensemble under the direction of Allison Brink. The January program was presented by our own Pat Pins entitled "AI-The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly."

We look forward to the rest of the year with many diverse speakers at our monthly meetings, more charity and volunteer work, and socializing with our many retired teacher friends.

"The human spirit thrives on helping others."
- Ethel Percy Andrus, founder of the National Retired
Teachers Association and AARP



Greater Grand Forks RTA Barb Beach, Communications Chair

UNIT FOCUS

In February we had a presentation about the new Children's Museum for Grand Forks. The Museum board is currently fundraising for a building at 42nd and 27th Avenue South near the Alerus Center. The Opp family recently donated one million dollars for the museum that will focus on S.T.E.A.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics) activities.

Our March luncheon was headlined by Ann Bailey, a journalist from the Grand Forks Herald who talked about her background and how she came to be a journalist.

A miscommunication changed our scheduled April meeting to June. It was a good mistake, as in June, the All Seasons Garden Center presenter, Georgia Heitman, talked about the dos and don'ts of good gardening. She introduced us to some new plants that none of us had ever heard of before. She also brought door prizes of beautiful plants.

The Gift of Life was presented by Sally Jacobson who spoke about organ donation. She was the recipient of a liver, and that liver just celebrated 101 years of healthy functioning. Needless to say, Sally is grateful to the donor for that liver. She encourages all to sign the registry for organ donation.

A June meeting may be a surprise to other units. Three years ago, we arrived at the restaurant, and it was closed because the workers had Covid. That was a January meeting. We decided to change our meeting pattern and now meet September through December and then February through June.

In September we met our **2024 Scholarship winner Morgan Hartz**, a graduate of Red River High School, along with a teacher's presentation about the JET (Junior Educators of Tomorrow) High School Program.

Lillian Ellsinga gave her presentation on Surviving Immigration, her second presentation to our group following the presentation about her family's involvement in the Resistance Movement during WWII in Holland. We hope to have her speak at the ND Retired Teachers Convention in September.

The state of the Grand Forks Public School district was presented by **Dr. Terry Brenner**. He discussed the new schools and the new Career Impact Academy.

Tamara Bertram, a violinist, recounted her intercontinental journey from her home in Australia to North Dakota. She performed music from various countries, a very enjoyable program for December.

Meeting at the Ground Round restaurant has been ideal for programs. Previous to this year, people enjoyed ordering from the menu, but the room rent fee of \$75 per meeting was becoming a financial burden. Officers met with management of the Grand Forks Ground Round and negotiated a plan to have a buffet at a standard price without a room rent charge. We started the new plan in September with mixed reviews. In June, we will decide how to proceed for 2025-26.

Our unit gives a scholarship to a senior planning to pursue a career in teaching. Starting with the three Grand Forks high schools, it was decided to grant a scholarship on a rotating basis. After each three-year rotation, the committee meets to see if we can raise the amount of the scholarship. There have been three rotations, and so far, after each rotation, we have been able to increase the amount of the scholarship.

The Grand Forks Unit is working hard and looking forward to hosting the ND Retired Teachers Convention on September 9 and 10, 2025.









Minot Area RTA Jeri Grant, President

UNIT FOCUS

MARTA continues to be a vibrant group of former teachers devoted to kids and education. Our Executive Board met early in the summer to review and discuss the many speaker suggestions submitted by members at our May meeting. This committed group activated a "divide and conquer" mentality, with various executive members offering to contact speakers, especially if they had a personal relationship with them. Our slate of 2024-2025 speakers was finalized and ready for the printer relatively quickly!

About 50 of our 60 plus members typically attend our monthly meetings at The Grand Hotel, where we enjoy a buffet luncheon and camaraderie with our fellow retired teachers. We hold our meetings on the third Monday of the month unless the public school is not in session - grandparents are often needed that day to care for their school age grandchildren! Meetings consist of the Pledge of Allegiance, invocation, speaker, business meeting, door prizes, and birthday celebrations.

At our September meeting, we hosted our 2024 Scholarship recipient, who is currently student teaching. She was followed by a speaker from the Minot Park District, who shared many updates and programs offered by the Minot Parks (Minot's ongoing flood protection project will cut through part of our park and zoo.) We then honored our Silver Apple Award winners.

Tim Baumann, co-organizer of the Union Silos Public Art Project in MInot, spoke at our October meeting. This public art project is designed to turn the Farmers Union grain silos into North Dakota's largest mural and artistic backdrop for downtown Minot. Tim shared information about the process, timeline, and the mural artist, Guido van Helten

We were delighted to hear from Holly Magcalas, 4th grade Journey teacher in the Minot Public Schools' gifted program. She shared information about how students are chosen for the program and the activities they do in the classroom. She also shared some insights from the students' perspective.

Our December tradition is a musical group to celebrate the holiday season. This year we were treated to a performance of the NuNotes, a group of talented female teachers who sing and perform throughout the local area. It was WONDERFUL!







Fargo RTA Mike Burton, President

UNIT FOCUS

Fargo Retired Teachers Association (FRTA) has had a good year so far. September started out with the loss of the usual style show. Instead, Christie Jacobson led off the year with a report on human trafficking in North Dakota. The October meeting had Craig Stensgard, Director of Cass County Elections, informing us about ballot security. A timely report on Medicare Advantage and supplemental insurance was covered by Mr. Hoffner during the November meeting. December was the usual Christmas music aptly covered by Gene Okerlund and the Dakota Brass. FRTA does not meet in January but in February FRTA will have a joint meeting with Cass County Area Retired Teachers Association (CCARTA). For those of you that don't know, Fargo has two retired teacher groups, FRTA and CCARTA. Both been around for 60 some years each.

As usual FRTA has been collecting food for the Food Pantry and Backpack for Kids. The scholarship program has two programs. One is for high school students who have committed to education in college and the other is run through Minnesota State University Moorhead for college students in education. The scholarships are awarded to the students during our May meeting. To add funds to the scholarship monies, members are encouraged to contribute during their birthday months. FRTA also had a fund raiser with Papa Murphy's Pizza in 2024. Papa Murphy's gave a share of money for each pizza sold. The dates FRTA chose for this were during National Teacher Appreciation week, the first full week in May (5-9 this year). Papa Murphy's added about \$265 to the scholarship monies in 2024 and I think we will try again this year during Teacher Appreciation Week.

One of the problems FRTA is having is that membership went down during covid and has not yet recovered. The old saying that 95% of the work is done by 5% of the people holds true with FRTA. We are having problems with the same people covering the offices, such as president, secretary, treasurer, etc. repeatedly. This also seems to be a problem with some of the other units.

I hope all the rest of you are having a great year and I am looking forward to seeing you at the NDRTA convention on September 9 and 10 in Grand Forks this year. Maybe we can come up with solutions to the above problems.

Thank you ArtWise from Grand Forks for Submitting the cover art from young artist, Samuel, age 12





UNIT FOCUS

Stutsman County Area RTA Loretta Welk Jung, President

The final meeting of the Stutsman County Area Retired Teachers for 2024 was held in November and hosted the Jamestown High School violin ensemble. It was a joyful introduction to the season of winter.

SCARTA hosted meetings in September and October with an attendance of approximately 10-12 members. Programs consisted of increasing library space at the Alfred Dickey Library in Jamestown and also information regarding volunteering in schools. Fingerprinting was identified as necessary in some aspects of volunteering for the safety of the students and staff.

SCARTA will meet again in April of 2025. If you live in the Stutsman County area, please join us. We are a friendly group.



President Sherryl Weisenberger govettinusa@gra.midco.net *Grand Forks, ND*

1st Vice President Rita Freeberg Mrs.Freeberg@gmail.com *Gilby, ND*

Secretary Barb Patzman rbpatzman@bis.midco.net *Bismarck, ND*

Treasurer, Membership Chair Sherry Heilmann jsproductionsnd@gmail.com *Minot, ND*

Past President, EDUCATOR PLUS Magazine Editor Mary Carlson mcarlson7@gmail.com Glenburn, ND





MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Thank you to everyone who helped make this NDRTA Educator Plus an issue with a ND Legislative focus! We appreciate all your extra time and effort. As many of you know, things can change quickly during the session so check the current progress of Legislative bills.

Thank you also to Kristin Michels who is our new publisher. She has done an excellent job! She majored in graphic design and minored in music at Minot State University. She currently works full time at North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities (NDCPD), a part of Minot State University. We welcome her to our team.

Best regards and gratitude to all of those who contributed to this issue and to our readers. We appreciate you all!

Mary Carlson

Visit Our Website: ndretiredteachers.com





Kate Hanlon (center),
Bismarck Mandan Area Retired
Teachers Association

Thank you, NDRTA, for the \$50 Target gift card that I won in the drawing. I (like many of you) volunteer at many different places within our communities. I belong to the West Fargo Area Education Foundation which helps the West Fargo Public Schools staff and students by providing grants to staff to try innovative activities in their classroom, recognize our classified, certified, and Administrators of the Year winners, and support our Para-to-Teacher program. The Foundation has me assisting in activities to reach our goals. I also volunteer at my church. I assist in the office, serve as a Proclaimer and a Eucharistic Minister, and help at funerals. I am also the program coordinator for the Cass County Area RTA. This involves arranging speakers for our monthly meetings, sending reminders to the speakers, and sending a thank you email at the end of their presentation. I also serve as an Election Inspector for Cass County. All of these and helping out my family and friends with projects seems to keep me busy. Thank you so much for all you do for your communities. Keep all of your activities going. Thank you!

> Nancy Peterson, Cass County Area Retired Teachers Association

We all went home happy from the NDRTA 2024 Convention in Mandan in September. Myself, particularly, since I won a \$50 Target gift card from a drawing of NDRTA Unit members who had done volunteer work during the past year. One of my volunteer activities is with Bismarck Grimsrud Elementary School Retired Teachers. Once a month we serve a meal at the Dream Center in Bismarck. I also volunteer at an elementary school, at Heaven's Helpers Soup Café, and my own church. Our local ND Retired Teachers meetings always include a segment on volunteer opportunities. That's how I got to help with the North Dakota Spelling Bee this past year. One doesn't volunteer expecting anything in return, so it was a sweet surprise to win the drawing.

Thank you!



"Volunteers
do not
necessarily
have the time,
they just have
the heart."
- Elizabeth
Andrew

Membership Message

Your membership is vital to NDRTA and we thank you for your support. Please check to see if you have already paid your dues through TFFR or if you sent in your dues already this year. The "year" is from July 1-June 30.

If you are not sure if you have already paid your dues or have any questions on this topic, please contact me at my email: jsproductionsnd@gmail.com

There is a form in this issue to have your dues automatically renewed each year through TFFR (Teachers' Fund for Retirement). We recommend you sign up for this convenient way to pay your dues. See page 19.

Thank you, Sherry Heilmann, NDRTA Treasurer and Membership Chair



NDRTA Membership Enrollment

Telephone	
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Auto	omatic Membership Renewal & Payment
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Mail completed form to: NDRTA: PO BOX 1865 Minot, ND 58702

Name

"I utilize the perk of having my NDRTA annual dues automatically withdrawn from my TFFR July pension payment every year. I appreciate having this available to me as a no worry, stress free way to make sure my dues are always current."

-Vicki Summerfield



your



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