



Alaska Retired Educators Association

SUMMER 2012

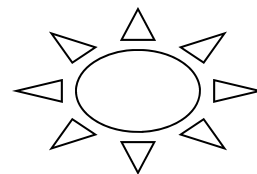
2012 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT

My name is Benjamin Widman and I am currently enrolled in the Secondary Education Certification Program through UAF. Ever since I began my B.A. in History with an English minor in 2008, my goal has been to become a teacher at the secondary education level. My interests in History and English are driven by a passion for teaching others. It is because of this passion that I strive for academic excellence. My coursework at UAF includes not only my English and history classes, but also two graduate level education courses that I took during this last spring semester. I attained my degree this May with a 3.61 GPA. I have made both the Dean's and Chancellor's list multiple times. I care about doing my best, and plan on excelling in the secondary education certification program this coming school year. I hope to eventually use all my academic and life experiences to make a positive impact in the classroom.

The reason I need this scholarship is because much of my financial aid that I have received over the past four years has been used up for my B.A. degree in history. As with my undergraduate degree, I wish to minimize my financial burden as I begin my certification program and Masters in Secondary Education. Since I am currently married, and my wife is pregnant with our first child, this makes financial aid extremely necessary to get through this next year successfully. This scholarship is a tremendous help in bringing



me closer to becoming secondary education teacher by providing aid for my family and education.



We again received a number of applications for scholarships. It took 5 days for an application from Fairbanks to get to me because our mail goes to Anchorage they sort it and send it back. If there are applicants from the bush it could take longer so we decided to wait a week

AK-REA OFFICERS

President:

Barbara Rich, Fairbanks

President-Elect:

open

Secretary

Barbara George, Fairbanks

Treasurer

Virginia Walters, Kenai

Past President

Bill O'Dell, Fairbanks

Website:

Under construction

Local Units and Contacts

Anchorage and Mat-Su Areas: CARTA

Shannon Jones, President

CARTA meets 1st Saturday at 12:30 at the Anchorage Senior Center (Sept.-May)

Contact: Ronelva Peacock
(907)349-1714

Fairbanks (FRTA) : Ellen Ayotte

1121 Coppett St

Fairbanks, Ak 99709

FRTA meets the 2nd Wednesday at the at 11:30

Juneau/Douglas: Barb Potter

billstoy@aol.com

JRTA meets on the 3rd Monday every month

Seward: Mary Daniel

Box 593 , Seward, AK 99664

smdaniel@gci.net

Kodiak: Kathy Wischer

Box 202, Kodiak AK 99615

kwischer@alaska.net

Kenai Virginia Walters

214 Birch, Street, Kenai, Ak 99611

vewalters@alaska.net

Homer: Ray Hillman

(907) 235-2449

rhillman@ptialaska.net

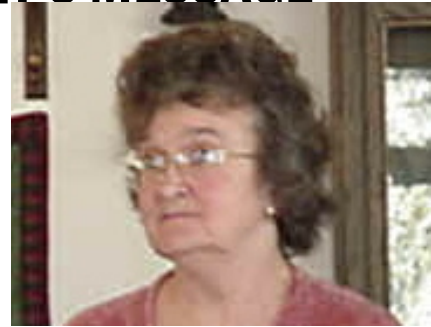
Palmer: Jane Hammond

Box 281, Palmer AK 99645

linjane@mtaonline.net

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BARB'S BY-LINE



AKREA has been working hard on the new web page. It is still a work in progress. Hope it will be ready in a few weeks. Trying to agree on all the items on the pages and how to display them is interesting. The web site is AKREA.org. It is not up but probably will be in a few weeks. We would like to know what you would like to see on the page. What is important to you. We will try to keep it up to date on legislation, what is happening in different communities of interest to Retired Educators, etc. Always open to suggestions.

I am pleading with members to take a more active role in the association. We need volunteers to be on the membership committees, legislative, financial, community affairs, and also officers. There is a need for new blood on the board and in the different positions. Our next annual meeting will be in Fairbanks around the 12th of October. The date is not exact yet but that is what we are planning. Please contact an officer or send the information to me 907-687-6299 or barbnroy@ecsalaska.com

On a happy note the Senate passed the new pension bill but the House did not hear the bill. It was a bill that presented a hybrid plan. Teachers had a choice of a DB plan similar to the Tier II or stay with their DC plan. That is better than in other years. However we still remain at bottom of the totem pole for retirement benefits for new teachers. The average for the teachers who are leaving after 5 years and taking the money out of their account has earnings of \$1000 on their investment. This is what I was told by someone who should know. Maybe next year we will get a pension for our new hires that will be better.

Have a wonderful summer Hope you have a lot of sunshine. Barbara

NEW DIRECTOR...MEET LIZ!

My name is Liz Lucas. I was appointed AKREA (Alaska Retired Educators Association) Executive Director recentlya distinct honor, thank you!

These are exciting times for us as an organization. We are involved in putting the finishing touches on a website that will enable us to better serve our members. Since our mission statement is “to improve the quality of life for Alaska educators; support education for all ages; and continue to make a difference in our communities by providing leadership and service,” it seems a logical next step. Stay tuned as we increase the volume and variety of news coming your way. The website isn’t the only thing going on in AKREA. Protecting the pensions of Alaska’s educator is always top of mind! We were very much involved in the recent effort to pass SB 121. This was a hybrid bill to give retirees a choice between a defined benefit, or a, 401K. Senator Dennis Egan initiated the bill which was supported by many others. Although it did not pass, it will appear next year. We will be there!

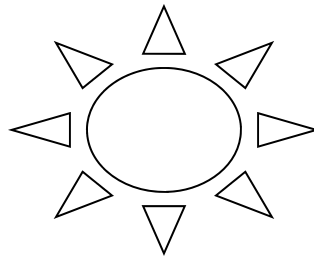


The financial security of our members is always high on our agenda. As an organization we are joining with AARP in the national conversation addressing the future path of Social Security. Watch for events that will be happening in your area.

Enjoy the summer months ahead. Best Regards, Liz Lucas, AKREA Executive Director

lizlucas@hotmail.com

Ph. 907.789.9655



About NRTA

Founded in 1947 by retired educator Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus, NRTA: AARP's Educator Community is a division of AARP. NRTA members share a commitment to learning, voluntary service, and civic participation. NRTA is the largest national organization that represents the interests of 50+ educators, with a membership of more than one million active and retired higher-ed and K-12 educators and school personnel at the local, state and national level. The NRTA network includes a national office in Washington, DC, 52 state and city associations, and more than 2,700 local associations. NRTA members are dedicated to continuous educational opportunity, advocacy, and service as a means of safeguarding the economic security, work opportunities, and future well-being of all generations. Visit NRTA's Website at www.aarp.org/nrta for more information.

NEWS FROM GAYLE

Our retirees do an outstanding job of trying to cut costs by using generics when they are available. The Retirement Drug Subsidy amounts that we have been receiving since 2007 because Alaska Care provides prescription drugs and our members do not have to participate in Medicare Part D are allocated to Public Employees' Retirement System Alaska Retirement Healthcare Trust, Teachers' Retirement System Alaska Retirement Healthcare Trust, Judicial Retirement System Alaska Retirement Healthcare Trust, and Retiree Health Fund-Major Medical Funds on a per participant basis. In 2011 nearly \$100,000 was returned. The fund has assets in excess of \$11 million.

Also there are 5 illnesses that cost the system the most, among them, diabetes, asthma, lower back pain and heart disease. In 2004 we advocated for a disease management program to help people early so symptoms would not progress to require more intensive care. It has been shown that over time this is a cost saver, both APEA and also NEA-Alaska Health trust both have disease mgt components. Gayle

AND MORE

Recently a member who resides in an interior village experienced problems with the Long-Term Care insurance providing Home Health Care, as there are no 'certified' Home Health aides in remote Alaska. Another member looked into the status of the TRS Long Term care insurance and was told it is 'very healthy' as the above chart indicates. He questions if this is 'due to the failure of the program to provide for Older Alaskans' as Home Health care is the scenario most likely to be utilized given the choice.

A recent survey by OPAG found the State of Alaska LTC plan somewhat outdated. This member wonders if most of the retirees using the program reside in the Lower 48, or move there in order to take advantage of a program they have paid into for at least 14 years. Anyone willing to share your experience with the Long Term Care insurance, good or bad, can send an e-mail to akeducators@yahoo.com

Some final thoughts

In this day and age we are bombarded with so much information and misinformation that we cannot distinguish one from the other. I bring this up because I met a friend I had not seen in a while in the outpatient department of the hospital. I was waiting for my husband and the friend sat down next to me and we started chatting. I told her I was waiting for my husband and she said she was going in for surgery. She felt very bad about this as she knew we seniors were running the government into this horrible debt with our Medicare and Social Security. She said she did not go to the Doctor unless she really had to because it cost the government too much money. She did not think it was the wars or anything else just us. A couple of weeks later I saw in the paper she did not make it out of the hospital. She died after her procedure. She was a retired state employee. I wonder how many more are out there with this same idea. I know we need to cut back but health is not the way. How do we let people know it is better to see a health care provider than wait until it is too late? The talk shows are not helping. I just had to get this off my chest. If you know someone like this, please tell them the wars are costing much more than Medicare.

The accompanying notes for this financial statement can be read at the State of Alaska web site (Alaska.gov); search 'retiree health fund'

STATE OF ALASKA
 RETIREE HEALTH FUND
 (A Pension Trust Fund of the State of Alaska)
 Statements of Changes in Fiduciary Net Assets
 Years ended June 30, 2011 and 2010

	2011				2010			
	Major medical	Dental, vision and audio	Long-term care	Total	Major medical	Dental, vision and audio	Long-term care	Total
Additions:								
Contributions:								
Employer health insurance premiums	\$ 1,479,396	—	—	1,479,396	1,410,804	—	—	1,410,804
Member health insurance premiums	1,206,295	30,672,814	20,790,459	52,669,568	1,088,256	28,044,890	19,438,047	48,571,193
Total contributions	2,685,691	30,672,814	20,790,459	54,148,964	2,499,060	28,044,890	19,438,047	49,981,997
Medicare retiree drug subsidy (note 6)	97,449	—	—	97,449	58,586	—	—	58,586
Investment income:								
Net appreciation in fair value	—	—	37,150,407	37,150,407	—	—	15,222,695	15,222,695
Interest	78,570	249,010	2,614,668	2,942,248	237,131	542,910	1,050,439	1,830,480
Dividends	—	—	2,344,163	2,344,163	—	—	2,930,345	2,930,345
Total investment income	78,570	249,010	42,109,238	42,436,818	237,131	542,910	19,203,479	19,983,520
Less investment expense	4,936	—	71,553	76,489	1,789	—	55,825	57,614
Net investment income	73,634	249,010	42,037,685	42,360,329	235,342	542,910	19,147,654	19,925,906
Other income	43	960	169	1,172	27,050	653	87	27,790
Total additions	2,856,817	30,922,784	62,828,313	96,607,914	2,820,038	28,588,453	38,585,788	69,994,279
Deductions:								
Benefits	2,042,481	30,498,683	6,766,186	39,307,350	4,916,384	26,740,565	7,029,970	38,686,919
Administrative	146,512	926,398	207,460	1,280,370	170,502	908,997	234,944	1,314,443
Total deductions	2,188,993	31,425,081	6,973,646	40,587,720	5,086,886	27,649,562	7,264,914	40,001,362
Net change in fiduciary net assets	667,824	(502,297)	55,854,667	56,020,194	(2,266,848)	938,891	31,320,874	29,992,917
Net assets held in trust for postemployment healthcare benefits:								
Net assets, beginning of year	10,985,767	12,751,804	171,827,449	195,565,020	13,252,615	11,812,913	140,506,575	165,572,103
Net assets, end of year	\$ 11,653,591	12,249,507	227,682,116	251,585,214	10,985,767	12,751,804	171,827,449	195,565,020

See accompanying notes to financial statements.

LEGISLATIVE NEWS

By Don Gray in Fairbanks

What has the Legislature done to help Retired Teachers / Seniors?

Thanks to AK-REA, working with AARP and the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, DENTAL CARE for SENIORS on Medicaid was improved. Before, state medicaid would only pay for removal of teeth: NO DENTURES! Now, Alaska Medicaid will pay for false teeth, up to a cap of \$1150/year. If scheduled in a timely manner, (e.g. December and January), a beneficiary can get upper and lower dentures. About 14% of older Alaskans on Medicaid took advantage of dental services last year. About half the expenditures were for dentures and half for standard dental care. A good example of a "win" that has really paid off for lower income citizens.

Why is this significant for our membership? We are Retired Teachers; we're not on Medicaid? Don't we have great health insurance?

Well, yes and no. Since all newly hired Alaskan teachers will not have retiree "bridge" health insurance provided as a benefit when they retire, they worry.

While many retired TRS teachers were wise enough to sign up and pay for Audio-Dental-Vision Insurance when they retired, some did not. They worry.

With rising insurance premiums, many seniors, including retired teachers, may find the out-of-pocket costs for all three daunting. If attacks on Medicare and the 2010 Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) are successful, we will all be affected. Our post-retirement TRS/Alaska Care health insurance, which becomes secondary to Medicare, should be adequate. We just can't be certain.

There won't be any PRPA or COLA adjustments in TRS pensions for the foreseeable future, unless the next Legislature lifts the present restrictions. Retirees on Federal Social Security will find it tough too, as the U.S. Congress still needs to raise the \$109,000 ceiling on income taxed to pay for SS, or risk running out of enough money in 2036. Most retired Alaskan teachers did not contribute to Social Security and so are ineligible for these benefits anyway. We do not expect to be considered "Low Income", but many retired teachers do worry about becoming so.

Given that the 2012 Legislature passed spending of ~\$12 Billion including Capital Budget spending (on sports fields, free airfare to the Great Shootout Basketball tournament, etc). and that the AK Senate stopped the Governor from giving away, (no-strings-attached), up to \$2 Billion a year for multiple years to Exxon-Mobil, Conoco-Phillips and BP oil companies, we are lucky to have received a small item of slightly over \$9 Million for dental care for many Alaskan seniors. This is both an Economic issue and a Health Issue. We must stay vigilant. Our work is not ended. This will be an important election year for OUR future too.

MEMBERSHIP IN THE ALASKA RETIRED EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION

NAME (Please Print)

Last _____ First _____ M.I. _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip _____

Phone: _____ E-Mail _____

I prefer to receive the newsletter via e-mail USPS

Dues: \$15 per year

Make Check Payable to ALASKA RETIRED EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION

mail to: Virginia Walters
214 Birch Street
Kenai, Ak 99611

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

IN THE UNITS

CARTA

May 5th, CARTA's last luncheon meeting of the 2011-2012 year at the ASAC was a day of celebration! Scholarships were presented, special guests were recognized, and officers for 2012-2013 were installed.

The annual CARTA Scholarship Auction was held at the April meeting. Don Joyner, a well known auctioneer, (now retired) has generously donated his service for the last several years. The auction proceeds totaled nearly \$1500. Two \$2500 scholarships are awarded each year to students nearing graduation or graduate students pursuing careers in education. This year's elementary recipient was Heidi Hilmes and the secondary award winner was Ian Burch.

Special guests were Carol Comeau, James Elgarico and Heidi Hilmes. Carol has retired after dedicating many years of her life as Superintendent of the Anchorage Borough Schools. James was the Senior Center Manager who made sure CARTA luncheons were successful. Heidi was a scholarship winner.

Officers installed for the 2012-2013 year were: Shannon Jones, President, Barbara Sell and Gretchen Van Hove, Co-Vice Presidents, Carol Waters, Secretary and Nina Prockish, Treasurer. (Our prayers are with Nina who is recovering from a long illness that kept her from attending the April and May meetings.)

Long stemmed roses were presented to officers and committee chairs as a thank you for their contributions to CARTA. This has become a tradition at the May meeting. The special guests also received roses.

CARTA meets at the Anchorage Senior Activities Center the first Saturday of each month September through May at 12:30 PM. All retired educational personnel are invited to join us! More info: 907-349-1714.

Formerly Alaska State Retired Teachers Association



Alaska Retired
Educators Association

214 Birch Street, Kenai, AK 99611
www.akrea.org

Ak-REA news is a publication of Alaska Retired Educators Association. (formerly ASRTA) It is mailed at irregular intervals.

Mailed at 'bulk' rate to members. It is NOT forwarded by the post office.

Check your mailing label!!! The date your membership expires is the number following your name; i.e. John Doe '12 indicates dues paid through 2012 An 'L' indicates a life member. If your expiration date is before '08 this is the last newsletter you will receive unless AKREA receives your dues for 2012 Annual dues are \$15. or 4 years for \$50 A membership renewal/application appears on page 7.

TO SERVE..NOT TO BE SERVED

"Our mission is to improve the quality of life for Alaska's retired educators; support education for all ages; and continue to make a difference in our communities by providing leadership and service."

Members are committed to

- Encouraging continuous, life-long learning
- Promoting the economic, social and professional development of the association and its members
- Monitoring and improving the benefits for retired and active educators
- Maintaining interest and participation in educational and community affairs.



**It is good to have an end to a
journey towards;
But it is the journey that matters
in the end.**

Ursula Le Guin