



Alaska Retired Educators Association

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open

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Website:

AKREA.ORG

Anchorage and Mat-Su**Areas: CARTA:**

Gretchen Van Hove,

President

CARTA meets 1st Saturday at

12:30 at the Anchorage

Senior Center (Sept.-May)

Contact: Ronelva Peacock

(907)349-1714

Fairbanks (FRTA)

Steve Heckman

FRTA meets the 2nd

Wednesday at the at 11:30

Juneau/Douglas:

Barb Potter

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JRTA meets on the 3rd

Monday every month

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FALL 2013



NOW RATHER THAN LATER!

By Liz Lucas

The Alaska Retired Educators Association (AKREA) has as one of their 2014 major goals the reduction of the projected unfunded PERS/TRS pension and healthcare liability. This is not a new goal. However, NOW is the time to take a serious approach to arriving at a solution to the problem. This projected unfunded liability problem will not timely resolve itself without costing Alaskans billions more in the upcoming decades.

What exactly is the projected unfunded liability? Simply stated, it is the portion of the projected unfunded liability not offset by PERS/TRS assets .Common sense and financial experts tell us the longer we wait to pay off this future liability, the more money will be needed to pay the benefits. Each year, the liability grows by almost \$900 million ...just for the interest on the liability. Financial experts say the trust funds would have made this much more money if they were fully funded and the money available for investment.

WHAT SHOULD THE STATE DO?

The Legislature should *increase funding now* to reduce the projected unfunded liability. This can be accomplished in several ways.

---Add a one time infusion of about \$2 billion. This would reduce annual employer payments into the funds by about \$300 million a year, and result in billions of dollars less in total payments.

---Fund the level dollar payment method adopted by the Alaska Retirement Management Board, rather than the previous level % of pay method. This would result in much lower annual payments in later years and less total payments into the fund.

These two recommendations were made by the Alaska Retirement Management Board (the Board responsible for the management of the PERS/TRS Trust Funds) after years of working on this issue with investment and financial experts. Four of the members of this board are PERS or TRS members. The ARM Board is steering toward a sensible, doable, common sense solution to the liability.

Accumulating more money in the retirement trust funds = increasing interest earnings = helping to defray the cost of pensions and health care.

AKREA fully supports the recommendation of the ARM Board for a \$2 billion cash infusion (one time or over four years) in addition to having employers front load the annual payments they already make to cover the system funding. This is a win – win situation! We will keep you informed!

As retired educators, please strengthen our voice by joining AKREA. www.akrea.org, click on membership. Thanks! Liz Lucas, Executive Director, lizlucas@hotmail.com.

AKREA TRAVEL NEWS.....

AKREA wishes to extend a big welcome to our new AKREA Travel Liaison, Patricia Spence, from Juneau, Alaska. I couldn't wait until the first of the year to share this wonderful news! It will be a busy season planning a fun trip together. Just a few words concerning Pat's background. She started her teaching career in Cleveland, Ohio, grades 7 – 12. In her own words, "after taking time to raise 5 children and move seven times across the country, I joined the Juneau/Douglas School District in 1979 and retired in 2005.

I taught ESL in the elementary schools, History of Language, and beginning French and Spanish at Floyd Dryden Middle School, and French Language and Literature 1 at Juneau Douglas High School. I also taught several French classes as an adjunct French Professor at UAS.

My travel experience has been extensive including taking several trips with students to France and New Caledonia."

AKREA will be collaborating with Collette Tours to offer you the best tours available in the future.....

CHECK OUT WWW.AKREA.ORG AFTER JANUARY – FEBRUARY, 2014 FOR MORE NEWS ON OUR TRAVEL PLANS.

Liz Lucas, Executive Director, lizlucas@hotmail.com

"Working together, we help education retirees have a secure and enjoyable future."

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BARB'S BY-LINE



Life in Alaska is never without its many extremes. This summer and fall in Fairbanks was just that. We had one of the warmest on record then in mid- August we had rain for several weeks. Beautiful fall , now winter has descended with the first storm knocking out power to over 12,500 and after 5 day still 1250 without power not good when temperature is falling to -27. But guess we are hardy fellows up here. Hope your weather is good.

It has been an interesting time in AKREA. The mini grants, the work on the unfunded liability, the push in DC for the WEP and GPO to be eliminated (all three of our congressional leaders are in favor of this), the work to try to return to the DB plan. We are working hard on these, hope you are too. It takes us all. With the talks on Social Security and Medicare coming up we need to be vigilant and let our thoughts be known.

When we went to Washington DC and talked to the congressional delegation and their aides, we found out that the Alaska Care recipients may have to pay some taxes on their policy but not for several years, 2016 I believe. First they need to determine the value of the policy, then deduct \$10,000 from that and we pay taxes on the remainder. That is what they think. It may change. We will keep you posted as we hear more.

The Commissioner of Administration has had a committee to change the health care and was adamant about it. She was in favor of the expansion of Medicaid which the governor has turned down. We heard this morning that she resigned for a new job in the private sector. We will have to keep in touch so we know what the new Commissioner will want to do. Again watch the web site akrea.org.

It is very close to the 2014 Legislative year. As soon as they start meeting we will post anything that is of concern to us on the web site so keep checking the Web site. We will try to keep you informed of what is going on. If there are questions you have let us know. Also the new third party administrators of the health insurance will be taking over the first of the year, if there are difficulties let us know. We have had these administrators before and most of us were happy with them. So we shall see again how they do.

Liz is writing about the unfunded liability but I would like to add a note. I went to a function with several active and new retirees in attendance. It was part of the Adult Learning program at the UAF call OLLI. We discussed the unfunded liability and they were all concerned and going to contact their legislators. People are finally concerned and not just burying their head in the sand; they want to do something to help. They realize the constitution can be changed. We need to do something before the issue is brought up.

IN MEMORIAM

To Live in Hearts We Leave Behind Is Not To Die

Thomas Campbell

These retired teachers have left us during this past year

William Dean Overstreet

William dies April 8, 2013 in Sun City Arizona. He began his teaching career in Juneau in 1953, teaching 8th grade at Capitol School. In later years he advanced to Principal, Superintendent and eventually to the Alaska Department of Ed. He is survived by his wife of 65+ years, Jean and son William. Jr.

Jane Williams

Jane died August 24, 2013 in Fairbanks. She taught at Fort Yukon and Cantwell before coming to Lathrop High School in Fairbanks to teach Biology. She was Alaska Biology teacher of the year. After retiring from teaching she served as Media Services Director at UAF.

Eunice Gordon

Eunice died August 31, 2013 in Soldotna. She taught on the Kenai Peninsula until she retired in 1981. She was the treasurer the KPRTA and volunteered in many capacities during her retirement.

William R. Marsh

William died February 23, 2013. In Washington State. He taught and coached in Sitka and also served as Principal and Superintendent. He later worked for the Department of Education and the Anchorage School District. He is survived by wife Lois and daughters Diane and Kathy.

Carmen Holum

News from Ketchikan informed AKREA of the death of Carmen Holum late in 2012. No other information was provided.

IN THE UNITS

CARTA

CARTA is off to a good start for the year with some very interesting programs and \$1500 in philanthropic grants awarded!

The September speaker, Abbe Hensley of Best Beginnings explained the project whereby books are distributed, with the help of the Dolly Parton organization, to children all over Alaska. In October the new Superintendent of ABSD, Ed Graf, spoke about the rewards and challenges of his position. The November program featured Col. Suellyn Novak, Ret., the founder of the Alaska Veterans Museum. The Museum has outgrown its present location on 4th Avenue in Anchorage and is in need of funds and volunteers to maintain and expand its growth. Ronelva Peacock, a CARTA member, has donated a silk gown and negligee made by an Italian seamstress from the parachute that saved her late husband's life. First Lt. Donald Gaard was a crew member in a Flying Fortress (B-17) that was shot down over what was then Czechoslovakia while on a mission from Foggia, Italy to bomb Berlin in March of 1945.

Shannon Jones, CARTA's President resigned in October and moved to Texas. Gretchen Van Hove will serve as CARTA's leader until our spring elections.

Two \$750 philanthropic grants have been awarded. One went to Jay Jackson who founded Helping Hands for Nepal, which CARTA has supported for years. Jay will be traveling to a remote village in western Nepal with a Peace Corps Volunteer in January 2014 to deliver 300 solar powered lights to the school children there. She will report on her trip at CARTA's March 1st meeting. The second grant was given to The Cook Inlet Tribal Council's Basket Program-----Christmas meals, clothing, etc. requested by Carolyn Crosby.

Scholarship information will be posted in January.

CARTA meets the first Saturday of every month September through May at the Anchorage Senior Activity Center for a catered luncheon at 12:30. For reservations call 907-349-1714.

FRTA

FRTA had a very successful No School Today Meeting. A fun time was had by all. The Book Sale (proceeds to the scholarship fund) raised approximately \$1400. The September meeting had Neil Brown speak on Health insurance. He is always very informative. November meeting canceled due to road conditions the December meeting will be fun with students from one of the high schools providing a Christmas musical program. We will have pictures on the web of the Christmas meeting along with pictures of the book sale and summer painting at the fairgrounds. New officers Steve Heckman President, Marlin Collins, Vice President, Sonja Younkens, Secretary, Vilma Grassi, Treasurer

JREA

Juneau Retired Educators had a very successful Back to School Brunch on August 20th. We welcomed six new members. The group donated four boxes of school supplies which we collected at the brunch. This year our supplies went to Auke Bay School. We are working our way through the elementary schools in the district. We have two more school to go.

Our September meeting was a potluck held at the Senior Center. The program for this month was the Empty Chair Project. In 1942 all Japanese were removed from Juneau and relocated to internment camps. That year, the valedictorian of the class was John Tanaka, a Japanese. A special ceremony was held so that he would be able receive his diploma before he had to leave. At the official graduation, an empty chair was in place in his honor. To commemorate this and recognize all those who were displaced, an empty chair sculpture will soon be placed on the grounds of the old Juneau High School. All of the names of those displaced will be engraved on the base. It should be in place by this summer.

In October, Doug Jones was our speaker. We learned more about the bears in our area.

All of our meetings, until the end of 2013 will be potlucks at the senior center. We meet the third Monday of each month, at 5:30.

JRTA has been awarded a grant to revise “Alaska Experiences by Juneau Teachers”, first published in 1993. When finished, it will be reissued under the auspicious of the Alaska Educators Historical Society.

KENAI

Several retired teachers in the Kenai-Soldotna area have expressed interest in reviving the retired Teachers Unit. If you are interested, and can take an active role in getting it rolling, please contact Virginia Walters at 283-7305 or e-mail vewalters@gci.net.

After January 1, 2014, the AKREA website, AKREA.ORG will have some pages password protected. The log-in will be your first initial and last name, the password is teach it will also be sent to you via e-mail if we have your current e-mail address, otherwise it will appear in the next newsletter after the legislative session in 2014.



CLASSROOM GRANTS

AKREA has offered a grant up to \$200 to working teachers for a classroom project not budgeted for... a teachable moment grant so to speak. At this time 23 applications have been received from all over the state, everything from greenhouse paraphernalia to a keyboarding book. The deadline is December 15 and the selection will be at the first of the year so they have it for the second semester. The funding for this year is from the grant awarded to AKREA from NRTA. Future funding will be from sales of TEACHER TALES, and from other donations.

Are You Volunteering?

By Barb Potter, Juneau

If possible, it's important to give back to our community. We have many different interests and skills and someone can definitely use our help.

Time is another major factor in deciding what to do. Since we are retired, we have lots of time to give, right? Not so! My retirement years keep getting busier and busier. I'm sure this is also true for many of you. As I write this, I'm doing wash, planning for a meeting tomorrow and trying to get ready for a trip later in the week. Our lives certainly are full.

There are a lot of snowbirds in the state too. Sometimes it's hard to commit to something long term since you'll be gone for several weeks or even months. General health may also be a factor. If you can't commit to something long term, think one, two or even three hours--sitting at a vendor's table, putting address labels on, helping at a meeting. Think of how much time your leaders give. Try saying yes, when asked to do a short term job.

There are benefits from volunteering. It gets you out, or at least in contact with, other people. You may even see old friends or make new ones. It's important to stay active and engaged. These interactions help us stay young or at least feel young.

When 2014 starts, I'd like you to try and keep a record of your volunteer time. Our volunteerism saves both our cities and our state a great deal of money. It would be nice to let them know just how much money we do save them. If we didn't volunteer at our schools, museums, libraries, hospitals, visitor centers and other places, they would have to pay people to do what we do for free.

Budgets are tight every place, we can do our part to help, while at the same time gleaning the benefits of the personal interactions that arise from the work that we do.

ALASKA EDUCATORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AEHS is partnering with Juneau Retired Educators Association to market their revision of early Juneau teachers' experiences. JREA is busy preparing the manuscript, which was originally typed and copied for publication in 1993, for reissue. They plan to add some stories and some pictures, and eventually also publish it as an e-book. They received a grant from the Juneau City Museum to accomplish this.

Volume IV of TEACHER TALES has been published as an e-book for the Kindle through Amazon.com. It has gotten some good reviews on that website and continues to sell. A big thanks to Ann Secrest in the state AARP office for getting the news out to the AARP BULLETIN about that project. Hard copies are still available also.

AEHS has put out the call for submissions for Volume V of TEACHER TALES. There are still stories out there that need to be told about the early days of Alaska Education. We have heard from a teacher in Rampart in the seventies and from two retired colleagues who have published books of their own. Remember that one does not need to be a member of AKREA to submit. So tell your friends who have not joined this community to send us their funny or poignant or this-is –the –way –it –was story of life in Alaska Education in the days before retirement. Submissions can be sent to AEHS, 214 Birch Street, Kenai AK 99611, or e-mailed to vewalters@gci.net.

AEHS is a membership organization. If you'd like to donate time or money to the cause the above addresses will put you in touch with the board. The AKREA website...akrea.org has a page for the Historical Society with our mission statement and a membership application. This page will not be one of the pass-worded pages.

Roll out those memories and send us a story or anecdote from your teaching days. With the holidays coming a remembrance of Christmas in the village, or trying to get a plane load of gifts to an outlying area, or even a less than sober Santa will come drifting in. Write it down and send it to AEHS,



Renew today! If you don't know your due date, e-mail akeducators@yahoo.com... To find out your membership expiration.

ALASKA RETIRED EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION

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The AK-REA dues year is January – December. Any dues received after September 15 each year will cover the next year