



The REACTOR

*Retired Employees Association
California Teachers Association*

June 2025

STAYING CONNECTED

By Robin Rose, President



Staying connected is the theme for our Annual Reunion and Business Meeting on October 21-23 in Atascadero. We have a new venue, the Springhill Marriott Suites, that we think you will like. It's close in proximity to Paso Robles, Templeton, Cambria, San Luis Obispo and Pismo Beach. There is something for everyone. Send in your registration today before our room block is full.

Staying connected also occurred when 84 REACTA members attended our Connecting the Dots zoom panel discussion on April 30th. For those who attended we hope you found it was informative. We were pleased with the positive feedback. Tom Madden and Marlene Bell attended all the way from Italy and stayed up late to join the conversation.

The meeting covered various topics affecting retirees. The four presenters discussed potential threats to government programs, and the importance of **staying connected** in addressing these concerns. **Merri Furler** (REACTA Vice President and liaison to the Health and Welfare Benefits Trust)



gave an overview of the Trust funding and explained how our trust is self-funded. **Alan Frey** (REACTA liaison to the Pension Trust) discussed factors such as stock market fluctuations that can impact funding.



Brian Breslin (active CTA staff in the Santa Maria RRC) reviewed the overall state of Social Security and its funding issues including the recent WEP and GPO offsets that positively impact many REACTA members.

Arleigh Kidd (REACTA Political Education Committee Chair) discussed a variety of issues including the dismantling of the Department of Education, weakening collective bargaining laws, the disregard for the rule of law, vouchers, and their potential impact to CTA funding. He connected the dots between Project 2025 and the current reality. *(continue of page 5)*



INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Some of our veteran staff hitched a ride from colleagues. **Barbara DePrete** graciously drove **Ed Romeo** to the Ponte Winery. **Terri Cooper Dulak** was one of 5 first time attendees.



Record number of participants joined the "Connecting the Dots" Zoom Call. Nearly 90 colleagues listened to the impact on Public Education from new Federal changes.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 21 – Membership
Committee Meeting

July 24 – REACTA
Board Meeting

September 11 –
REACTA Board
Meeting

October 21 - REACTA
Board Meeting

REACTA Conference
October 21-23 Spring
Hills Suites
Atascadero



ATTENDANCE GROWS AT REACTA LUNCHEONS

By: Margaret Wallace, Editor

Marilyn Russell Bittle, Felice Strauss and Gary Campbell are among the 8 Region 3 luncheon attendees. Dennise Jennex presented information to Jim Schlotz, Kathy Schlotz, Robin Rose, Gary Campbell, Felice Strauss, and Marilyn Russell Bittle at the Region 3 luncheon. Barbara Kerr, Kathie Casas, Dick Gale, Sheri Scott and Karen Bost join 30 REACTA attendees at the Region 4 luncheon in Temecula. Kathie Casas welcomes Bill Morgan to the Region 4 luncheon. Jim Schlotz and Robin Rose map plans for the REACTA Annual Meeting in Atascadero. It was hard to fit in the 30 members into one photo let alone the overflow in the dining room.

REACTA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS By: Margaret Wallace

Scholarship applications hit an all-time record. "Thirteen relatives of our members applied," said Anita Benitas Gardella, Scholarship Chair. Applicants filled the spectrum from high school seniors, community college students, and graduates seeking their teaching credential.



One of the four scholarships went to **Alina Clarke**, the daughter of **Kris Clarke**. **Alina** graduated from CSU Chico magna cum laude majoring in Social Studies. She will begin her teaching credential classes in June with the hopes to teach history in middle or high school. The biggest influences for **Alina** were her mother and her seventh-grade social studies teacher. Public education and unions are in her blood. "I have been going to union rallies since I was 5 years old," said **Alina**.

Killoran Jenkins, great nephew of **Karol Merwin Morphey**, currently attends Everett Community College majoring in IT. His goal is to transfer to Central Washington University focusing on IT management, an interest linked back to his high school experience. Even though Killoran did not receive a scholarship last year, he reapplied and was awarded one this year. "I did it in memory of my Aunt Alicia, who passed away this year. She always encouraged me to apply and to never give up," said **Killoran**.



Susan McClure's niece, **Hope Branham**, heads to Bryn Mahr College in August planning to focus on a double major in Fine Arts and History. "I look forward to voting in a swing state when I move to Pennsylvania," said **Hope**. This dual major is an obvious choice considering her love of history since middle school and her impressive artistic talent in a variety of mediums including oil paint, watercolor, colored pencil, graphite, ink, and more unconventionally, toilet paper and liquid latex. When you visit the Laguna Art-A-Fair you just might run into her working there as a ticket salesperson in the summer.

It is hard to imagine that **Rose Luna-Nunez's** daughter, **Olivia Nunez**, is all grown up now winning one of REACTA's scholarships. Olivia is currently attending California State University Fullerton. She plans to apply to the animation program at CSUF. "As a child I was fascinated by animated films. My favorite is Gravity Falls," said **Olivia**. Artistic expression is in her blood. She dedicated the last 14 years to playing mariachi music in a mariachi band. She also enjoys teaching guitar and vihuela to young students in the Hemet and Perris public schools, helping them to connect to their parents and grandparents.





MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT

YOUR REACTA MEMBERSHIP ROCKS

Be Well and Stay In Touch

By: Ann Adler, Membership Chair

All the new retirees have been contacted, and many have joined. Every remaining cash payer has paid for the 2025 year. As a group, the Committee discussed Trump 2.0 as it impacts our retirement and shared our ideas with the REACTA Board. The super successful zoom with over 80 people was in part due to your Membership Committee. We are also working on how to better contact our Option 2 colleagues who meet the requirements to join REACTA when they retire. And finally, over the summer we will be working on tips for those who lose their spouse/partner.

Thanks to the Membership Committee for all your hard work: **Jackie Butler, Gary Campbell, Kathie Casas, Sydney Greenberg, Susan Midori Jones, Alva Rivera, Penny Sevoian, Barbara Smith, John Stephens, Patty Taylor, Patricia Williams and Liaison Merri Furler.**

Happily, we are 445 members strong. Collectively, we are making a difference.

A HEARTY REACTA WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS!

Mark Leach and Linda Elliot

Suzette Michel

Dawn Murray

Andrew and Enid-Kelley Oman

The downside to the Membership Committee work is the loss of our colleagues of which there have been far too many since the last REACTOR in January. Whether they were CTA warriors or spouses of our colleagues, each loss diminishes us as a group. We also lose a little of CTA with each passing. Condolences to the families and friends of: **Andrew Alkema, Linda Antoine, Janis Baer, Darrell Gifford, Olav Lejnieks, Mark Miller, Dick Odgers, James Paisley, Judy Thomas, and Peg Tracey.** May their memories and legacies live on in the hearts of others.

To keep current, the Membership Committee reminds you to checkout the REACTA webpage at www.reacta.org and our Facebook page. The webpage has a multitude of information including the officers by name, Bylaws and Standing Rules, previous publications, and resources such as phone numbers you may need as a retiree and contacts to make upon a death. Our Facebook page provides not only updated directories, info about events, but also an opportunity to engage with others through posts. If you have changed any of your information, please let **Kathie Casas** know at KCasas@aol.com.



Staying Connected continued from Page 1

The conversation ended with a moment of silence in remembrance for so many of our deceased colleagues that we have recently lost.

Staying connected also took place at the Region 3 and 4 Spring Luncheons. It is a terrific opportunity to connect with former colleagues and receive updates on our two CTA Trusts.

Executive Director, **Jeff Good**, appointed Region 3 Manager, **Denise Jennex**, as the liaison to REACTA. **Denise** will be a great asset as we **stay connected** and collaborate on issues affecting CTA and retirees. Also, as a new trustee on the Health and Welfare Benefits Trust, she will be an added resource as we navigate health benefit issues.

As CTA staff, we were more than just employees. We were a family bonded by common interests, values and passions. The wonderful benefit of being a member of REACTA is that it is a way for us to **stay connected** and informed on issues that affect us as CTA retirees. We do this through our Website, Directory, Facebook Page, Hot Topics, the REACTOR, email blasts, our Annual Reunion and social activities. If you are a **NEW** member, welcome and I hope to see you at our Annual Reunion!

SUMMER READING

Joanne Summa: Brooklyn and Long Island by Colm Torbin
Unmissing by Minka Kent
Hotel Nantucket by Elin Hildebrand

Dixie Ditsler: Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind by Yuval Noah Harari

Margaret Wallace: Penitence by Kristin Koval
The Favorites by Layne Fargo
Personal Librarian by Marie Benedict

Help us expand our book list for the next REACTOR. Send your book recommendations to Margaret Wallace, marwall@aol.com



CTA HEALTH & WELFARE BENEFITS TRUST

By: MERRI BOSTON FURLER, REACTA Liaison

New Third Party Administrator - The Trust has announced that starting September 1st, Delta Fund Administrators will be the new TPA. Zenith is out. The Trust is discussing creating some trainings to answer questions about how the transition will work, what will happen, and when you can expect to see changes. I hope to find out more information at the June 13th trust meeting.

Trust meeting -Future Benefits Changes and Funding for the Trust There are 3 primary funding sources each month for the Health Trust:

- 1) Employer contribution rates
- 2) 16% of active employee payroll to pay for retiree expenses
- 3) Interest from investment income

Not only does the Trust use this funding for benefit expenses, there are also administrative expenses, such as the consultants, attorneys, Stop Loss insurance, and claims processing.

Employer contribution rates are what CTA, and participating chapters pay for active employees and dependents whether Anthem or Kaiser members. These rates are determined each year at the June Trust meeting using past and projected expenses.

Currently there are 473 active employees and 668 retirees. In 2010, it was the opposite. The numbers were about even in 2016-17 and have changed direction since then.

In 2020-21, the assets were around \$27M. Over the last 4 years, the Fund balance of assets has been dropping and is currently around \$15.5M. The Consultant is projecting a deficit at this year's end of \$2.5M and a deficit of \$4.2M by the end of 2025/26.

Current Contract language directs the bargaining parties to direct the Trust to make benefit plan modifications and increases to the employer contributions when the reserves/investments start to reach \$10M. With this in mind, conversations have begun to address the \$10M threshold.

As soon as REACTA is aware of any decisions of benefit plan modifications, we will communicate that to our members.

REACTA	2025 Projected	5/8/2025 Actuals
	Income	
Member Dues	16,300	4,794.00
Annual Meeting	2,600	0
Add'l Scholarship Donations	800	0
Other	50	3,550.00
Total Income	19,750	8,344.00
	Expenses	
Executive Bd	2,000	0
Committees	7,700	0
Elections	200	0
Membership	2,000	73.00
Nominations	100	0
Political Education	300	0
Scholarship	2,500	0
Trusts	2,500	498.13
Other	100	0
Communications	1,500	0
Directory	50	0
Facebook	200	0
Hot Topics	50	0
Newsletter (Reactor)	100	0
Web Site/Zoom	300	159.90
CAS/CSO/CTA	500	0
Printing/Mailing/Supplies	300	160.90
Membership/ Advocacy	26,000	0
Annual Membership	13,000	0
Member Assistance	4,000	3,000.00
Legal Expenses	6,000	0
Regional Activities	1,000	0
Scholarships	2,000	0
Other	100	0
Total Expenses	37,300	3,891.93
	Assets/FFCU	
Convenience Checking		62,769.03
Prime Checking		12,695.22
Association Savings		28.07
Total Assets	65,000	75,492.32

TREASURER REPORT

By: **DICK GALE**, Treasurer



Greetings to all. The REACTA 2025 budget is in excellent shape. So far this year, thanks to the generosity of thirteen of our members who contributed to the REACTA Assistance Fund to help our members who lost their homes during the Los Angeles firestorm and our monthly dues contributions, our income is \$8,744.00 and our expenses are \$4,104.41. Total REACTA assets equal \$75,492.32.

I encourage all members to make plans to attend REACTA's Annual meeting- **Staying Connected** in October. Please complete the registration form found on our website (REACTA.org) and download the Conference Registration Form. Completed forms and personal checks to cover the \$50 per person registration fee (which includes a banquet dinner) should be sent directly to me at:

Dick Gale
11895 Evergold Street
San Diego, 92131.

Please note: First time attendees or committee members attending committee meeting will be reimbursed the \$50 registration fee.

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Committees

Annual Meeting Planning

Committee: Merri Furler (Chair)

Dick Gale, Shirley Horn, Ann Adler, Kathy Schlotz, Kathie Casas, Robin Rose.

Scholarship Committee:

Anita Benitas Gardella (chair), Ginny Jannatto, Debbie Diaz, Sydney Greenberg, Frank Wells, Susan Midori-Jones (Board Liaison).

Health & Welfare Trust

Liaison: Merri Furler.

Membership:

Ann Adler (Chair), Merri Furler (Board Liaison);

Sydney Greenberg, John Stevens, Susan

Midori-Jones, Patricia Williams,

Gary Campbell, Penny Sevoian,

Jackie Clark, Alva Rivera, Barbara

Smith, Patty Taylor

Retirement

Trust Liaison: Alan Frey.

Fiscal Oversight Committee:

Dick Gale (Chair), Felice Strauss.

Nominations & Elections

Committee: Dixie Ditsler.

REACTOR Newsletter:

Margaret Wallace (Editor), Dixie Ditsler,

Kathie Casas, Shirley Horn.

Social Media Specialist:

Kathie Casas.

Database and Directory:

Kathy Schlotz.

Legal Expense Fund and Member Assistance Fund:

Susan Midori-Jones.

Political Education Committee:

Arleigh Kidd, Gene Huguenin, Felice Strauss, Ed Sibby

FUNNY IRREPLACEABLE GOOD PEOPLE HISTORY MAKERS

By: MARGARET WALLACE, Editor



Stop and think for a moment. Who was that colleague who was the wind behind your wings? You know who I am talking about. The colleague who always had your back. The colleague that directed you in the right direction to help you be successful. "At the bargaining table I could spot bull shit a lot quicker thanks to **Dick Odgers**," said **Bill Empey**. Oh yes, and the colleague who made you laugh when you needed it most.

For many of us it was more than one person, each of them for different reasons and different times in your career. Some were there the day you walked into the office. Others were in the bar with a drink waiting for you after a very rough round of bargaining. And of course, those who taught you everything they knew and always made you look like you were the expert during training.

When **Felice Strauss** was REACTA Treasurer she often shared how she was one of the first to know when we lost a member. "It was so sad because I knew these people very well. I stood on their shoulders."

"Watching the loss of the generation of staffers that made our organization great is brutal on our ranks," said **Mark Young**.

We have lost so many colleagues along the way, but recently we have lost so many giants in a very short time period. It makes you wonder who the giants will be to walk in their footprints. Did we pass it forward?

The true loss happens when we stop telling the stories, or stop telling the jokes, or stop being there for each other. No one can write the **Darrell Gifford's** News from Fort Burlingame, but we can tell the story. No one can deliver a quip like **Judy Thomas**, but we can try. "Well bless their little hearts." No one can project **Peg Tracey's** impish grin, but we can smile when we see it.

Goodbye dear friends. We will miss you, but we will not forget you. We will be there for you.