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President's Message



Happy 2024! I hope that your year started out better than ours did. January 1st was a beautiful day and my husband Jim and I were putting our Christmas decorations in our garage. Jim stepped on a sheer piece of ice by our patio and down he went and broke his hip. The good news is that we have a house close by with football players in it. I knocked on their door and two beefy young men came over and picked up Jim under his arms and loaded him in our SUV and off to the hospital we went. He has been home for one week and is doing well after spending four days in the hospital and a week in the Rehab Hospital. While there they worked on doing steps, getting in and out of a vehicle, and other things to get him ready to go home.

So now I am getting ready to be more attentive to my duties as your new NDRTA president. I feel honored and a bit overwhelmed taking on the task in front of me. I have been retired from teaching for twenty-two years and then did five years of some subbing. Since then, I have been involved in our Grand Forks Retired Association as a President for five years and helped organize our Convention. I know what a big job that is, but I also know the fun and excitement in seeing it all come together. What makes it more fun is having many people getting involved in the planning process. "Many hands make a lighter load," so I hope that you will get involved not only when you are hosting a convention but at your local unit as well and as often as possible.

We see "Help Wanted" posters in almost every business place. The same is true with helping your local units as an officer, a participant, and with special projects. Many of our officers have done their jobs for many years because they can't find anyone to take their places and they want to keep their units functioning to give former teachers a place to meet and to keep us informed with issues in our schools and communities. I hope that you will consider stepping up to the plate and take on a job. It is scary sometimes and you might think you can't do it as well as the person in charge now, but we are all former teachers who took on that challenge. We can do it if we try! (We might have to ask for help too, but that is alright!)

Our local units can learn important things from TFFR and AARP. They work so hard for us to make sure we are getting paid a fair retirement wage and getting services that make our retirement easier and better. So please "help" your local by inviting other teachers to your meetings, helping with projects, and saying "yes" to being an officer. Help make this a Happy New Year for your units!

Learn more about Sherryl on page 5 in this edition.

Sherryl Weisenberger

-We're Improving Our Website-

Please be patient as we make some updates!

www.ndretiredteachers.com



AARP North Dakota



As we barrel into 2024 -- an election year shaping up to be very interesting at the state and national level -- we'll keep our focus on the priorities of older North Dakotans. These include:

Keeping Social Security secure. Social Security is your money — you earned it through a lifetime of hard work. And like most Americans, that money is needed to help cover living expenses and pay bills. More than one in six North Dakotans (138,461) receives Social Security, and more than 102,000 of those recipients are retired, like you. Unless Congress acts in the next few years, Social Security will exhaust its cash reserves, and would only be able to pay about 80 percent of the benefits that retired and disabled workers have earned. To avoid any shortfall, Congress must take action to address Social Security's finances. AARP will keep fighting to ensure hard-working Americans who pay into Social Security, get the

money they've earned. Learn more at aarp.org/socialsecurity.

Providing trusted voter education resources. Americans 50+ are our nation's most powerful voters – and they again will be the deciders in the 2024 elections. In the coming months, our voter education and engagement efforts will include opportunities for individuals 50+ to ask candidates about issues of importance to older North Dakotans. We'll hold telephone town halls, sponsor debates and make sure North Dakota voters over 50 are informed regarding new district boundaries and the impact of various measures likely to be on the ballot in November. Stay informed moving forward by going to aarp.org/NDvotes.

Preventing fraud in ND: AARP North Dakota provides regular insights and best practices to defend against fraud through regular media appearances statewide and events like Fraud Lunch & Learns. We also support laws and regulations that strengthen and enhance consumer protection in North Dakota. In 2023, the ND Securities Commission enacted a Fraud Restitution Fund for eligible victims of investment fraud. Learn more about the fund at aarp.org/NDFraudFund.

Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus, who founded both NRTA and AARP, was a lifelong educator who strove to alleviate the struggles she saw her colleagues face in retirement. AARP North Dakota is proud to work alongside the NDRTA to ensure that all North Dakotans, including our valued educators, thrive as they age. To learn more, go to aarp.org/ND.



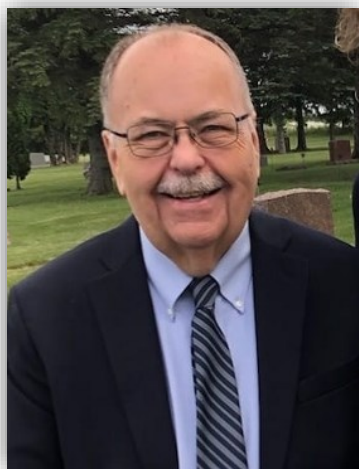
Marnie Piehl



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



I am a former science teacher and doing experiments in lab class was one of my favorite activities. To set up an experiment, run it correctly, and either confirm or deny a hypothesis was something I really enjoyed. Several legislatures have been running experiments with pensions by moving from defined benefit (DB) pensions to defined contribution (DC) pensions. Except these “experiments” were not set up very well, run correctly, or had a clear hypothesis. There is no understanding that there is any real answer to the experiment.

The several states that have been experimenting with pensions have for the most part found that there are consequences to the rash and poorly understood decisions they made. Some key things found are:

Employer costs increase. The state of Michigan pension plan cost went from \$169 million in 1998 to \$1.3 billion in 2022 and the funding ratio went from 109% to 69%. Trying to maintain the old DB plan that is now having to invest monies differently and running the new DC plan is very inefficient.

Difficulty attracting new employees. Alaska has found that attracting new teachers and public employees in the DC plan has been a problem. Alaska has had to offer tens of thousands of dollars in bonus money to try to attract workers.

Employees are not amassing enough retirement money. Many workers, nationally 41.4%, cash out their DC money as they move from one job to another. This brings up another point legislators claim that DC plans are more attractive to younger workers because they can take the money with them when they leave. This causes two problems: First, many workers stay in the job until they are vested in the pension. When they leave, they remove their money from the plan. In Michigan this has removed 40-50% of the fund’s money. Second, I think there are jobs in which we do not want high turnover. Think of a school having a new coach every two or three years. How well do you think the coach would know their players. Parents having to deal with new teachers popping in and out of classes. The loss of consistency and the loss of getting to know a community. Think of a state worker maintaining the highways. I am sure experience is important in knowing where there are problems and what to do with the expensive machinery used to make repairs.

North Dakota has embarked on an experiment, a pension experiment. Will the costs to the state pension increase? Will the state be able to attract and keep employees? Will retirees have enough money? The sad thing about this experiment is that it may affect people badly for years to come.

Next issue: Should TFFR have a COLA in its future?

Mike Burton

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



Meet the Artist: Marly Nygaard

Marly is a 3rd grader at Liberty Elementary in Bismarck. She is the daughter of Jordan and Mallory (Krabbenhof) Nygaard and a sister to Jack and Morris. In school she enjoys writing stories, drawing, and playing with friends at recess. Her favorite subjects are reading and writing because she likes to be creative. Outside of school, Marly takes piano lessons, is in musical theatre, and soccer.

Marly’s favorites are spending time with friends and listening to Taylor Swift. When she grows up, she wants to be a hair stylist and a musician. Marly is this edition’s cover artist!

TFFR Updates



-----GREAT EXPERIENCE-----

After serving two terms--10 years on the Teachers Fund for Retirement Board of Directors, Mel Olson's term as a member of the Board ended July 1, 2023. He also served as a TFFR representative on the North Dakota State Investment Board. Mel indicated that he thoroughly enjoyed the challenges involved in serving on both boards and was consistently impressed with quality of the board members, the outstanding leaders and staff members of Teachers' Fund for Retirement and the North Dakota State Investment Board for the seven years.

-----CAREER HIGHLIGHTS-----

Mel began his career in education in 1964 and served as a teacher and coach for several years before becoming a high school principal and later a Superintendent of schools. After serving many years as a school administrator he moved to Bismarck to

take on the role as State Director of Vocational /Technical Education.

The next role Mel pursued in education was serving as the director the Skills & Technology Training Center Fargo —later to become the Director of the NDSCS campus in Fargo.

During the years that he was actively involved in education in North Dakota, Mel served on many local, state, and national boards including: ND State Board of Public Education; ND State Board of Vocational-Technical Education, National Board of Vocational Technical Education Directors, ND High School Activities Association: National Federation of High School Leagues to name a few.

-----AND THEN WHAT-----

After enjoying 50+ years involved in the field of education, Mel retired and is now enjoying drawing his checks from the Teacher's Fund for Retirement.

THANK YOU

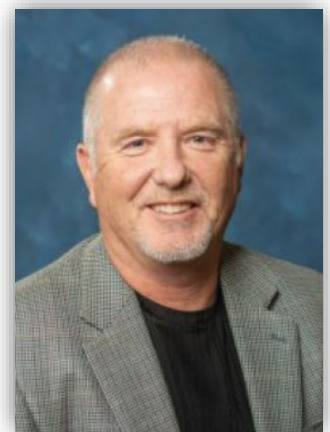
for your years of service and leadership, Mel!

Scott Evanoff is a North Dakota native and taught high school mathematics for 37 years, retiring in 2023. He spent three years in Granville and 34 years in Minot.

During his time in Minot, Evanoff taught at both the middle and high school level. The majority of his time in Minot was at Magic City Campus teaching students in grades 11 and 12. For the last 10 years, many of his classes were dual-credit courses accredited with Minot State University. Evanoff was also involved in extracurricular activities during his time at Minot Public Schools, coaching football and basketball.

Mr. Evanoff is excited to be a part of the TFFR board and is looking forward to representing the needs of retired members as the board makes decisions moving forward.

Evanoff is a newly appointed TFFR board member. He was nominated by NDRTA and appointed by Governor Burgum.



2023 NDRTA State Convention Highlights

Preparations for the 2023 NDRTA Convention began in August 2022 and quickly became a focus of the Cass County Retired Teachers Association in Fargo with wonderful support from Fargo Retired Teachers Association. When bee costumes were offered for the invitation skit, leaders were inspired to choose the theme. The NDRTA Convention on September 12-13, 2023, would be in Fargo and *Bee Inspired* began to take shape. "Bees can inspire us to fully own what we have to offer and to put it to use in the pursuit of a goal that will benefit all of humanity." Retired teachers are skilled at working with others for their community's greater good!

A tour of NDSU's gardens and pollinator garden, led by Dr. Esther McGinnis, began the first day of the convention. The opening session opened with a special welcome from Sara Lichtblau, Fargo Teacher of the Year, 2023. Kevin Wallevand, a well-known journalist and reporter, was the keynote speaker reminding all of the powerful impact teachers have on individual lives and communities. Breakout sessions followed and attendees could choose between two films, "The Road to Little Rock" and "The Mission of Herman Stern" with Carl Oberholtzer and "Getting Yard and Garden Ready for Fall" with Don Kinzler.

NDRTA President, Mary Carlson, led the business meeting during which the new NDRTA Board officers were elected: Sherry Weisenberger, President; Rita Freeberg, First Vice President; and Barb Patzman, Secretary. Sherry Heilmann serves as Treasurer and Mary Carlson is Past President. Appreciation was expressed to Jeannie Orke and Mike Burton for their many years of service on the board.

The Quarter Notes Jazz Ensemble, made up of retired musicians, performed during the social hour. Jeff Kolpak, local sportswriter, author and speaker, entertained the group during the banquet.

Wednesday, September 13, opened with introductions from AmeriCorps and TFFR. Josh Askvig, TFFR ND State Director, and Chad Roberts, ND RIO Deputy Executive Director/Chief Retirement Officer, updated the group on important information for retirement. After a short coffee break, Family Wellness instructor, Lori Hill, led the group in stretches and exercises to improve mental and physical health in retirement.

After awards were given and officers were installed the Bismarck Mandan RTA presented a fun skit inviting everyone to the NDRTA Convention in 2024. Many thanks go out to all the Cass County and Fargo Retired Teachers, committees and leaders who made this convention a tremendous success for the 80+ attendees. Hope to see you all at the 2024 Convention on September 16-17, 2024, in Bismarck/Mandan.

Karen Eriksmoen, Convention Chair



Save the Date!

2024 NDRTA Convention - "Gnome More in 2024"

September 16-17 at the Baymont Hotel
2611 Old Red Trail, Mandan, ND 58554

Featuring:

Kirsten Baesler - Superintendent of Public Instruction

David Pearce - Entrepreneur & Philanthropist

Debi Rogers - Entertainment

Door Prizes & more!

We "gnome" you will enjoy every minute!



2023 National Retired Teachers Advocacy Conference



From October 2 through October 4 of this last fall, Sherryl Weisenberger, NDRTA President, and Rita Freeberg, NDRTA Vice President, attended the National Retired Teachers Advocacy Conference in Washington, DC. The National Retired Teachers Association (NRTA) and the American Association for Retired Persons (AARP) sponsored two representatives from each state to first attend an intense day of informational sessions about protecting Social Security, lowering drug prices, curbing gun violence and violence in schools, with the major topic of concern, creating a Care Giver Reimbursement Act for all caregivers.

On October 4, the representatives from each state's Retired Teachers Association were then supposed to meet with their Senators and Representatives to discuss matters of concern and to encourage them to support the Caregiver's Reimbursement Act. Unfortunately, it was the day after the House Speaker was ousted, so none of the Senators or Representatives were in their offices. Sherryl and Rita met with their staff in the ND Senators' offices and left contact information with a page of concerns that had been expressed by NDRTA members at the State Convention as well as at local unit meetings. Concerns ranged from keeping Social Security fully funded, to keeping pensions safe with diligent oversight, recruiting and retaining teachers, and keeping ND communities safe, affordable, and healthy.



The weather in Washington, DC was beautiful for October, allowing Sherryl and Rita to walk to many of the buildings.

Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus (black and white cutout in the photo to the left) established the National Retired Teachers Association in 1947. NRTA became a national voice for Retired Teachers across the United States, promoting fair state retirement programs and pensions while seeking such advantages and opportunities as offering group health insurance. The NRTA became so successful that other retired people desired similar advantages. From that desire, Dr. Andrus established AARP which has become a strong national advocate for retired persons and has far out-paced the "parent" organization of NRTA. At present, NRTA is designated as AARP's Educator Community.

Something Yummy from Barb Patzman, NDRTA Secretary

Parker Bars

Parker Bars are renamed for my grandson, Parker who has asked for them every time he visits since he was old enough to talk. When he started playing baseball he requested them, ate one then hit a home run!!

- 2 cups sugar
- 2 cups Karo syrup
- 1 3/4 cups peanut butter
- 9 cups Rice Krispie cereal
- 2 cups chocolate chips
- 1/2 cup peanut butter

In a Dutch oven pot on the stove top bring to boil the sugar and syrup, stir often. Remove from heat add the peanut butter stirring again to combine ingredients, add the cereal stir to completely coat the cereal. Pour into a greased 10x15 inch jelly roll pan. Melt the chocolate chips for 1 minute in the microwave add the peanut butter, microwave again for 1 minute stir until smooth, then top the bars with the chocolate mixture. Allow to cool before cutting.

Meet Your New Board President

Sherryl Weisenberger was born in Dickinson, ND, but was raised on a farm south of Richardton. She was the oldest daughter along with a twin sister in a family of seven kids. The youngest siblings were also twins, but boys. Sherryl attended a country school a quarter of a mile from her farm from first grade through eighth grade. She attended Taylor High School for one year, then went to a brand new high school in Richardton where she graduated. There were sixteen students in her graduating class with five sets of twins. After graduating from high school, Sherryl attended Dickinson State College where she majored in Physical Education and minored in Business. Sherryl worked as a student secretary for the Physical Education department all four years of college.

Sherryl taught typing and accounting in the morning and physical education in the afternoon at the new Dickinson High School for two years. While there she coached gymnastics and track.

Sherryl and her husband, Jim, moved to Wahpeton where Jim attended NDSSS. While there for one year, Sherryl taught physical education at the junior high school and coached dance line there and track at the high school.

Jim got a job in Grand Forks as a partsman at the Eide Mercury dealership one week before school started. Sherryl went to UND looking for a job and was told there was an opening in physical education in the public schools. She got hired the next day and taught at Schroeder Junior High School for the next twenty-nine years. During that time she coached cheerleading, dance line, track, and volleyball.

Sherryl started working at Christopher and Banks clothing store the same month that she retired from teaching. It was her fun job! She worked there for eighteen years until COVID shut it down.

Sherryl also started an exercise class at Sharon Lutheran Church the same year she retired and is still leading it.

Sherryl is very involved in her church with many different groups such as youth groups, former kids song leader and Sunday School teacher, choir member, lefse group, Bible study groups, etc.

She has been president of almost every organization she has been involved in because she likes to be active and hasn't learned how to say "no!" Her hobbies over the years have been golf, volleyball, skiing, bowling, exercising, reading and being with people. Politically, Sherryl was a District Chair for twenty plus years and ran as a candidate, but did not get elected.

Sherryl and Jim do not have any kids of their own, but love being with them at school, church, and with family and friends.

NDRTA Board

President

Sherryl Weisenberger

govettinusa@gra.midco.net

Grand Forks, ND

1st Vice President

Rita Freeberg

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Gibly, ND

Secretary

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Bismarck, ND

Treasurer

Sherry Heilmann

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Minot, ND

Past President

Mary Carlson

mcarlson7@gmail.com

Glenburn, ND



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 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 2023-2024 year will be Project 31:8 and United Way Center for Opportunity. Each of these organizations focus on vulnerable individual; those who are victims of human trafficking or homelessness. We also gave \$200.00 Christmas donations to twenty-two different charities in the Bismarck Mandan Communities.

In September, many of our local members attended the North Dakota State Retired Teachers Convention in Fargo. We had Co-Silver Apple recipients, Sue Triska and Nancy Haunz. These two ladies spend countless hours each year maintaining our membership role of over 150 members and keep our membership booklet updated. We thank them for their tireless work on our behalf. BMARTA will be hosting the 2024 NDRTA State Convention on September 16th and 17th, 2024. Six of our members, dressed in hilarious Gnome costumes offered a rap inviting other State members to this conference "To Gnome More in 2024."

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 15th - October 22rd. Our help ranged from admissions to concessions to helping with the multitude of diverse activities that attracted the nearly 8,000 visitors from schools and families across the state for fun, fall entertainment. This is the major fund raiser for our organization.



Our monthly programs have been very diverse. In August we had a presentation from Carrie Gross who operates Carrie's Kids, a nonprofit that services kids in need from 43 different schools. The September presenter was Dave Pearce, a local entrepreneur, teacher, business man and farmer, also founder of the Pumpkin Patch, presented a program entitled On Beyond Zebra and Then Some, a book written by Dr. Seuss

encouraging readers to think outside the box. Our October speaker was from Project 31:8; a nonprofit which speaks up for those who can't speak for themselves. The three components of their program focus on Human Trafficking Education, Bravery Backpacks, and Survivor Mentorship. Our November meeting was two-fold. The speaker for the month was Tammy Siems who owns and operates Memory Keepers. She is passionate about assisting elderly clients that are moving out of their home and finds new homes for belongings that otherwise could have ended up in the landfill. The remainder of our November program was the annual Remembrance of deceased BMARTA members led by Jeanne House. December brought a lively Christmas Concert performed by members of the Legacy High School Gold Standard Choir directed by Mr. Mike Siel. The January program was presented by our own Pat Pins entitled "Lights, Camera, Action," a nostalgic rendition of the Silver Screen. He reflected on the background of the Silver Screen to present day animated films.

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

Central Red River Valley RTA

Ruth VanWechel, Co-President

We are about nineteen members strong and meet the first Wednesday of September through November, take a break through the winter, and then meet again April through June. Our officers meet in July to plan the next year's program. We typically meet at Sun Center, the assisted living facility in Mayville, so members living there can attend. Because COVID is still an issue, we have been able to meet at the Edson and Margaret Larson Alumni Center on the campus of Mayville State University.

Under the new leadership of Co-Presidents, Elizabeth LeClair and Ruth VanWechel, we took a little bit different path. We have been touring various places around the area and inviting guests to speak.

The speakers have been very informative with much useful information. AARP has been a willing participant at our meetings. We have had topics on scams, and this year they will be speaking on brain health. Something we can all use. One of our members graciously agreed to speak on women's rights. It was very informative and interesting.

Some of our tours included a trip to Naastad Acres, a wedding venue, a visit to a nursery, and the Mayville Museum. We had a delicious meal at Lake Tobiason, and always have a potluck in November. We will be meeting at the Mayville Golf Course in June to play cards and board games.

We all enjoy getting together and visiting. Most of us don't see each other outside of our meetings, so this is a way of connecting.

Unit Focus

Stutsman County Area RTA Loretta Welk Jung, President

The Stutsman County Area Retired Teachers Association met at the Legacy Center in Jamestown on November 28, 2023, with fourteen members attending. The Jamestown High School Choir performed their annual concert. Loretta Welk Jung, President, thanked them and the members for attending the meeting.

It was with joy and smiles that SCARTA resumed their meetings. SCARTA has decided to meet every five months of the year to have programs and try to do community projects. Members enjoy the social time and gathering of former educators. The Unit formed an enlistment committee to seek new members.

Loretta shared her new children's book, "The Misfit Ornaments," and several other books she has written. They are sold on Amazon and at Dakota Store in Jamestown.

SCARTA will meet at 11:30 a.m. on April 24, 2024, at the Legacy Living Center, 419 5th St. NE, in Jamestown. Election of officers and an enlistment report will be on the agenda. If you live in the SCARTA area, please join us. We are a fun and friendly group.

Sending wishes for a Joyful and Healthy New Year to all.



Minot Area RTA Arlyn and Donna Marquardt, Co-Presidents

MARTA is thriving and we have added sixteen new members to our roster this year. We now have over seventy members. We meet the third Monday for eight months, September-December, and February-May. We meet at the Grand Hotel at 11:30 on those days, have a lunch and lots of conversation, followed by our guest speaker and a short business meeting. We awarded scholarships to two students in teacher education at Minot State University. We also used the Twice-Blessed Program and donated money to Minot Public School Foundation for the Back 2 Basics Program, Northern Plains Children's Advocacy Center (Recovery services for abused children) and Project Bee Broadway Circle. We donate needed items monthly to Second Story, a social and educational club for adults with developmental disabilities. When possible, members help with the Matthew 25 Project, a non-profit Christian organization, which provides an opportunity for those in need to obtain clothing and basic household items such as bedding, towels and dishes.

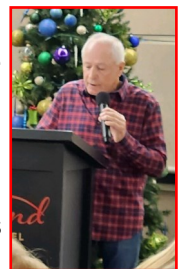
Our year started in September with several of our members attending the State Convention. Thank you, Cass County and Fargo RTAs, for a BEE-utiful job of making us feel welcome. We are so proud of our very own Kathy Thiel for receiving the Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus Award and Mary Carlson who was presented with the Silver Apple Award from our unit. Both Kathy and Mary are so deserving of these awards as they are truly dedicated members to our organization as well as our community.

Our first MARTA meeting was held in September and we gleaned helpful information from Dr. Kathy Hintz, MSU Field Placement Director. She made us aware of the challenges in education because of the shortage of teachers in North Dakota. Her presentation, *Responding to the Teacher Shortage in ND, was well-received.*

We took a "Field Trip" in October and met at Minot's new *Magic City Discovery Center*. After eating our catered lunch in their conference room, we had a short business meeting and then toured the three levels of interactive science exhibits. The Discovery Center staff became our tour guides of this very creative place for children and adults of all ages. It's a wonderful asset to our community and we invite all members from across the state to visit. You'll be glad you did!



Les Anderson, former Minot Middle School Administrator, was our guest in November. He shared his journey he had with his wife, Debbie, who had early-onset Alzheimer's Disease. The presentation entitled, *Personal Reflections on Alzheimer's Disease*, was emotional, informative, and time well spent. Since Debbie's passing, Les works closely with the local as well as the National Alzheimer's Association.



December found us entertained by Dr. Dennis Sommers, DDS, local retired dentist and author of his book, *Retirement? You Can't Handle the Truth*. Dennis read quotes from his book, shared stories and generally kept us laughing and smiling. After his book signing, we ended on a festive note (literally) with inspirational Christmas music by the Schwan Family Singers, Pat, Colleen and Brianna, and friends, Marcy and John Witteman.

Continued on page 12.

Unit Focus

Moving forward, we are pleased to have Hugo Fernandez Alvarez from Spain and Sylvana Mares Guerrero from Mexico, Foreign Exchange Students who are attending Magic City Campus, as our guests in February. They will share their experiences in North Dakota with the program, *Education/Culture Near and Far*. Pam Strokland, CTE Director in the Minot Public School System will join us in March, speaking on *Career and Technical Education* in our state and specifically our program we have in Minot High School. In Spring, our thoughts turn to gardening, and Ken Eraas, retired Horticulture Extension Agent, will bring his expertise on this subject, speaking on *Lawn and Garden Care on a Budget*. We close our year with learning about *Prairie Grit Therapy* and all it has to offer. Krystal Butgereit, MOTR/L, PGAS Executive Director will tell us about this program and its mission to make children's therapeutic treatment fun through an environment rich with opportunities for movement, sensory input, and learning experiences.

Our MARTA experiences have rekindled former friendships and created new ones among the education community. We are grateful for these opportunities and for staying informed with programs highlighting relevant topics. With our volunteerism and contributions, we hope to make a difference in our locality.

Greater Grand Forks RTA Rita Freeberg, Past President

Unit update: In November, our own local retired teacher, Connie Sherwood, did an exceptionally illuminating and heartwarming program about her vast involvement in Journey Home Animal Rescue. Connie fosters cats and kittens as one of the program's animal caregivers. She bought a home and renovated the basement to accommodate the rescued felines, and she is a 24/7 volunteer.



On Tuesday, February 20, 2024, the Grand Forks Retired Teachers will hear from Kim Woods as she describes the plans and progress toward the Grand Forks Children's Museum and Destination Playground.



The GGFRTA program planning committee usually meets in late June or early July each summer to discuss plans for nine months' worth of programming for our regular meetings. Our members make suggestions for programs, and we have had delightful entertainment and very informative presentations. Average attendance for the luncheons is 40 – 55 people.

Holiday Music and Entertainment was the focus in December. Dave Berger entertained us with new holiday songs as well as classics. The December meeting is often one of our better-attended meetings because of the holiday performance.



GGFRTA meets at in the southeast room of the Ground Round on 32nd Avenue in Grand Forks on the third Tuesday of each month, September through December, and February through June. We order from the menu, have our business meeting, and then the program. If you are from another unit and are ever in Grand Forks on a third Tuesday, we would love to have you come to lunch with us. I can vouch that there is at least one member who would pick up your tab!

Sandi Kerr (on right in the photo), the current Courtesy Chair for GGFRTA, was awarded the Silver Apple Award. Sandi has been a very active member of our local retired teachers since retiring from teaching First Grade at the Grand Forks Air Force Base. Sandi has worked on many committees and has also served as treasurer.



Looking forward, GGFRTA has started gathering input for themes and venues for hosting the annual North Dakota Retired Teachers State Convention in September 2025.

Fargo RTA Mike Burton, President

The Fargo Retired Teachers Association (FRTA) meets on the first Thursday of each month from September through May, except for January. We support the Food Pantry and Backpack for Kids with member food and money donations. We also give several \$1,000 scholarships for prospective educators.



Unit Focus

The September meeting is always a gala affair with a fashion show. Jennifer Fisher of My Best Friend's Closet supplied the fashion wear and members modeled them. Verlene Dvoracek emceed and has ably put together this program for several years.

For October, Steve Scheel, CEO of Scheels, was our speaker. Steve told us of the history of Scheels from a good potato crop in 1909 near Sabin, MN, leading to the purchase of a single hardware store to today's thirty-two stores in sixteen states. Scheels is now a national leader in sales of sports equipment. The "big" Scheels store in Fargo is one of the smaller stores in their system.



In November Don Tucker, an engineer, outlined the work on Fargo's expansion of its sewage treatment plant. Don told us how the growth of Fargo and the surrounding area necessitated this expansion. He also explained the operation of the plant from introduction of the wastewater to "drinkable" treated water at the end that is put back into the Red River.

Our December meeting was a musical affair lead by Karen Tabor singing solo or leading the members in a round of Christmas carols. Each month Connie Knain and the hostess committee decorate the tables with seasonally appropriate decorations, a much-appreciated touch.

In January there is no regular meeting of FRTA which brings us to a troubling trend that affected us in February. FRTA has 117 paid memberships for 2023-24. Over one hundred members sounds great but only about a fourth of the membership has been coming to the meetings. February's invitation for the meeting was so low we had to cancel the meeting. Our arrangement with the Holiday Inn requires that we purchase at least thirty meals, we did not reach thirty. Plus, the cost of the room set up made it too expensive to have the meeting, so we had to cancel. We do not know if this is a trend other units are seeing but it goes along with the problem of finding officers willing to run for positions. It got so bad in Fargo they elected me president, the only male member in FRTA.

The last item will hopefully be good news. I was in Papa Murphy's Pizza earlier this year and noticed a poster advertising Pizza Donation Days. This is a program where we host an event at Papa Murphy's and encourage members and others to purchase pizzas on given days, we were given two days during Teacher Appreciation Week. For all the pizzas sold, that people mention they are buying teacher pizzas, Papa Murphy's will give us 20% of the sales money. We are going to use this money to augment the scholarship monies. I will tell you how and if this program is worth it at the unit meeting during the NDRTA convention.

Something Yummy from Sherry Heilmann, NDRTA Treasurer

Krum Kaka

Every Christmas Sherry makes dozens of delicious krum kaka (krumkake) for friends and neighbors.

- 3 eggs
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup whole milk
- 1/2 cup butter (melted)
 - 1 1/2 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Beat the eggs and sugar together. Add milk and vanilla. Then add the melted butter slowly. Add the flour little by little. If it gets too heavy, add more milk.

Cook on a Krum Kaka griddle and immediately roll on wooden cones until cool. Repeat. Store uncovered.



Awards & Recognition

The Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus Meritorious Service Award

This award recognizes one Retired Educator each year who has demonstrated a commitment to excellence in North Dakota's Retired Teachers units and/or State organization. The recipient must also be a member of NDRTA. Their dedication to retired teachers or involvement with children and/or community has been exemplary.



*Congratulations to Kathy Thiel, 2022-2023
Award Recipient*



*Congratulations to Charlotte Rohde, 2022-2023
Honorable Mention*

NDRTA Silver Apple Awards 2022-2023

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 Fargo on September 13, 2023.

Congratulations to these very deserving recipients:

Nancy Haunz, Bismarck Mandan Area Retired Teachers Association

Sue Triska, Bismarck Mandan Area Retired Teachers Association

Karen Eriksmoen, Cass County Retired Teachers Association

Verna LaBounty, Fargo Retired Teachers Association

Sandra Kerr, Greater Grand Forks Retired Teachers Association

Mary Carlson, Minot Area Retired Teachers Association

Nancy Jo Rothe, Missouri River Basin Retired Teachers Association

Leland Ham, Stutsman County Retired Teachers Association

Bob Hunskor, Turtle Mountain Retired Teachers Association

Joetta Koester, Williston Area Retired Teachers Association





Bismarck Mandan RTA Silver Apple Award



Minot Area RTA Silver Apple Award



Fargo RTA Silver Apple Award



Missouri River Basin RTA Silver Apple Award



Stutsman County RTA Silver Apple Award



Cass County RTA Silver Apple Award



Turtle Mountain RTA Silver Apple Award

Thank You Jeannie Orke & Mike Burton for your years of service on the board!

Thank You to Neal Eriksmoen & Glenn Bertsch for providing photos from the convention for this issue!



NDRTA Newsletter

Mary Carlson, Editor

PO Box 1865

Minot, ND 58702

Please cut and return.

NDRTA Membership Enrollment Form

Name _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Year Retired _____ SSN _____ - _____ - _____ **or** TFFR Person ID _____

(Required for payroll deduction)

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

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