



VRTA Newsletter

Publication of Virginia Retired Teachers Association

Member, NRTA—Division of The AARP

Spring 2015 Edition

From Your President



We have been blessed to have had a career that is second to none, that of teaching and molding the minds of children.

Our hands have held tiny hands; mended broken spirits, skinned knees, and nose bleeds; applauded students' successes; hugged a crying child; found promise buried in self defeat; slipped lunch money; tutored; been the reason a student stayed in school; made a difference in a life; waved good-bye at the end of a day.

We continue to be blessed even today in our roles as retired teachers; our hands are not idle. We aid classroom teachers, organize scrapbooks of memories, hold a frail hand, visit nursing home residents, run Relay for Life, knock on doors of the lonely, the elderly, the sick, lobby for teacher benefits, hand out scholarships to students who will become future teachers. Our hands join together to make a difference, to provide support and friendship.

We continue to teach, to mold, to influence, and to serve. We continue to touch lives. By doing so, our lives have become richer and more meaningful. Is that not a blessing! In the words of Longfellow, "let us, then, be up and doing" and "leave behind us footprints on the sands of time" that others may "take heart again" and follow, achieve, and pursue.

I challenge all you to come to the 2015 Spring Delegate Assembly in Blackstone with enthusiasm and determination to make VRTA the best it has ever been.

Phyllis Eastridge
President, VRTA

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VRTA Officers Attend Leadership Conference

Phyllis Eastridge, president of Virginia Retired Teachers Association and Nina McClanahan, president elect of VRTA, attended the NRTA Volunteer Leadership Conference held in San Antonio, Texas, March 2-5. The theme for the conference was Retired Educators Association: Creating a Masterpiece. Members celebrated NRTA's success and diversity of different generations' life experiences. Training sessions were conducted on advocacy efforts, effective social media, and fraud watch network. Both Nina and Phyllis will be trained to lead workshops in the areas addressed at the leadership conference.

Presenters were Dara Dann, NRTA Vice President; Rebecca Villarreal, NRTA Senior Advisor; Tom Nicholls, NRTA Senior Legislative Representative; Kelly Kenneally, NRTA Communications Consultant; Rosa Maymi, Project Advisor, and Mary Beth Dixon, NRTA Advisor.

Nina McClanahan and Phyllis Eastridge at Leadership Conference in San Antonio.



"... Certainly, there are challenges in every General Assembly session, but our optimistic members continued to lobby successfully this year to repeal bad legislation passed in recent years and to educate ourselves and legislators about the necessity of some bills and the dire consequences of others. . ." Page 2

WHO ARE THE WINNERS???



Helen Keller said, "Optimism is the faith that leads to achievements. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence." Optimism doesn't defy reality but embodies an attitude that is the most hopeful view of a situation. Certainly, there are challenges in every General Assembly session, but our optimistic members continued to lobby successfully this year to repeal bad legislation passed in recent years and to educate ourselves and legislators about the necessity of some bills and the dire consequences of others.

We agree with William James that "Pessimism leads to weakness, optimism to power." We are reminded of the tenacious optimism of those who worked successfully in the past to establish the VRS benefits we enjoy today, to protect the continuing contract of teachers, and to reduce the high-stakes testing that is robbing our children of the joy of learning. Those who were successful in these and other accomplishments prevailed because they refused to give up when outcomes looked bleak. They had confidence in their belief that their goals were necessary, being patient and refusing to doubt that they eventually would win.

What must we do to maintain this can-do outlook? Knowledge is a must. Knowing more than a one-sentence identification of an issue gives us confidence and equips us to be effective spokespersons for our cause. During the GA session, many of you read the Legislative Updates and followed up by contacting legislators. Some even thought about these issues enough to ask questions.

On Monday, April 27, at the Delegate Assembly, the VRS staff will make a presentation to the group after lunch. This is an opportunity most do not have to get information directly from those who are in charge of managing our pension fund.

Another opportunity to gain knowledge and understanding of the issues is the Legislative Workshop later on Monday afternoon. We will analyze actions of the 2015 GA and discuss possible strategies in 2016.

"Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier," said Colin Powell. Please join us as we look forward to 2016 and learn how we all can be a positive influence on and most effectively participate in the legislative process. Optimists who have knowledge and are prepared are always the winners.

Bea Morris, VRTA Legislative Chair



VRTA Members at Fall 2014 Legislative Workshop

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or email at hooman4949@gmail.com

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"Organized November 28, 1936"

2014 - 2016 Officers

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My Short, Sweet Teaching Career

By Bonnie Atwood



I am the registered lobbyist for VRTA, and I love it. Some of you have expressed surprise that I've never been a teacher. My background is in experimental psychology, writing, rehabilitation, and law. My experience as a teacher covers raising a child, teaching Sunday school, being a Cub Scout den mother, and one day as a substitute teacher for Richmond Public Schools.

Yes, it was only one day. I thought you might like to hear how my one day went. To tell you the truth, it seemed like it was going to be easy. I remembered my schoolmates had given our substitute teachers a hard time, but I thought I could probably handle it well. I'd be friendly, but not too friendly; authoritative, but not too authoritative. I took a training class, which was very good. It made us think about teaching in much more complex ways than my "Welcome Back, Kotter" perspective.

Early one morning, I got the call. They needed me as a substitute teacher for a kindergarten class across town. Kindergarten? Okay, I can do that. It's not like I have to do a quick review of history and biology. It's kindergarten. Numbers. ABC's. Snacks. Quiet time. What's the problem?

I dressed up like a teacher, found the school on my city map, and got myself over there before opening bell.

The classroom was big and cheerful. The floor had those big spongy puzzle pieces with numbers all over them. The walls were ablaze in primary colors. The large windows overlooked a beautiful lawn. The teacher had left me good instructions. She had periods of time blocked out for this and for that. I would just follow the list.

The first children started to drift in. They were absolutely adorable. Wiggly, and inquisitive, wanting to know where Mrs. Smith was. Their eyes got wide when I told them I would be their teacher just for today, and Mrs. Smith would be back tomorrow. A new teacher? Some of them had never contemplated the possibility. It was clear they liked Mrs. Smith. I was determined to make them like Mrs. Atwood, too.

Then more children came in. And more. Still more. That's when it started to hit me that this job was not going to be a cakewalk. When the class bell rang, my room was packed with children. I don't remember how many, but it was clearly too many. I told them to sit in two big circles on the spongy mat on the floor. Did they do that? Of course not. I realized that almost all of them needed something. Susie lost her barrette. Jane wanted to sit next to Carol, but Carol didn't want to sit next to Jane. John was hitting Joey. Alice had to go to the bathroom. Charlie was crying, but it was impossible to figure out why. The names have been changed to protect the innocent. I tried to solve every problem. A precious few were quiet. Too quiet. It occurred to me that the children who were not clamoring for attention may have been having even more serious problems.

I started to learn their names, and I started to identify different personalities of each child. I worked hard on placing them in what seemed to be the most efficient spots. Slowly, somehow, we started to get through the teacher's activity list. But honestly, how did she do this every day?

After what seemed like a year, it was time for recess. I was so glad. The weather was nice. The kids could run and get their energy out, and I could be still enough to catch my breath for a moment.

Of course, I was wrong again. If I thought class time was hard, recess was 100 times as hard. The classroom had been chaotic, but at least it had walls. The children were contained in an area in which I could see and take care of each one. I opened the door. What I had earlier perceived as a beautiful play area, I suddenly saw as multiple acres of hazards, stretching farther than the eye could see, and bordered by three highways of speeding cars and trucks. I ran after each of my little chicks who strayed too far, and I prayed for the end of this nightmare known as recess.

At the end of a very long day, I met most of the parents. They were nice people. Some were obviously very worried about the problems of their children. Because I remembered being a parent, I tried to make a positive comment to each one. It was hard. They seemed grateful.

I talked briefly with the other teachers. I think they and I knew that I would never be back. It wasn't that I was a failure. It was that the job was stressful in a way that I was not cut out to handle.

I knew then and I know now: it takes a lot of heart and soul to be a good teacher.



News From Around the Commonwealth

BCRTA /District K

On December 8, 2014 the Buchanan County Retired Teachers' Association met at Peking's Restaurant for lunch and to celebrate the Christmas season. The group adopted two residents of Heritage Hall Nursing Home in Grundy, Virginia, and provided gifts. Also, a donation was made to the Coal Miner's Christmas and Special Needs Fund.



Members pictured are Doris Stiltner, Nina McClanahan, Joan Boyd, Kaye Keen, Penny Jennell, Toni Stokes, Retha Pittman, Janie Mullins, Patricia Dales, Judy Holland, Lillian Dales, Donna Hager, Patricia Hogston, and Sharon Lester.

District G Has Fall Meeting

Over thirty area retired educators from local units in Augusta, Bath/Highland, Page, and Shenandoah County as well as from the Harrisonburg/Rockingham area attended the Virginia Retired Teachers Association District G fall meeting on Wednesday, October 22, 2014, at Traditions Restaurant in Harrisonburg.

The program, entitled "Out of the Frying Pan into the Fire?" featured a panel of retired educators who have run for elected office after retirement. Panelists were Bill Moyers of Woodstock, former town council member and mayor; Jody Grogan and Bill Lobb of Staunton, current school board members; and DD Dawson of Harrisonburg who is running for city council.

Moderator Karen Whetzel, who is president of District G and a school board member in Shenandoah County, asked questions about the panel members' experience in education, why they decided to run for public office, whether they ran opposed or unopposed, what the hardest part of being an elected official was, and what they considered their greatest accomplishment. Audience members asked other questions of the panelists.

For more information on District G RTA, or to attend the spring meeting to be held on Thursday, May 21, 2015, at Traditions, contact Karen Whetzel at [540-740-8589](tel:540-740-8589) or kswhetzel@gmail.com.

Left to right - Bill Lobb (Staunton School Board), Jody Grogan (Staunton School Board), DD Dawson (candidate for Harrisonburg City Council), Bill Moyers (past Town Council Member and Mayor in Woodstock), and moderator Karen Whetzel (District G president and Shenandoah County School Board)

Henrico RSPS Recruits New Members

Henrico Retired School Personnel Association actively recruits members throughout the year. Every spring a few Board members man a table outside the dining room where Henrico County Public Schools hosts a luncheon for its new retirees. Each new retiree is greeted by one of the board members, given a mint and a bookmark with an invitation to join HRSPA. Each new retiree also receives a packet of information about HRSPA and a membership form through the school system's mail system. Additionally each new retiree is sent a fall newsletter with an invitation to join.



HRSPA Board Members
Debbie Williams,
Rose Tanner,
Debbie Firebaugh,
Becky Goshorn, and
Lee Reynolds
at the Henrico County
Public Schools Retiree
Luncheon.



News From Around the Commonwealth

Franklin/Southampton RTA

Members began the year with their first quarterly meeting on September 24, 2014, at Martin Luther King, Jr. Center, Franklin, Virginia.

The guest speaker was Martha Wood, a representative of VEA-R. She presented up-dates and other valuable information to the group.

Following the meeting some members visited the Baker's Home to present toiletries to the residents that were provided by the members of the unit. This helped to spread some sunshine on a very rainy day.



Left to right:
Marvia Goode,
Annie Johnson,
Carol Logan,
Rose Galloway and
President
Daphne Miller

Hampton Retired Teachers' Programs

In the past few months, the HRTA has expanded its understanding of the retiree in VA education policies and programs, assisted some of Hampton's elementary school students and entertained themselves.

President Elect Linda Byrd conducted the September 2014 meeting of the Hampton Retired Teachers Association at the Embassy Suites in Hampton, VA. The featured speaker was Delegate Jeion Ward of the 92nd District. Her comments about education issues in Virginia and the active role which retirees can play was informative and inspirational.

HRTA's commitment to education extended in two more areas. Members donated school supplies to Bassette Elementary School students. These were presented by President Elect Byrd and were accepted by Dr. Bryce Johnson, Principal, and Jennifer Seal, BASE Family Support Services worker. Additionally, a generous contribution, totaling \$520, was collected at the meeting from the HRTA members and given to Tarrant Elementary School for its Uniform Fund.

At the December 2014 meeting, the members wore festive holiday headwear, jewelry and outfits. The program featured holiday music from HRTA member Fred Watson, soloist, and Rufus Easter, keyboard accompanist. After their performance, groups were assigned to sing and act out one of the verses from the "Twelve Days of Christmas," and the music renditions brought much laughter from the attendees.

Loudoun County's Spring Project

The LRTA spring project will be working with Loudoun County Public Schools Backpack Coalition in April and May. LREA will provide funds for food and members have signed up to pack backpacks that will provide weekend food for 21 needy families. Backpacks will be delivered through the schools to identified families.



Ann Thorsen at a silent auction table at our February 2015 Loudoun REA meeting. \$519.00 was raised for our scholarship fund.



Bassette Elementary School Principal, Dr. Bryce Johnson; Jennifer Seal, BASE Family Support Services worker and HRTA President Elect, Linda Byrd.

AARP COMMUNITY FOOD DRIVE: WE DID IT AGAIN!!

Patrick County Retired Teachers Association was notified that they had collected the most food of any Virginia unit at the AARP Virginia Community Food Drive held September 12-13, 2014. PCRTA partnered with the Patrick County Food Bank and collected 1710 pounds of food and over \$900. The food will stay in the county and will be distributed by Patrick County Food Bank. This is the second consecutive year that PCRTA has collected the largest amount of food during this drive.

Visit VRTA's Website at VRTA.org

News From Around the Commonwealth

Roanoke County RTA



Retired Roanoke County School Superintendent, Bayes E. Wilson, was honored by the Roanoke County Retired Teachers at their November, 2014 meeting. Dr. Wilson is originally from Russell County and attended Honaker High School. He left school before graduating to join the Air Force to serve his country, but later returned to school getting degrees from Virginia Tech and UVA. During his tenure as an

educator his experiences ranged from cheerleading sponsor to superintendent. Seen here flanked by Dr. Ted Viars on his right and Aubrey Vaughn on his left, he credits them with being his "right hands" during his term as Superintendent of Roanoke County Schools until he retired in 1994.

Buchanan County VRTA Day at the General Assembly

Nina McClanahan, Roger McClanahan and Retha Pittman represented BCRTA/District K on January 29, 2015, in Richmond for VRTA Day at the General Assembly. They met with Delegate James W. (Will) Morefield, who represents the Counties of Bland, Buchanan, Russell (part), and Tazewell. He showed a great interest in both retirement and education issues.



Washington County Retired Teachers Go Back In Time

Each year in August the Retired Teachers of Washington County get to travel back in time. We host at the Duncansville School, a one room school house that has much history with it. In conjunction with the Virginia Highlands Festival of Abingdon, Virginia, the school opens to give present day teachers and students and all those interested the experience of this one room school. The history of the school and its journey from the original spot to the current spot is on display at this historic school museum along with all the comforts of the one room school.



Dinwiddie County RTA

Throughout the year members are involved. We collect and donate books to various school libraries. We participated in the AARP Food Drive during the week of September 7th-13, 2014, for the Dinwiddie County Food Bank. During National Education Week (November 17th-21, 2014), we hosted lunch for all schools in the county. Each member formed a group of three or four to serve at one of the five schools. This photo is from Sunnyside Elementary School McKenney, Virginia.



Pictured left to right:
Mary Alsbrooks,
Mrs. Snodgrass
(Principal), and
Charlie Taylor.

News From Around the Commonwealth

Floyd County Retired Teachers

Remember how challenging it is to keep students motivated in March? This winter has certainly left everyone needing a boost and the Floyd County Retired Teachers are still taking action to help. We are in our third year of sponsoring mini-grants to fund classroom projects. Our grants are awarded in February and FCRTA members deliver the grant checks to each winning teacher in her/his classroom.

As a part of our regular November meeting, we held a "Ready for the Holidays?" sale of crafts and baked goods to fund this project and originally offered two \$200 grants. An education supporter in the community familiar with our past grants gave a generous donation making it possible to fund two additional teacher applications.

Our 2015 winners teach at four different schools. Their projects include kindergarteners incubating chicken eggs, third graders using Legos for storyboarding and multimedia projects, 5-7 grade students developing a school butterfly garden, and high school advanced drawing students combining historical research with drawing, archival quality printing and marketing experiences.



Left to right: Alice Slusher, Kimberly Ingram, Floyd County High School art teacher, Lorice O'Connor, Reba Goff, and Sarah Wood.

King & Queen/King William/West Point RTA Participate in the AARP Food Drive

On Thursday, September 11, 2014, the King & Queen/King William/West Point Retired Teachers Association met at Bruington Baptist Church in Bruington, Virginia, to donate filled bags of food items.

The King and Queen/King William/West Point Retired Teachers Association has participated in the AARP Statewide Community Food Drive for the past several years. The association called on our communities to help support and replenish food items for one of our local banks. This year the group chose to donate our filled bags to the King & Queen Community Ministries Food Bank at Bruington Baptist Church. Mrs. Velma H. Wharton, coordinator, received and expressed her appreciation for the 34 bags of groceries donated. It is always very gratifying to be a part of the AARP Statewide Community Food Drive.

Frederick County Retired Teachers' Association

The Frederick County Retired Teachers' Association conducted two community food drives during their first two meetings of this year. During the first meeting held on September 9, the group collected non-perishable foods for the restocking of the community food bank at the Stephens City United Methodist Church. Over twenty bags of canned and boxed foods along with cash donations were delivered to the food bank for distribution to those who were in need of assistance.

The second food drive was held on November 11 during the second meeting for this year. The group collected food donations that were appropriate for the Thanksgiving season and delivered the food to the local unit of the Salvation Army to assist with the preparation of its annual Thanksgiving Dinner for the community. Also, money was donated for the purchase of turkeys for the community meal and for distribution to individuals in the community. Both of these outreach programs were greatly appreciated by the community.

The final two meetings for this year will focus on the Frederick County Retired Teachers' Scholarship Program. Every year the organization gives a one-time scholarship to a deserving member of the senior class at each of the three county high schools. The recipients of the scholarship must be planning to enroll in an education major at an accredited university. During the upcoming meeting on March 10, the group will hold their annual scholarship auction which is always filled with fun and sharing. The goal for this year's scholarship program is \$4,500 to allow the association to award three \$1,500 scholarships.

During the last meeting of the year on May 12, the Retired Teachers' Association will host a reception for our scholarship recipients and their parents. The students will be afforded an opportunity to address those attending and share information about themselves, as well as their future plans in the field of education. Following their presentation and luncheon, the students and their parents will be provided an opportunity to meet and greet the association members present.



Retired teachers present (left to right) were: William (Bill) Gwathmey (Chaplain), Louise Carlton (President-Elect), Emmaline Page, Abigail Collins, Clara Harris (President).

News From Around the Commonwealth

Patrick County Holds Appreciation Evening

Patrick County Retired Teachers enjoy an evening of celebration and expressing appreciation to retired teachers for the hours and services volunteered during the term 2013-2014. The number of hours reported to NRTA for the With Our Youth program was announced. This program provides opportunities for retired educators and youth to work together to address the needs of youth and the broader community by providing ongoing relationships with caring adults, healthy starts in life, safe places to learn to grow, marketable skills upon graduation, and opportunities for youth to serve in their communities. PCRTA members also served hours in the areas of education, church, health, organizations, and community service.

Honorary certificates from NRTA With Our Youth and certificates in recognition of outstanding service to the people in the community were presented to retired teachers.

A former student, Jason Harris, presented a program of music appropriate for the occasion.



Patrick County Retired Teachers enjoy an evening of celebration and appreciation.

Petersburg/Prince George RTA Elects Officers

At St. Stephen's Episcopal Church at its September 16th meeting, the Petersburg/Prince George unit elected its officers for the 2014-2016 term.

At that same meeting scholarship recipients Faith Pritchett (Petersburg) and Mary C. Shirer (Prince George) were announced.

In other meetings, members have discussed or received information about the Affordable Care Act and the impact of shingles. Door prizes were awarded.



Left to right, President George Henderson; (installing officer, former VRTA president Rosa D. Overby; vice-president, Patricia Bates; secretary, Shirley Townsend; treasurer, Arnetta Jones; and chaplain, Canzata Turner

Prince William RTA



VRTA Community Services Committee Chairperson, Louise Mont-Tucker, presented the Most Outstanding Unit Award to Prince William Retired Teachers' Association Co-President, Bruce Ker.



Prince William Retired Teachers' Association Co-President, Lora Ker, led District N in singing "This Group is Your Group" at its fall meeting in Manassas.

AT YOUR SERVICE

Correction

The article on Page 8 of the Fall 2014, VRTA Newsletter left out the Bath/Highland unit, which had a number of members at the District G meeting in May 2014 in Harrisonburg. We regret the oversight in the article and wanted to recognize that members of the Bath/Highland unit were in attendance.

News From Around the Commonwealth

Richmond-Henrico Retired Teachers Association

Richmond-Henrico Retired Teachers Association is committed to addressing the needs of the youth in our community. The highlight was to bring the joy of the holiday season to children and their families.

The December luncheon held on December 16, 2014, was dedicated to "Giving Back to the Community." R-HRTA members' generous contributions made it possible to make presentations to the Richmond Christmas Mother-Maya Smart, the Henrico Christmas Mother-Becky Goshorn and the Feed More/Back Pack Program Representative, Susan Northrop.

Members donated school supplies, mittens/gloves and hats to be given to five Richmond Public Schools and three Henrico Public Schools. Our volunteers also read to children at these schools on Read Across America/Dr. Seuss Day – March 2, 2015. Many of our members have been volunteering in these schools since September and will continue until the close of school in June.



President
Margaret Wildy;
Richmond Christmas
Mother, Maya Smart;
Henrico Christmas
Mother,
Becky Goshorn



Quentina Kinney,
Susan Northrop
(Feed More/Back
Pack Program),
and Virginia Hayes

News from District D

District D continued its tradition of excellence as units performed outstanding community service activities and also developed and implemented creative unity projects.

The Amelia Unit hosted the first district meeting of 2014-2015 on September 8. Mr. Jack McKinley, Superintendent of Amelia County Schools, spoke about his vision of excellence, expansion, and engagement. Sheriff C.T. Woody, from the City of Richmond highlighted his work with the Urban Task Force and his connection with faith based programs and their goal of curbing drop-out rates.

Officers were installed prior to the business session for 2014-2016. Patricia Holland, president, Greenville Unit; Jeanetter Urquhart, president-elect, Sussex Unit; Jean Marrow, secretary, Amelia Unit; Dr. Henry Featherston, Jr., treasurer, Amelia Unit.

A memorial service was held to remember seven members of the district.

The Brunswick Unit hosted the December 8 district meeting. The keynote address was presented by Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. Dora Winn. Her remarks were focused on "Building a Culture of Collaboration and Quality" stating that we must teach the whole child. The Christmas celebration featured a medley of carols with audience participation. A highlight of the meeting was the presentation of VRTA awards in the categories of scholarship donation, banner displayed, equalized membership, and early-bird reporting. Thirty-nine certificates were awarded by president-elect, Mrs. Jeanetter Urquhart and president, Miss Patricia Holland.

District D of the Virginia Retired Teachers Association is comprised of 12 units which represent 13 counties and four cities of central Virginia, making it the largest district in the state.



District D officers for 2014-2016—Patricia Holland, President, Greenville Unit; Rosa Davis Overby, past VRTA President (installed officers); Jean Marrow, secretary, Amelia Unit; Jeanetter Urquhart, president-elect, Sussex Unit.

VRTA Insurance Committee



Left to right, Larry Hardesty, Karen Whetzel, John Harris

News From Around the Commonwealth

District D Secretary Leads

Project Sharing Session at Fall Conference

Based on expressed interest by members, a session on sharing ideas was introduced at the VRTA Fall Conference held on October 6, 2014, in Blackstone at the Blackstone Conference and Retreat Center. The presentation, led by Jean Marrow, District D secretary and unit president from Amelia, focused on projects, creative ideas for fundraisers, unique methods to reach goals, and different ways to approach the "usual activities" that would lead to success. A Community Service Log, sample service reports and a copy of our Unity Project guidelines were given out. The informal discussion led to other units sharing interesting projects that had been successful for them.

Patricia Holland and Glenn Pair, Sr. from the Greenville Unit informed the members of a 40th anniversary celebration honoring "Torch Bearers" – retirees who had been members of the GRTA for ten years or more.

President Don McInturf, of the Mecklenburg Unit shared a fundraiser with a twist. Letters were sent out asking for contributions to their "Bakeless Bake Sale." Members and others were asked to donate the money to their scholarship fund that might have been used to bake something.

Other examples of fundraisers included donations from members for a silent auction and a "Make it or Bake it" for a hospital rummage sale.

York Retired Teachers

York Retired Teachers Association honored Myrtle Soles for her 25 years of service as treasurer to our organization. Myrtle has put in many hours as treasurer and also has been active on several committees. She was instrumental in increasing our membership each year. Her commitment to be our auctioneer for our annual auction fundraiser for our scholarship fund was always greatly appreciated. The YRTA thanks Myrtle for her wonderful years of service.



Myrtle Soles



Roanoke City RTA's Fall Activities

The Roanoke City Retired Educators' Association met on September 11, 2014, at Covenant Presbyterian Church. Our guest speaker was Peter Lewis, who founded the Apple Ridge Farm Education Program. Hundreds of children have benefited from supplemental educational opportunities and outdoor, environmental experiences at Apple Ridge Farm during the summers. We also heard from Kathy Duncan, ROTEC principal, who leads the Teach for Tomorrow program open to high school students who are considering careers in education. The program is offered at William Fleming and Patrick High Schools.

On October 1, 2014, our group enjoyed an Oktoberfest trip. Teachers from Roanoke City Schools and Roanoke County Schools took a day trip to the Shenandoah Valley with lunch at Edelweiss Restaurant and a tour of Wade's Mill and wine tasting at Rockbridge Vineyard. The trip was arranged by Bonnie Mann, president of RCREA.

On December 10, 2014, RCREA members and their guests, met at Hidden Valley Country Club for our annual Christmas luncheon. A program by "Hands for God Puppet Ministry" was presented.



Retired educators from Roanoke County and Roanoke City on their trip to the Shenandoah Valley



From 1,003 Great Things About Teachers

- If you teach young enough kids, the really smart ones don't realize they're smarter than you are.
- They never let on that the last half hour of the day passes just as slowly for them as it does for the students.
- They have all the good colors of construction paper.

News From Around the Commonwealth

Suffolk Community Food Drive

Suffolk Retired Teacher Association partnered with AARP, the students of Lakeland High School's Family and the Community Leaders of America to collect for the community food drive. The food drive was held at Walmart on Saturday, September 13, 2014. Susan Shields of the Salvation Army collected the food to supply the food pantry.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the staff of Walmart; the members of Lakeland High School's faculty, Mrs. Phyliss Elmore, Mr. Lawrence Stratus; and their students, Nadirah Butler-Martin, Lisa Matthews, Keonna Hayes, Molly Cox, Alexis S. Knight, Elysia Hickman, Benevante Stephenson, Destiny Davis, Darius Reid, Tatiana Ivory Cazeau and Quintia Riddick.

Members of the Retired Teachers who participated included; Marion Flood, Marion Wright, Madeleine Stokes, Costella Ledbetter, Mary Copeland, and Mary Stevenson, Vergie Sandiford, and Pricilla Benn.

We were fortunate enough to collect 522 pounds of food and \$403.00 used to purchase food. Last but not least we would like to thank the generous community for supporting this cause.



Botetourt Retired Educators

Members of the Botetourt Retired Educators have participated in a variety of service projects this year. In September school supplies were collected to be distributed by the Department of Social Services to needy students in the county. Nonperishable foods were collected in November for the Botetourt Food Pantry. In December toiletry items were donated to an assisted living facility in the county. This facility is all-male home, many of whom are veterans.

At both meetings in the spring, BRE members donate money for the scholarship fund and the book fund. BRE gives two \$1,000 scholarships to a senior from each of the county high schools. The recipients plan to enter the field of education. Money collected in the book fund is used to purchase books for the libraries in each of the schools in the county. Last year two books were purchased for each of the 11 schools in Botetourt County.

BRE's December Service Project — Toiletry items for assisted living home



Shenandoah County RTA

The Shenandoah County Retired Teachers Association held its annual Back to School Breakfast Meeting on Tuesday, September 2, 2014. Food was collected for Luke's Backpack. Members donated 514 items with approximate value of \$300 and \$290 in cash or checks in September. We also collected 250 pounds of food and \$44 for the Strasburg Food Pantry in December. The two food drives are held yearly.



Officers of SCRTA (l to r - Karen Whetzel, President; Connie Fauber, Vice- President; Maryann Sherry, Treasurer; Virginia Stultz, Secretary; Bill Moyers, Past President)



Virginia Stultz, Secretary, looks over some of the food collected in bags for Luke's Backpack

Get Ready!!

It's Coming—the VRTA Spring Delegate Assembly, April 27-28

Pack your bags, grab new members, and come to Blackstone.

These are some of the highlights :

- Entertainment by Ladies of the Lake, a musical group made up of retired teachers near Smith Mountain Lake.
- Keynote speaker, Bob Blancato, president of Virginia AARP
- Interesting and informative sessions on legislation, insurance, heart health, nutrition and exercising, consumer protection, tips for treasurers, writing a With Our Youth report, and making a deco-mesh wreath. For those who want to make the wreath, you may want to bring a roll of deco mesh and a wire or straw wreath form, or you can just watch.

It will be a full agenda. Meet old acquaintances and make new friends.

See you there!

Ladies of the Lake will Entertain on Monday Evening

The Ladies of the Lake, a trio from Smith Mountain Lake, has been together for five years. Their performances feature traditional and acoustic music. Pamela, Liz and Shirley all play guitar and sing harmony in a variety of styles including Popular Songs of the Civil War; Moonshine, Mountains and memories, (songs of the Blue Ridge and Appalachia); Nostalgia and the standards from Tin Pan Alley; Country and Pop, Stage and Screen, Gospel, Hymns and Spirituals, songs of Ireland and the British Isles, Love, Romance and Broken Hearts; Patriotism and Protest; Cowboy, Western and Pioneer Songs and Childhood Favorites.

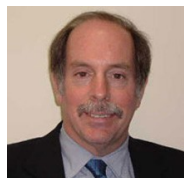
The Ladies have performed for museums, libraries, nursing homes, church groups, fundraisers, re-enactment groups, historical societies, neighborhood associations, educational groups, street festivals, State and National Parks, book signings, and luncheon gatherings in Franklin, Bedford, Pittsylvania, Henry, Patrick and Roanoke counties.

The trio has had many years combined experience in vocal music and have brought this to the group. They met at the Skelton 4H Center at Smith Mountain Lake when it offered guitar classes in 2008. The three became friends when they started blending vocal sounds with their guitar lessons. By 2009 they were ready to bring some joy to clubs and groups around the lake, then historical, educational, church and other types of organizations signed on for entertainment and fun.

The Ladies of the Lake promote singing along. Everyone can get in on the fun and the joy of singing.



Bob Blancato to Speak to the Delegate Assembly in Blackstone



Bob Blancato will deliver the keynote address on Tuesday morning at the VRTA Delegate Assembly. Bob is President of Matz Blancato and Associates located in Washington D.C. He is the National Coordinator of the bipartisan 3000 member Elder Justice Coalition. He serves as Executive Director of the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs. Bob has more than 20 years of federal government service in the Congress and Executive branches including 13 years as on the senior staff of the House Select Committee on Aging and an appointment by President Clinton to be Executive Director of the 1995 White House Conference on Aging. Currently Bob is in volunteer leadership roles with top national aging groups including serving a second term as AARP Volunteer State President in Virginia, a member of Board and Executive Committee for the American Society on Aging and on the Board of the National Council on Aging. He holds a BA from Georgetown University and an MPA from American University. Bob has won numerous awards for advocacy and in 2011 was knighted by the Italian Republic for his commitment to the relationship between the United States and Italy.

Plan to be in attendance Tuesday morning to hear Bob speak to the Delegate Assembly.

**Attention Districts and Local Units!!!
Don't forget to bring your banners and
scrapbooks for display
at the Delegate Assembly in Blackstone!**

Receiving the VRTA Newsletter Electronically



For several years VRTA has tried to determine the best way to deliver the spring and fall newsletters to those who want to receive it electronically. Surveys were sent in several newsletters, but the response was minimal. We plan to create a list of people who want to access their newsletter by email. Once the newsletter has been placed on the VRTA website (VRTA.org), people will receive an email informing them that the newsletter is available. This seems to be the best way for them to get the newsletter. Even if you have previously indicated that you would like to receive your newsletter by email, please send your email address to: Weldon Martin(hooman4949@gmail.com) or you can mail it to: 1049 Martins Lane, Fincastle, VA 24090. Hopefully, we can begin to try this system of delivery for the Fall 2015 VRTA Newsletter in August.

Most Active Member



Joyce Williams presents the Most Active Member Award to Bea Morris

From the VRTA Treasurer

Reminders for local unit treasurers:

Continue to submit names of deceased members and address changes to me

It is now time to start sending in state dues for 2015-2016 membership

Membership forms, Dues Settlement Statement Forms and the Handbook for Local Unit Treasurers will be available at the Spring Delegate Assembly. These items can be mailed to you by request if you are unable to attend the delegate assembly.

All units or districts who are part of the VRTA IRS Group Exemption (commonly referred to as our Group Tax Umbrella) must submit a copy of your 2015-2016 budget to the state treasurer by December 31, 2015. (Some of you have still not submitted your 2014-2015 budgets and these are now past due.) They must be signed and dated by two unit officers.

Contact information: Weldon Martin,
1049 Martins Lane, Fincastle, VA 24090.

Email: hooman4949@gmail.com.

Phone: (540)473-2636.

Thanks for all of your help and I look forward to seeing many of you in Blackstone at the Spring Delegate Assembly.

Weldon Martin, Treasurer

With Our Youth

Reminder: Units need to send their Community Service With Our Youth Hours to Louise Mont-Tucker by June 15, 2015. Send to: P.O. Box 430, Broadnax, VA 23920. Her email address is: loumonttuc@hotmail.com



Blackstone Conference and Retreat Center — 707 Fourth Street Blackstone, VA 23824

Phone — 434-292-5308

Directions to Blackstone Conference and Retreat Center

From the North:

I-95 South to I-85 South at Petersburg

Take I-85 South to Route 460 West to Blackstone

Take first Blackstone exit (Business 460) Main Street

Follow Main Street into town, go through 5 traffic lights

Take right on Fourth Street to BCRC

From the East:

Route 460 West to Blackstone

Take first Blackstone exit (Business 460) Main Street

Follow Main Street into town, go through 5 traffic lights

Take right on Fourth Street to BCRC

From the South:

I-85 to South Hill Exit 15

Route 138 North to Kenbridge

Right turn at traffic light

Route 40 into Blackstone on Main Street

Follow Main Street into town to Fourth Street

Left on Fourth Street to BCRC

From the West:

Route 460 East to Nottoway Exit (Business 460)

Route 460 Business into Blackstone on Church Street

Right at College Avenue to BCRC

Future Conferences



- 2015 Fall VRTA Meeting — October 5-6
 2016 Spring Delegate Assembly — April 25-26
 2016 Fall VRTA Meeting — October 10-11

Newsletter Articles

VRTA wants your news for the newsletters. It would be helpful if articles submitted for publishing would be emailed to the newsletter editor. If an article cannot be emailed, typing the article helps to ensure accuracy. Pictures can be emailed or mailed to the editor. The people that are pictured should have given permission for their pictures to be used in the newsletter. This is especially important if pictures of students are included with the article. All submitted articles will be used if space permits. Articles received after the deadline will likely not be included. The deadline for the Fall 2015 newsletter is Wednesday, August 12.

Susan Martin
 Newsletter Editor

Menus for VRTA Conference

Monday, April 27

Breakfast – Scrambled Eggs
 Bacon
 Diced Hash Browns
 Assorted Muffins
 Cold Cereal

Lunch – Virginia Ham
 Green Beans
 Roasted Sweet Potato
 Broccoli/Cauliflower Medley
 Cobbler

Dinner – Baked Chicken
 Tossed Salad
 Baked Potato
 Three Bean Salad
 Yellow Cake with Chocolate Icing

Tuesday, September 28

Breakfast – Scrambled Eggs
 Sausage Pattie
 Fried Apples
 Biscuits
 Cold Cereal

Lunch – Pork Barbeque on Bun
 Cole Slaw
 Baked Beans
 Fruit Cup

(Menus are subject to change.)



VRTA Mailing List

In order to make the VRTA mailing list more accurate, names of people whose newsletters have been returned to VRTA three times in a row will be removed from the list. If you know someone who should be receiving a newsletter and is not getting it, please inform the newsletter editor. Please continue to inform the VRTA treasurer about members' address changes and deaths of VRTA members. With your help VRTA can cut the cost of the postage for mailing the newsletters.

VRTA 2015 Delegate Assembly Schedule

Sunday 7:00pm — Executive Committee Meeting

Monday 8:am — Breakfast

9:00am — 11:30am — Registration

9:30am — Board of Directors meeting

11:45am — Welcome and Lunch

12:50pm — General Session — Virginia Retirement System

2:00pm - 5:30pm — Concurrent Workshop Sessions

6:00pm — Dinner

7:15pm — Entertainment

8:30pm — Popcorn and Bingo

Tuesday 8:00am — Breakfast

9:00am — Delegate Assembly and Keynote Speaker

12.00noon — Lunch

Who is a Voting Delegate?

Voting members of the Delegate Assembly shall be members of the Executive Committee, district presidents, unit presidents, and two delegates from each local unit. If a unit has over 100 members, it shall have an additional delegate for each 50 members or fraction thereof. Before you register for the VRTA Delegate Assembly, determine if you are a delegate from your unit.



Visit the VRTA Website at
VRTA.org

VRTA Delegate Assembly
 April 27-28, 2015
 Blackstone Conference and Retreat Center

Note: Registration fees and lodging rates are per person, not per room or per couple.
Each person attending the conference should fill out a registration form.

1. **Registration** postmarked by Monday, April 20, 2015 \$25.00
 Amount paid (**Late registration --- \$35.00**) 1.

	<u>One Night</u>	<u>Two nights</u>	<u>Total</u>
2. Lodging: Main Building (one person/room -- \$47.50/night)	_____	_____	_____
(multiple persons -- \$43.75 per person/night)	_____	_____	_____
Goodson Lodge (one person/room -- \$58.00/night)	_____	_____	_____
(multiple persons/room -- \$53.25 per person/night)	_____	_____	_____
Roommates _____			
Total for Lodging			2.

Room assignments will be made based on the registration postmark. Later registrants may have to share a bathroom with an adjoining room.

3. **Meals:**

	Monday	Breakfast – 8:00 AM	\$7.50	_____	
		Lunch – 11:45 AM	\$12.00	_____	
		Supper – 6:00 PM	\$9.00	_____	
	Tuesday	Breakfast – 8:00 AM	\$7.50	_____	
		Tuesday – 12 Noon	\$11.00	_____	
		Sub Total for Meals			3.

4. **Total of enclosed check to VRTA** (For total add Registration Fee, Lodging, and Meals) 4.

5. NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____
 PHONE _____ EMAIL _____
 EMERGENCY CONTACT – NAME _____ PHONE _____
 NAME OF LOCAL UNIT _____ DISTRICT _____
 ROOM PREFERENCE _____ (Will be honored, if possible, as forms are received.)
 SUNDAY ARRIVAL TIME (if applicable) _____ (**May register, any time after 4:30 PM**)
 DIETARY RESTRICTIONS _____ (Will be honored, if possible; use back of form to list dietary issues)

6. ARE YOU A VOTING DELEGATE? _____

7. Mail completed registration form and check, payable to VRTA, no later than Monday, April 20, 2015. Send to: Leigh McKay,
 3025 McVitty Forest Dr., #209, Roanoke, VA 24018, Phone: 540-989-4417 (home) or 540-529-5131 (cell), email – cwmck5@cox.net

Virginia Retired
Teachers Association
Susan Martin
Newsletter Editor
1049 Martins Lane
Fincastle, VA 24090

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Scenes from the Fall 2014 Conference



Nina McClanahan — President-Elect



Delegate Ken Plum at Legislative Session



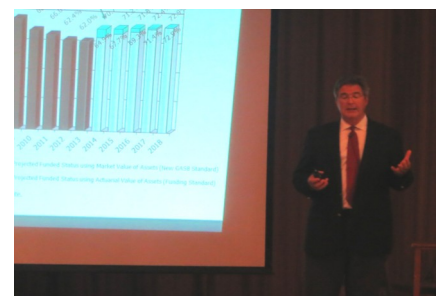
Flower Arranging Workshop



Executive Committee Meeting



Board of Directors Meeting



VRS Presentation