

Volume 8 Issue 2

Summer 2024

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"Land really is the best art." -Andy Warhol

# President's Message



Happy summer! I love seeing the flowers blooming and everything so fresh and green! It is a time of renewal, refreshment, and a time to do many activities with family and friends that we can't do as easily in the winter because of the cold and snow.

The National Retired Teachers Association (NRTA) and AARP sponsored another Volunteer Leadership meeting in Charlotte, NC, for two people from each state on April 15-17, 2024. These two organizations work hard for us in so many more ways than most of us realize. They are trying to find ways to increase our memberships locally and nationally. The more members we have, the more power we have in getting better benefits for us all through our State and National Legislators.

In Charlotte, we spent time trying to find new strategies to increase membership and create new volunteer leaders. The theme for the conference was, "Let's Get Social." We talked about ways to make this happen at unit meetings, by using different media resources, and doing things for current educators to show our appreciation for what they are doing.

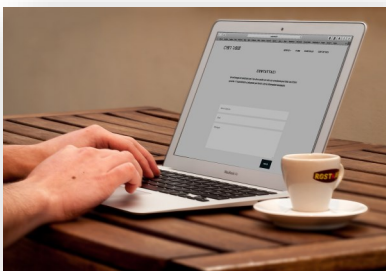
The NRTA also has been doing Zoom meetings with representatives from all the states to teach us how to engage our members, talking about what ideas work for increasing membership, and member trends. COVID changed many things in our society by keeping us secluded. Now we are slowly trying to return to a place where members can feel a sense of belonging and engagement.

So why do people want to join our units? What key activities can we offer to help them find some value in belonging? Hopefully, they can find friendship, a sense of security (someone is looking out for us), legislative advocacy, community involvement and service projects that help us feel connected and that we are making a change. NRTA and AARP are helping us get the word out of who we are, who we support, and how they can help us.

Our challenge is to try to get every single retiree to join our units. If you are already a member, we thank you and encourage you to reach out to your fellow retired teachers who aren't members and invite them to join you at a meeting or activity. If you aren't a member, what can we do to encourage you to join? We also need to have new leaders in our units and for state officers. Please consider helping out as a leader when asked or surprise us and volunteer!

Most of us rely on our retirement checks as a major source of income. This is not a guarantee! We need to get or stay involved so we can make sure pensions will continue by getting people elected who will support education and retired educators. I hope that you will take the time to vote for the people who you think will help education and educators the most.

*Sherryl Weisenberger*



Visit Our Website:  
[ndretiredteachers.com](http://ndretiredteachers.com)

# AARP North Dakota



## Listen up! Hearing loss is tied to brain health

Human connection is one of the most essential elements of emotional well-being, particularly as we age. Humans are social animals who enjoy talking with neighbors, connecting with friends and family over a meal, and sharing corny jokes with a grandkid. But, when you have hearing loss, missing the punchline is the least of your worries. Hearing loss is tied to a higher risk of falling, depression, cognitive decline, and even dementia.

The good news is that hearing loss is easily addressed.

Hearing loss is the third most common chronic condition faced by older adults, according to Dr. Leah Ross, a physician in the Division of Geriatric Medicine at Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center. While the damage is caused by common risk factors -- exposure to loud music and loud machinery such as farm equipment -- most of us don't prioritize our hearing. The 2023 AARP Brain Health and Hearing Survey reported that in the last five years, only 26 percent of adults ages 40-plus have had hearing tests, and 10 percent report cognitive screenings. By comparison, 83 percent have had an annual physical.

When a person can't hear what others are saying, they may feel left out, uncomfortable, or anxious. You've likely witnessed (or experienced) this scenario: An older adult is having trouble understanding conversations. They smile and nod, but they're missing what was said. Soon they begin to turn down invitations, they stay home and become isolated which can lead to depression. And, because hearing loss progresses slowly, the brain adjusts over time, getting used to a quieter world. The longer you wait to have your hearing assessed and treated, the more lost sounds your brain will have to relearn, and the greater your risk for cognitive decline.

Even if you know the risks, accepting the need for a screening can be hard. More so than eyeglasses, a hearing aid is perceived as a sign of aging and decline, and hearing aids can be expensive. But technology is changing how hearing aids work and how they look. They're becoming more efficient, less conspicuous, and available at prices to fit different budgets.

If you've put off screening, remember that the repercussions of ignoring hearing loss can harm your brain and your relationships. Consider scheduling a screening as a gift to those you love – letting them know that staying sharp and maintaining healthy connections with them matters.

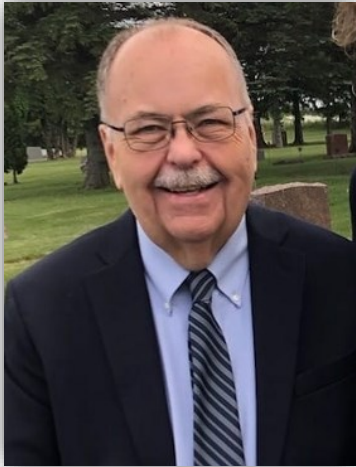


*Marnie Piehl*

*Marnie Piehl joined AARP North Dakota in November 2021. She has worked in higher ed, technology, healthcare and in advertising. She lives in Mandan, N.D., where she serves on the school board and raises three sons with her husband Shadd. She is eternally grateful to all the teachers who have been vital in making her kids (and so many others) the good, curious and interesting people they are today.*



# Pension Watch



Inflation is one of the big killers of purchasing power. What you once thought was enough is slowly eroding away. As an example, if you were getting \$50,000 per year from your pension plan and there was a 2% annual inflation every year at the end of 10 years of inflation that initial amount of \$50,000 would now have purchasing power of about \$40,000. At the end of 20 years the purchasing power would have shrunk to about \$33,000. Inflation has been much higher in the last several years so this has had a greater effect on our pensions. This will be especially hard on the retiree if the pension does not provide inflation protection as in North Dakota.

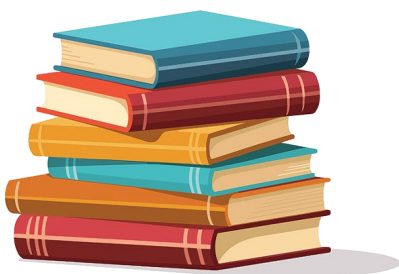
Many years ago, a colleague, Ed Motl, told me that I needed to have three parts to my retirement plan: social security, TFFR pension, and my own IRA. He told me that because the pension amount that I received would stay the same for the rest of my life. I needed something more to protect myself against inflation. It hurt, but I started out with the least amount I could contribute to an IRA monthly. Then I slowly increased the monthly amount over the years. Today I thank Ed for giving me that bit of information. How does a new teacher protect their retirement income? They can contribute to an IRA and hope they put enough in their account or have a pension plan with a COLA.

A COLA or cost-of-living-adjustment may be provided by a pension plan to offset or reduce the cost of inflation.

COLAs can be automatic, occurring without action, or ad hoc, requiring action by the legislature. They can be simple which gives a smaller benefit over time, or compound which like compounding interest gives a greater benefit over time. COLAs can be inflation based, usually with an upper cap, or performance based on investment performance funded by an annuity set up by the member, etc. There are many options available for setting up a COLA. However it is set up, it has to be well executed and well-funded as COLAs can be very expensive.

Excited by a COLA? Well dream on as most of the people reading this will never see one through TFFR in their lifetime. One of TFFR's goals is to end the unfunded liability and this will take about 20 years to accomplish. Why even bring up the idea of a COLA? Two reasons come to mind. First, I think that TFFR should be working on adding a COLA in 20 years. You might think this is a long time from now. The government works, but it works slowly. Second, I think that each NDRTA Unit in a college town should have some of their members get themselves invited to the first day of school meetings and be like Ed Motl and tell the new teachers about what their pension does and what it doesn't do. Those college town Units also keep telling me that newly retired teachers are not joining. This is a way of introducing NDRTA to teachers and NRTA also tells us that this is a way of getting new members. Comments?

mtburton@midco.net



*Mike Burton*

*Mike is a current TFFR board member and representing retired teachers.*



# TFFR Updates



## Significant changes made at the Retirement and Investment Office to deliver a better member experience

The North Dakota Retirement and Investment Office (RIO), the administrator of the Teachers' Fund for Retirement (TFFR) program, has initiated several significant changes over the last three years that will benefit the pension program's membership.

In 2021, RIO's retirement services division started a multi-year project to replace an aging pension administration system used to manage TFFR's benefit program. The project is now in the final stages of development and testing. The new system, called "MyTFFR," is a significant upgrade, designed to provide ease of access, account management, and transparency for TFFR members and beneficiaries that will enhance your retirement experience.

Through an investment of approximately \$9 million, RIO will deliver a cloud-based and highly secure virtual environment that will allow members to perform nearly every function associated with their retirement account using any internet-enabled device (i.e., a smart phone, tablet, or computer). MyTFFR can best be equated to an online banking platform. Members will be able to view real-time account balances, apply for retirement or disability, or update their banking information, mailing address or beneficiary information all without the hassle of printing and sending the paperwork to RIO where it would then have to be entered into the system by our staff. In addition to providing ease and transparency, the new system will reduce costs by using technology to supplement the work of the administrative staff.

As with any new endeavor, there are changes and growing pains. Transitioning to a system that enables users to maintain their accounts means that the members must learn how to use the system. In the coming months, RIO will launch member education to ease the transition. Rest assured, RIO's dedicated staff will always be available to assist and guide you through this change. Our goal is to ensure a smooth transition for all our members.

Another significant change at RIO that will impact the TFFR is the implementation of an internal investment program. Approved by the legislature during the 2023 session, the program will move management of up to half of the agency's holdings from external money managers to an in-house team.

Managing investments internally will reduce the fees paid by all RIO's client funds, including the TFFR. The money saved will remain in the fund and add to its overall health and viability. This transition is underway and will be incremental over the next few years. Once fully implemented, the agency will be able to deliver its stellar service at a much lower cost to TFFR's members.

Finally, in 2023 RIO added a communications and outreach director. This position is charged with delivering timely and relevant information to TFFR's members and other interested parties including our business partners and state legislators. Since adding the role, the agency has made improvements to its website, added digital communications (i.e., newsletters and program updates), and produced timely and relevant news releases. If you aren't receiving our digital communications now, you can "Subscribe" by visiting RIO's website homepage, [www.rio.nd.gov](http://www.rio.nd.gov). Look for the button in the upper right-hand corner of the webpage.

In closing, RIO's staff genuinely appreciates and values the opportunity to serve a membership that has dedicated its lives to the betterment of society by educating North Dakota's children. We look forward to continuing to deliver excellent customer service, a substantial and secure retirement fund, and cost-effective program administration for you in the coming years.

*My* **TFFR MEMBER SELF-SERVICE**  
ND RETIREMENT & INVESTMENT OFFICE

*Chad Roberts*

*Chad Roberts is the deputy executive director/chief retirement officer at the North Dakota Retirement and Investment Office (RIO). The state agency administers the Teachers' Fund for Retirement, a qualified defined benefit pension program for public school educators with over 25,000 members and more than \$3 billion in assets. An Alabama native, Chad earned a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Accountancy from the U. of Alabama. He is currently working on a Doctor of Business Ad. from U. of Mary.*



# 2024 NDRTA State Convention Registration



Bismarck/Mandan Area Retired Teachers Association  
 September 16-17, 2024  
 Baymont Inn & Suites • 2611 Old Red Trail • Mandan, ND 58554



## GNOME MORE IN 2024!

Monday, September 16<sup>th</sup>  
 Convention Registration \_\_\_\_\_ x \$50 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Registration starts at 10:00 am – Opening Session begins at 1:00)

Evening Banquet 6:30 pm **Please indicate the number of meals:**  
 Beef Tips served with a bed of buttered pasta, green beans \_\_\_\_\_ x \$30 \_\_\_ GF \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Chicken Cordon Bleu w/ cream sauce with baked potato, green beans \_\_\_\_\_ x \$30 \_\_\_ GF \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Gluten free/vegetarian- Chef's Choice \_\_\_\_\_ x \$30 \_\_\_ GF \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Tuesday, September 17<sup>th</sup>  
 Continental Breakfast 8:00-8:30 am  
 Pastry, yogurt, coffee, juice, tea No fee, Count me in Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

Luncheon 12:15 pm  
 Choice of 2 Soups – Chef's Choice  
 Assorted meat, cheese, bread, tomato, fresh lettuce  
 Dessert: Chef's Choice \_\_\_\_\_ x \$20 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 I request a gluten free/vegetarian option \_\_\_\_\_ x \$20 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Registration \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**\*A full registration is required for anyone attending any or all of the convention.**

**\*Registered attendees may reserve and pay for meals for a guest who is not registered.**

Registration MUST be received by September 2<sup>nd</sup>– No cancellations after September 9<sup>th</sup>.

Registrant Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_  
 Contact Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Room reservations: Baymont Inn & Suites: (701) 663-7401 (The Baymont Inn & Suites will charge the state rate for attendees.)

Mail registration to Sharon Bertsch: 619 NE Barston Lane, Bismarck, ND 58501 and check payable to BMARTA.

All cancellations should be emailed to [rbpatzman@bis.midco.net](mailto:rbpatzman@bis.midco.net)



# 2024 NDRTA State Convention Agenda

## Monday, September 16

- 10:00 a.m. **Registration**
- 11:00 a.m. **Regional Advisory Council Meeting**  
(Unit Presidents and State Officers)
- 1:00 p.m. **Opening of Convention**  
**State President**  
Sherryl Weisenberger
- Presentation of Colors**  
Century High Color Guard
- National Anthem**  
Tim Johnson
- Community Welcome**  
Kirsten Baesler  
State Superintendent of Schools
- NDRTA Welcome**  
Pat Pins and Vickie Mayer  
Bismarck Mandan Attractions
- 1:30 p.m. **Keynote Speaker**  
David Pearce
- 2:15 p.m. **Breakout Session I (Choose 1)**  
Jody Kerzman  
Ann Vadnie  
Carolyn Geston
- 3:15 p.m. **Breakout Session II (Choose 1)**  
Jody Kerzman  
Ann Vadnie  
Carolyn Geston
- 4:15 p.m. **NDRTA Business Meeting**  
Call to order  
2023 Convention Minutes  
Financial Report  
Resolutions  
Nominating Committee  
Election of Officers  
Memorial Service
- 5:30 p.m. **Social (Cash Bar)**
- 6:30 p.m. **Evening Banquet**  
Invocation  
Dinner  
Entertainment (while we eat)  
Legacy High School Ensemble  
Speaker  
Debi Rogers

## Tuesday, September 17

- 8:00 a.m. **Registration**  
Continental Breakfast
- 8:30 a.m. **Opening Session**  
AARP Presentation  
NDU Presentation  
TFFR Presentation
- 11:15 a.m. **Speaker**  
Tyler Kurtz
- 12:15 p.m. **Lunch**
- 1:15 p.m. **Closing Session**  
Awards  
Installation of Officers  
Invitation to 2025 Convention  
Closing Comments  
Adjournment



**Learn more about  
the conference  
speakers &  
presenters on pages  
8 & 9!**



# 2024 Conference Speakers & Presenters



## Kirsten Baesler, North Dakota State Superintendent of Public Schools

Kirsten will open the 2024 North Dakota State Retired Teachers Convention with a warm welcome and words of encouragement. She was elected State Superintendent in November 2012. A native of Flasher, she had previously served as a library assistant, a library media specialist, and assistant principal in the Bismarck Public School District. She was also president of the Mandan School Board for seven years. Kirsten has degrees from Bismarck State College, Minot State University and a MLS from Valley City State University. She also completed a graduate program in Educational Leadership at Harvard University. Kirsten was Council president and in 2024 became president of the Board of Directors of the Council of Chief State School Officers, representing leaders from all 50 states and eight territories or jurisdictions. She lives in Mandan and has three sons, a daughter-in-law, and two precious granddaughters.



## Dave Pearce, Entrepreneur and Philanthropist

Dave has a kaleidoscope of experience as a volunteer, farmer, teacher, trainer, and speaker that has taken him all over the world. In partnership with his family they have established and grown Papa's Pumpkin Patch and Polar Patch to a must visit destination in Bismarck. If I Ran a Zoo by Dr. Suess and Every Pumpkin is Perfect by Ann Krzmarzick are two books that will come to life in Dave's presentation. Papa's Pumpkin Patch has become "this most wonderful Zoo." You will hear the stories, the history, and the parables from Papa's Pumpkin Patch from PAPA himself. He is animated, he might be in tears, you'll giggle...you will like so many others...walk away feeling our profession as a teacher is as "perfect" as "Every Pumpkin is Perfect."



## Debi Rogers – Musician and Entertainer

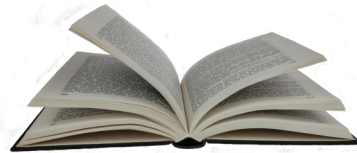
Debi is a teller of tales, musician, actress, director, and artist-in-resident. With degrees in Theater Arts and Choral Music and numerous acting and directing roles to her credit, she's at home on the stage-from concert hall to school, outdoor festival to senior center, theatrical stage to Irish pub. Irish lore is more than snakes and saints. There are women who shift into seals, sorrowful tales you might hear at the pub and lyric poems of lost love. Through singing and playing music of her Scots-Irish heritage, Debi Rogers, a wee sprite of a woman, will open your heart to the Irish soul.





### **Tyler Kurtz, School Counselor**

Tyler is a life-long resident of Bismarck. He is currently a school counselor at Legacy High School. On October 12, 2021, Tyler's life as he knew it changed forever. What most would consider a routine visit to the chiropractor, resulted in Tyler having an instant stroke after a manual neck adjustment. His recovery journey has been the biggest challenge of his life and is the inspiration behind his talk titled "Learning to Walk Again: Finding Gratitude, Humor, and Resilience in Life's Setbacks."



### **Jody Kerzman, KFYP-TV Anchor and Reporter**

Jody's first "real" job after college was with KFYP-TV. She has tried nearly every job in the newsroom including reporter, photographer, assignment editor, assistant news director, producer and anchor. In 2021 she launched her "Good News" series and has logged thousands of miles throughout North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana tracking down stories. It is her favorite part of the job. Many of these encounters have inspired Jody to write a book sharing her favorite stories and anecdotes of the many interesting people she has met along the way.



### **Ann Vadnie, Teacher and Presenter**

Ann taught English in Bismarck for 33 years at Wachter Junior High/Middle School. After retiring in 2008, she became an active member of the Bismarck Historical Society. She loves learning herself and enjoys helping other be life-long learners, so that led to teaching again. Ann has developed classes on topics she has always wanted to teach... and with adult students, no grades to give, and no homework to correct...it continues to be a wonderful experience.



### **Carolyn Geston, Teacher and Presenter**

Have you heard we need to reduce, reuse, repurpose, and recycle our waste products? Carolyn will present a lesson on recycling. We recycle to keep our environment clean, preserve natural resources, reduce landfill waste, and save energy. She will show you clever ways to preserve some throw aways to keepsakes. She has repurposed neckties, jeans, men's shirts, pine cones, jewelry and more to inspire people to keep our earth healthy. If our earth is healthy we will be healthy, right?



# Unit Focus

## Williston Area RTA

Lynne Christen, Past President

The Williston Unit of Retired Teachers had a variety of programs this last year. We began the year with a tour of the Water Resource Recovery Facility. This brought us full circle with the city/water services as we have previously toured the Public Works building and the Water Treatment Plant.

In October we visited our local pumpkin patch called Cottonwood Forest. It was entertaining to view the fun environment and see all the available activities. We took a group photo and tried some activities. It was quite an interesting experience to see the make-up and workings of the haunted house.



Our annual Christmas lunch and gift exchange is always a highlight of the holiday season. It provides members a chance to connect and celebrate the season with friends and former co-workers.



Williston has experienced an enormous growth in the last 15 years resulting in kindergarten enrollment being almost twice the size of the graduating classes. Therefore there is a definite need for additional classroom space and new schools. Our April program had a local architect present the plan for a new elementary school proposal. District Superintendent and Assistant Superintendents were also in attendance to answer questions. On April 17 voters approved a bond to build a new elementary school.

The final meeting for the year was sharing "Tech Tips" in an informal setting at a local coffee shop. As members enjoyed a refreshment of their choice, favorite apps were shared, followed by a question and answer period. Officers were elected for the next year. We are glad to welcome President Delyte Lee and Vice-President Sue Jorgenson, who will join returning officers Treasurer Jill Hovde and Secretary Joetta Koeser.

## Slope Area RTA

Carma Gerbig, Secretary

At our last meeting on May 16, those who were in attendance agreed that our local group of retired teachers had a good year! In addition, our officers were thanked for continuing to serve our group.

Our group meets on the last Thursday of most months at noon at Pizza Ranch in Dickinson. Each member may eat as they choose, and we allow time for visiting and catching up with other members.

In September, Dickinson Public Schools Superintendent, Dr. Marcus Lewton, and high school principal, Jeff Brant, spoke to us about the upcoming bond issue and we were asked for our support for its passage. The bond issue that was being brought before Dickinson residents did pass in October and funds will be used for needed renovations and additions to Dickinson High School and other schools within our district.

Our October meeting was cancelled due to an early North Dakota snowstorm complete with plenty of snow, wind, and ice.

In November after our lunch and business meeting, we toured the Theodore Roosevelt Museum display at the TR Center on the Dickinson State campus. It houses many priceless documents, letters, and tableaus of our famous former president who called North Dakota home at times during his life.

In mid-December, we enjoyed a SARTA form of Bingo, sang Christmas carols, and shared special Christmas goodies. Earlier in the month several members helped judge entries for The Christmas Storybook which is a contest sponsored by *The Dickinson Press*.

January found Dr. Shirley Herbel, a psychologist, sharing a great deal of information about many of the types of dementia. She shared examples and much information about the decline of the brain and how it happens.

In February, we had lunch and our business meeting and then toured two of the SW Area Career and Technical Education buildings which opened in the fall of 2023. This is an all-new place for this type of education for seven area high schools and for Dickinson State students. Another building in this complex will open in the fall of 2024.

At our March meeting, Jo Marie Kadmas, a member of the Dickinson Parks and Recreation Commission, was our speaker. She shared information about the addition of two new parks, repairs needed at the 20 year old West River Community Center, and the difficulty of finding enough employees to keep the current and new programs functioning.

## Unit Focus

As spring arrived, we had C.B. “Buck” Haas speak to us about plants and gardening. For healthy plants and gardens, we need soil with good mulch and good drainage. He reminded us that the NDSU Diagnostic Lab is an excellent source of information about plant and gardening problems.



In May, members shared ideas of things to do and see in our local area during the upcoming summer. There certainly are many activities going on and things to do and see for those who like to participate.

During the year, we raise money to sponsor a Dickinson State education scholarship. We also assist *The Dickinson Press* by reading and judging stories and poetry for their Christmas Storybook contest. In addition, we support and donate funds to the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. We also support Dickinson Area Community Concerts by being a sponsor and offering raffle tickets to members to attend concerts.

As mentioned earlier, we had a good year and will soon begin making plans for the 2024-2025 programs.

### **Turtle Mountain Area RTA** **Becky Hanson, Co-President**

The Turtle Mountain Area Retired Teachers is open to all retired teachers and guests in the areas of Bottineau and Rolette Counties and beyond. We registered about 30 members this year with several older honorary members. Bob Abrahamson and I are Co-Presidents, LeaRae Espe is Secretary, and MaryAnn Saville is Treasurer. We meet quarterly on the first Friday in April, June, September and December with a lunch meeting and program. We enlist member volunteers to sign up for and plan these programs, and we also try to meet at different venues in the area.

We like to learn about new things and opportunities for growth in our area. In the past year we have met at Dakota College at Bottineau for an update and tour of the renovations to Old Main and the Nursing Program. We welcomed guest speaker Shawneen Voiles of Minot with her informative and fun presentation “Celebrating the Years in Education.” Bob Hunskor was awarded the NDRTA Silver Apple Award for our Unit by Mary Carlson, NDRTA President, at the meeting. In April, our Bottineau County Extension Agent presented a program on Balance Awareness which is a concern to all. Our December meeting is always a Christmas party/program with participation and games. For our June meeting, we were all invited to think of an item which we would like to refurbish and our guest speaker and Bottineau teacher, Jenny Patterson, treated us to a

demonstration of how she brings random junk items to life. We had a drawing and a lucky member took home the renovated “Treasure!” We also had a brief meet and greet with the recipient of the scholarship which we present each year to a Dakota College at Bottineau student who plans to major in education. At least once during the year, we invite a Bottineau School music group to share their talents with us.



Our group has dues of \$25 per year which we use to support the Education scholarship, the Dolly Parton Library, and the Anne Carlson School. We collect quarters at our Christmas meeting and donate them to area senior care facilities. We also are concerned with keeping abreast of the ND State Legislative bills and decisions pertaining to “Pension Watch”.



A big part of our meetings is the visiting and sharing connections of friends with our common shared experiences and concerns. Feel free to visit our group before you decide to join. If you have any questions, please call our secretary, LeaRae Espe at 701-228-6457.

### **Cass County RTA** **Bobbie Krenz, Past President**

CCARTA started the year with a “BUZZ” as we hosted the state NDRTA Convention. We endeavored to “BEE INSPIRED” under the leadership of our Queen Bee, Karen Eriksmoen. Kevin Wallevand and Jeff Kolpack entertained us as guest presenters. Other notables included Don Kinzler (horticulturalist), and Carl Oberholtzer (historian). There were other break-out sessions that were enjoyed by many! CCARTA would like to thank all who attended and helped make our conference a great success!



## Unit Focus

CCARTA has worked hard to keep the fires burning in funding scholarships for students working toward teaching degrees in elementary, secondary and special education. We achieved this through monthly drawings, monetary donations, membership dues, meal and conference proceeds, etc. We also work to find additional fund-raising opportunities in the form of social gatherings. Through the hard work of Shirley McCaslin, Scholarship Chair, in conjunction with the Fargo-Moorhead Foundation, we were able to award four, one-thousand-dollar scholarships, this year.

CCARTA is especially proud of its monthly donations to the Emergency Food Pantry in Fargo. Food and personal care items are collected and delivered to the Pantry each month. A special donation is given in December where we purchase new toys, games, books, and other items for the Red River Advocacy program. These are distributed to needy families in our area.

Our monthly programs, organized by our Vice President, Nancy Peterson, are a highlight for our attendees. Suggestions for programs/presenters are gathered from the membership so that varying interests will be addressed. Here are a few examples of recent programs our CCARTA members were treated to:

- Legislative updates from Senators Judy Lee and Kathy Hogan and how they work together despite the fact they are on opposite sides of the aisle! This was informative and fun!



- FM Diversion presentation which was amazing! You must check this out online or even better, take part in a guided tour of this unbelievable engineering feat!

- Presentation by C. Englehardt, Professor Emeritus of Concordia College, which provided a detailed history of the Probstfield family, prominent pioneers in the Moorhead, Minnesota area. Professor Engelhardt shared his book, "The Sweat of His Brow," which featured the Probstfields and offered a book signing for everyone. This presentation was quite a hit!

CCARTA will resume this coming year and work to attain goals of maintaining and growing memberships and providing scholarships for future elementary, secondary and special education educators. We will continue to "BEE INSPIRED" as we gather our hive and push forward under the leadership of our new president, Gene Okerlund! (Technically he is a 'drone', but he will be a working drone!)

## Missouri River Basin RTA Valerie Saylor, Secretary

I have been a member of the Missouri River Basin Unit for a year, although I retired years ago. It has been a pleasure to be part of this group. This past year we visited the ND Heritage Center and State Museum in Bismarck. We had so many questions, and there were so many exhibits we may need to visit again!

We also visited the Mercer County Historical Museum. Many of us found pictures of relatives and items we all used in our childhood. I even found a picture of my dad in a photo of a local baseball team. I didn't even know he was on a team! It was one of the most interesting events. We encourage everyone to visit!

This year we started with some fun! We asked Nina from Art from the Heart of Mandan to lead us in a painting session of flowers and lady bugs. We found out that we are all painters. As teachers we all did art in our classrooms and encouraged all styles of



art. We would say, "It doesn't have to be like mine. Make it your creation." We needed to say that to ourselves!

Another interesting event was visiting a local farmer/gardener in Mercer County. He gave us a history of his family's land, which is right next to the Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site. There is so much history of the Native population who lived on the edge of the Missouri River for hundreds and even thousands of years! The land on the Missouri River was the place of Earthlodge people who hunted bison and other game, but were in essence farmers living in villages along the Missouri and its tributaries. The site was a major Native American trade center for hundreds of years prior to becoming an important market place for fur traders after 1750. This gardener also has a greenhouse and is well versed in plants and bushes. We all received a petunia from his greenhouse.

We are looking forward to our next adventure—a boat ride down the Missouri!



We hope you had a safe and happy

Independence Day!

# Meet Your New Board Secretary

**B**arb Patzman was born and raised in Bismarck. She is the second oldest of four other siblings. After graduation from the University of North Dakota, in the spring of 1974, with a double major in Elementary and Special Education, she taught for one year at the Grafton State School Life Skills and Transition Center. She then moved to Bismarck to marry her high school sweetheart, Rick Patzman.

In September of 1975, Barb went to work for Bismarck Public Schools as a Special Education Teacher. After twelve years the system was transitioning away from self contained special classrooms to full integration. She wanted to have her own classroom with her own students so she transferred to fourth grade. Barb loved her job, and says, "After forty years in the classroom, I only went to work less than ten days. The best part of teaching was the ability to expand curriculum and use creativity to make learning fun and interesting."

One unique idea she developed was a unit called "Cookie Economics." The students gathered personal collateral, then went to US Bank and negotiated a loan for \$100.00. They then bought ingredients to make chocolate chip cookies to sell at Open House. With the proceeds they paid back the loan, with interest, and had enough money left over to buy materials to help build benches for the playground and a class pizza party.

One of her favorite subjects to teach was North Dakota Studies, especially Early Native American history and the story of Lewis and Clark. These soon became passions. Early on while teaching fourth grade she wrote a play, *Going West with Lewis and Clark*, which her students performed for many years. In the fall of 2004 she expanded the play to include all the students in grades 4-6, at Highland Acres Elementary School, and turned it into a musical, with the help of music teacher, Brenda Peterson. The group was asked to perform at the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Event at the University of Mary, and had four performances. Barb also wrote the book, Would You Have Gone with Lewis and Clark?, which was used as curriculum in many North Dakota schools.

Even after nearly ten years of retirement Barb still needs her "kid fix" so she along with her husband, Rick, go into classrooms and do day long presentations on Lewis and Clark and Early Native American Life. The event includes artifacts, dances, games, story-telling, and art. In her spare time she does after school tutoring.

During forty years of teaching and in retirement Barb has been rewarded with several awards. She was the 1986 ARC Teacher of the Year, and 1993 Crystal Apple Recipient. She was also the 2020 North Dakota Retired Teachers Association Silver Apple Recipient for Bismarck Mandan Area Retired Teachers.

Barb and Rick have three daughters and sons-in-laws. Taya is an eye doctor, and Kim and Christa are both educators. They are the proud grandparents of six athletic grandchildren. They enjoy traveling around the state cheering them on in basketball, baseball, softball, volleyball, football, golf, and tennis. Especially fun is gathering at their family lake home on beautiful Lake Sakakawea to enjoy the great outdoors. "When we are all together there are fourteen people and eight dogs. Thank heavens the dogs all get along!!"



# Gardening is the Best Therapy in the World |

Last year was my final year on the state board and it was a rewarding experience for me. I attended state board meetings for the last eight years either in person or via Zoom. I started out as first vice president, then president, and then past president. I should have been on the board for a total of six years, but then Covid lengthened my stay two more years. I feel I developed many good friendships with the retired teachers of North Dakota. NDRTA has a good mission and I was proud to be a part of it. Board members shared much of their personal lives along with their professional lives. We didn't always discuss bylaws, meeting dates, conventions, duties of the board, etc. We learned about each other's lives and passions. All of us have passions foremost in our minds and that is educating the students of North Dakota and working for the teachers of North Dakota. I am sure present and past board members can all recite the school districts where I was a staff member and what I taught. Along with knowing this professional part of our lives, we shared facts about our families, hobbies, other interests, etc. I am sure the board members learned that I have many hobbies that I practiced through the years —reading, music, quilting/sewing, gardening, baking, cooking, canning, volunteering in our communities and churches, etc. Many of these became my passions and I feel because of these hobbies/interests I became a strong educator. I shared my gardening passion with my students each and every year. GARDENING IS A PASSION OF MINE AND I ENJOY SHARING IT WITH EACH AND EVERYONE. Therefore, I will share a bit of my gardening experiences. I feel "gardening is the best therapy in the world." I have gardened almost my entire life starting with my family when I was in the primary grades. It surely does help when a parent enjoys gardening; so therefore, I learned to enjoy it also.

The first thing I learned as a gardener was to pull weeds and don't let them get out of hand. Plants grow so much better when they don't have competition. I know people think I am crazy when I admit I enjoy pulling weeds. All my troubles and worries are gone when I am in my garden. Gardening solves a lot of problems. I start out using gardening gloves, but then they are discarded. I just have to feel the soil. Dirty fingernails don't bother me. Just use a scrub brush and do it often. Each spring I am eager to start gardening. I often save seeds from last year's plants and I visit as many greenhouses as I can. A greenhouse is full of KNOWLEDGE and I learn so much from other people. In my later years I sold garden produce and canned goods at a Farmers Market. One can imagine the interesting conversations gardeners have when they get together. Along with gardening I enjoy canning the produce. It tastes so good the coming winter. I canned many jars of salsa, pickles, jams, jellies, and even sauerkraut. Canning is a labor of love. Shoppers at the market were very eager to get as much of these as they could.

Beet Pickles are a favorite of mine and a favorite at Farmers Market. A lot of people use the term pickled beets, but in one of my old cookbooks there is a recipe for Beet Pickles.

*Jeannie Orke*

## **BEET PICKLES**

- Cut off beet tops, leaving one inch of stem. Also leave the root.
- Wash beets, cover with boiling water and cook until tender.
- Remove skins and slice in pieces.
- For pickling syrup use 2 cups water, 2 cups white sugar, 2 cups white vinegar, 1 tblsp. cinnamon, 1 tsp. cloves, 1 tsp. allspice.
- Boil this syrup and pour over beets.
- Pack beets in glass jars, adjust lids.
- Process in boiling water bath for 30 minutes.



# Strategies that Increase Membership

Statistics show that seven **invitations**, also called “asks,” or “touches,” are average before a person joins an organization. Those invitations shouldn’t all be the same type of “ask,” but rather might **include different forms such as a letter, an email, a phone call, an in-person invitation, web page, Facebook, or even an Instagram invitation.**

Strategies for increasing membership was one of the subjects of a training session presented by the National Retired Teachers Association (NRTA) in Charlotte, North Carolina, in April 2024. Sherryl Weisenberger and Rita Freeberg attended the training session. NRTA’s Mary Beth Dixon, Noelle Carter, and Al Campos were presenters. Ideas and strategies were also shared among participants.



Number One: **don’t get discouraged, and ask again in a few years.** Informal questioning reveals that many newly retired teachers have a “bucket list” of things they’ve been waiting to do as soon as they have retired, but potential members are often more open to joining a retired teachers group two or three years after they have retired.

Additionally, the more member **bonding**, and the more opportunities for people to **connect--the more likely people will stay with the group and invite others to join.** If your unit has a program each time you meet, perhaps adjusting the programming to provide more opportunities for people to **connect.** Some suggestions included the following: tours, games, sharing recipes, book clubs, fun gift exchanges, line dancing, chair yoga, Tai Chi, and pickleball.

Having common causes and projects gives your group more relevance and importance to the community, appealing to many retired teachers. Community and giving projects provide chances for your members to connect and be a part of something meaningful and purpose-driven. Working together to raise money that will be given to worthy causes helps members feel connected, helps members learn more about the organizations, and helps those charities in the community. Projects with a Retired Teacher “touch” such as: Collecting Food Pantry Items for Senior Citizens -- **including**

- **Tips** for products that are **most appreciated**
- Tips for giving **products that make life easier** for senior citizens, such as Hearty Soups with Pull-Tab Tops
- **Back-to-School Projects** and **Teacher Appreciation Week Projects** (especially with Active-Teachers contact)
- Collecting clothes items for school kids (hats, gloves, mittens, spare t-shirts, sweat pants, and sweat shirts)
- Presents for a Family--One retired teacher “team” shops, another wraps, another “team” delivers ...

Please, join a local ND Retired Teachers Unit, or, if you are already a member, ask a fellow retired teacher to join!  
*Pictured above: Mary Beth Dixon was one of the presenters from the National Retired Teachers Association.*

*Rita Freeberg*

## **NDRTA Board**

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Please contact a board member today if you are willing to serve on the NDRTA board of directors!

**Past President • Mary Carlson**  
mcarlson7@gmail.com  
Glenburn, ND



**NDRTA Newsletter**

**Mary Carlson, Editor**

**PO Box 1865**

**Minot, ND 58702**

*Please cut and return.*

## **NDRTA Membership Enrollment Form**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Year Retired \_\_\_\_\_ SSN \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ **or** TFFR Person ID \_\_\_\_\_

*(Required for payroll deduction)*

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

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

**OR**

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

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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