



VRTA Newsletter

Publication of Virginia Retired Teachers Association

Member, NRTA—Division of The AARP

Fall 2020 Edition

A Message from the VRTA President



As I begin my term of office as your president, I want to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing leadership of the Virginia Retired Teachers Association that has been led by Ben McCartney for the past two years. I appreciate the knowledge and guidance that Mr. McCartney's team provided me, and I will continue to focus on our association's Mission Statement that reads, in part: "to be the voice, resource and connection for all retired school personnel," as well as our Vision Statement that promises "All retired school personnel will be safe, productive, informed and financially secure in retirement."

We have canceled our 2020 October conference because of the COVID-19 virus restrictions at the Double Tree Hotel.

However, be reminded in your district and local organizations, continue to send your dues to your unit treasurer. Also continue to send in your yearly reports, such as your annual report.

In our plan to implement visual ways to communicate with our members and conduct association business, our board proposes the following:

1. To communicate to members that "we care" by using Facebook to check on our members and stay in touch;
2. Create "Virtual Engagement Opportunities" that share AARP's Online Events. We will use Facebook, the Creekside newsletter, made available electronically, provided by our insurance agent of record;
3. Promote meaning through "Virtual" volunteering. We will coordinate volunteer activities through the Virginia AARP office, and use Facebook and Creekside to help promote our events.

As retired educators, we continue to dedicate our lives to helping children reach their potential and we rejoice in seeing the successes of our former students. We stand for the education of all students. We support the public school system and its employees. VRTA continues to work for dignity of retirees and for improvements in VRS.

I am proud to be the president of an organization whose members volunteer in many community service capacities. We support advocacy for children, teachers, retirees and public education. Fostering open communication between VRTA members and legislators is so very important. Most of our local units provide scholarships for deserving students.

As decisions are made regarding the Spring 2021 Delegate Assembly, I will inform you as soon as possible. Have a safe and healthy fall and I hope to see you soon.

Fall 2019 VRTA Conference



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Meet the VRTA Officers

Glenn Pair, Sr.—President

Glenn Pair, Sr, the new president of VRTA, is a long-time member of the organization. He has served as president of the Greensville Retired Teachers Association, District D president, chaplain of VRTA, and president-elect of VRTA. He is proud and excited to take the leadership mantle of the organization. Mr. Pair's favorite quote is one that he actively practices and shares each day, "Train up a child by teaching him the way he should go and when he is old he will not turn away from it." (Proverbs 22:6) Glenn brings four decades of secondary education experience to his new role as VRTA's president.

Mr. Pair grew up in Emporia, Virginia, and was the first African American male to graduate from the formally all white school in Greensville County. Mr. Pair received a bachelor's degree in political science from Saint Paul's College in 1972 and a master's of education degree with a specialty in secondary education administrative supervision from Bowie State University. He taught one year in Mecklenburg County, Virginia. For 31 years he was a teacher at Northeast High School in Pasadena, Maryland. Glenn also ran a successful home maintenance company there. After retiring from Northeast in 2004, Pair taught social studies until 2011 at Greensville High School in Emporia. At Greensville High School, he served as the head and lead teacher in the social studies department, was a mentor to new teachers and coordinated the placement of full time teachers with student teachers.

Mr. Pair is a past president of the Greensville County Education Association and is a lifetime member of the National Education Association. Glenn is the founder of Christian Boys Clubs Ministries and serves on the board of deacons at First Baptist Church in south Richmond.

Jean Marrow—President-elect

Jean Marrow is a native of Chapel Hill, North Carolina. She attended North Carolina Central College which is now known as North Carolina Central University. Inspired by her English teachers, she sought a career in education. At the age of 20, she graduated with a major in English and a minor in French. Her interview for a teaching position was held at a Greyhound bus station in Richmond. The principal hired her that evening to teach English and French to students at Russell Grove High School in Amelia Court House, Virginia.

During her thirty-four year career, she taught at Russell Grove for several years. Once the schools desegregated, she continued teaching at the renamed Amelia County High School. Jean taught students English and French in grades eight through eleven. In the evening she taught English to adults seeking a GED. At one point, she was the secretary for four different organizations. Later, she went on to earn a master's degree in education administration from Longwood College in Farmville.

Jean Marrow—continued

After a full career, she decided to retire from the Amelia County Public Schools. She moved to Chesterfield County in 2005. Shortly after the move, Amelia County developed the Russell Grove Academy which was a summer school program for at-risk students. The goal of the program was to bring the students up to grade level. She was hired to teach the students who were enrolled in that program. After the completion of that program, she began volunteering for the Chesterfield County Registrar's Office as an office helper. During that time, she served as a precinct chief for thirteen years and became a permanent part-time employee at the registrar's office.

Jean is a member of Zion Hill Presbyterian Church in Amelia, where she serves as an elder and secretary of the women's missionary. Currently she is the president of her local RTA unit in Amelia and the secretary of District D.

Karen Whetzel—Vice-president

Karen Whetzel is a graduate of Madison College, where she got her BS in 1971, MS in 1975, and administrative endorsement in 1996. She worked for 38 years in Shenandoah County Public Schools, as an elementary librarian and high school administrator. She has served 11 years on the Shenandoah County School Board and is current chair. Whetzel was president of Shenandoah County RTA for six years and has been president of District G- RTA for several years. She volunteers with the New Market Area Library and the New Market Area Chamber of Commerce.

Virginia Retired Teachers Association

"Organized November 28, 1936"

2020- 2022 Officers

President—Glenn Pair, Sr.	(434)594-9661 gpair1949@gmail.com
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Immediate Past President Ben McCartney	(540)347-9516 bhmcarrt@gmail.com

Visit VRTA's Website at VRTA.org

Reba Evans—Secretary

Reba Evans is a retired elementary librarian/media specialist. She was librarian at Oakland Elementary School in Carroll County for 30 years. After retirement, she joined the Carroll County Retired Teachers Association and moved to Sparta, North Carolina. She is a life member of District M, VRTA, VEA and NEA. She also belongs to NRTA. She is a member of Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, Iota Virginia State and Alpha Kappa Chapter. She has served the CCRTA as vice president and is president at this time. She also serves as president of District M. She is honored to serve as secretary of VRTA. Reba is single and lives with her mother and brother in Sparta, North Carolina, just seven miles from the Virginia line. She remains active in both Carroll County and in Sparta. She currently secretary of her church and the local historical society. She is also a secretary of the Alleghany County Public Library Friends of the Library. Since Reba is interested in history, she is a member of the Alleghany Historical and Genealogical Society and a member of the Alleghany Historical Museum committee. Her hobbies include reading; especially historical novels, magazines, and humor and crafting; especially knitting, crocheting, and embroidery. Reba also likes to play computer games.

Weldon Martin--Treasurer

Weldon Martin was born in Roanoke, Virginia, and is the oldest of five brothers. The family moved to Botetourt County when he was six years old. He grew up on the family farm near Fincastle, Virginia, attending Botetourt County Schools and graduating from Lord Botetourt High School in 1967. Weldon attended the University of Virginia, receiving a BA in history in 1971 and an MED in school administration in 1975. He returned to Botetourt County as an elementary school social studies teacher, moved into school administration, and retired in 2003, after 32 years of service. He served as an elementary school principal for 26 years.

Weldon is married to retired middle school teacher, Susan Martin, and they have one son, Benjamin, who is an environmental scientist. Susan is the newsletter editor for VRTA and is currently serving as president of the Botetourt Retired Educators. They continue to live on Martins Farm, where they built their home in 1990.

Weldon is very active in a variety of volunteer jobs. He serves in several leadership positions in his local church and at the district level, including serving as the lay delegate from his church to the Virginia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, singing in the church choir and serving as church treasurer. He serves as executive director, treasurer, and newsletter editor for the Botetourt County Historical Society, Inc. and Museum; on the board of Godwin Cemetery; secretary of the Kiwanis Club of Botetourt County; member of Catawba Masonic Lodge and a member of the Botetourt Retired Educators. Along with his duties as treasurer of VRTA, these volunteer opportunities keep him very busy. During his spare time, he enjoys reading, traveling, playing with the family dog, Cooper, and sitting on the front porch.

Ben McCartney—Immediate Past President

Ben McCartney grew up in Alexandria, Virginia, and upon graduation from high school, attended the University of Richmond. After graduation, Ben started teaching for the Fauquier County Public Schools. Over the course of thirty-five years, he taught various social studies courses including US government, AP US government, US history, world geography, psychology and AP psychology. He was twice named Teacher of the Year, locally, during his career and was nominated twice for the prestigious Agnes Meyer Award sponsored by the Washington Post.

After retirement in 2008, he continues working with students. He teaches psychology seminars for Mountain Vista Governors School and is still active in helping to coordinate a foreign exchange program with a high school in mid-Wales, which he started in 1996. Ben works with the Fauquier County Board of Elections and instituted the Election Page Program in Fauquier County, which he still coordinates. Ben has been active in the Fauquier Retired Teachers Association since retirement, serving four terms as president. He is on the board of directors for the University of Virginia Community Credit Union, chairman of an investment group and active in his church, St. John The Evangelist Catholic Church.

Ben has been married to his wife, Mary Pat, since 1979. She was a career educator who retired the same year as Ben. They have two grown children and two young grandchildren. "My wife is the most wonderful person I know." She is a wonderful partner, mother, grandmother and friend to all. She has been so supportive of all the endeavors I have tried over the years. In our leisure time, we like to spend quality time with our grown children and grandchildren, as well as doing some travel and visiting our local wineries in the northern piedmont.

Fall 2019 VRTA Conference



So What Do We Do?



There is a saying that history repeats itself. That may be true in some respects, but much of what we are experiencing now is brand new. However, when we review our past, we remember how we got through the hard times and the lessons we learned. When we feel so uncertain now, perhaps we should hearken back to some of those times and lessons.

First, be realistic and accept the changes we need to make. Our physical safety and health are paramount. Whether we like wearing a mask or not (who does like it?), the experts tell us it is necessary to curb the spread of this virus. So just wear it! For however long we need to do it! Avoiding crowds and social distancing are especially difficult. We are used to spending much of our time trying to get people to make up a crowd, the bigger the better. But at least for a while, we are going to have to forego certain events we have always looked forward to. **For this reason, we are canceling our in-person VRTA lobby day this year, but we will still be keeping up with legislation and emphasizing contacts with legislators.** Unless an issue is time sensitive, the old fashioned letter may be more effective than the deluge of emails they receive every day. Units and districts may not be able to continue with some of their meetings and traditions, but instead of forgetting about the group, creative leaders will adapt and will find ways to keep the group together and express concern for each other.

Second, be encouraging to the younger generations and others who are living with such stress today. Listen to their frustrations and show your understanding and wisdom as you share the hardships of your past and the lessons you learned. I sometimes think the lifestyle of today makes it harder for young people to be patient, to be inconvenienced, and to sacrifice than it was for us. And we need to demonstrate coping skills today in the way we help our VRTA leaders as they try to keep our units and districts intact. Technology is a wonderful tool, but not all of us have it or are as adept at using it as others.

Third, be a strong link in communication and make it fun. Especially now it is important to keep everyone informed and help those who are having difficulty with new programs without making this another source of stress. Certainly, always respond to an email even if all you say is, "Got it." A friend and I recently decided on a date and time to have a telephone lunch. We each got our own lunch, I called her at noon, and we ate and talked for an hour and a half. A real conversation allows quick response, and it's comforting to hear a friend's voice. We went smoothly from topic to topic, as we never could have done in email, and learned things from each other. I was glad that I could dispel some very strange information she had gotten, and almost believed, from Facebook about our governor. Later I emailed her the May Creekside E-Newsletter which included the "Virtual Workshop" on how to recognize fake news. If you didn't get that newsletter, let me know and I'll see that you get the article "Use the SMELL Test to Sniff Out Fake News." Also, let me know if you are not getting this Creekside E-Newsletter about the 15th of every month.

Yes, some aspects of history do repeat themselves such as the American ideals of freedom, commitment to personal responsibility, and continued work for justice for all. We have been and are today resilient people.

Bea Morris, Legislative Chairperson

How to Talk to The Press

Bonnie Atwood



In times of crisis, such as school shootings, or pandemics, it is the news reporter's job to interview as many people as he can. When you are at the school, or involved with the school, whatever your job, you may be the one approached for comment. If you're that person, you may want to review these few tips for grace under pressure.

1. Don't get angry. The reporter is doing his job as thoroughly as possible. If you are on public property, he has every right to approach you.
2. If you have no authority (such as the principal or superintendent would have), then you have no duty to answer the reporter's questions.
3. Never give information that has not been screened by the public relations personnel.
4. Never guess. Do not say, "I think the fire started in the kitchen," unless you know that as a fact and are authorized to repeat it. It is fine to say, "I don't know," or "I'm not at liberty to say."
5. Speak properly. As a teacher, you are a model for clear speech and correct grammar. Even under stress, you don't get a "pass."
6. Keep answers short. Don't answer a true-false question as though it were an essay question. Think of your answer as a "sound-bite," not a conversation.
7. Never, ever, under any circumstances, lie.

News From Around the Commonwealth

Allegheny Retired Teachers

The Allegheny Retired Teachers began their first meeting of 2019-2020 year in September at Scott Hill Retirement Community with Sheena Jackson, the manager of Scott Hill discussing services they offer. Chef Chuck from Scott Hill supplied a buffet lunch. Chuck Swope from Creekside Insurance Advisors gave an update on their services. The service project for the September meeting was to collect school supplies for the area schools.

In October, four members were able to attend the state conference in Midlothian and six members attended the District P meeting. The members who attended gave a presentation at the December meeting and encouraged others to attend these meetings.

The annual December meeting was held at Temple Baptist Church with the Allegheny High School Choirs, under the direction of Amanda Sprouse, entertaining members. The members welcomed guest speaker, Holly Peters, a retired teacher serving as the 2019 Highlands Christmas Mother. She gave us an update on the Christmas Mother Program. For the December service project, members donated items for the Christmas Mother Program. Holly was very appreciative for the donations of personal care items, household items, cleaning supplies, school supplies, paper products, toys, clothes, and monetary donations. The luncheon was catered by A & B Catering.

The March meeting was held at Epworth United Methodist Church and the guest speaker was Tamara Reid, a YMCA instructor. She discussed several programs offered at the YMCA. She showed chair yoga and had members try some of the yoga moves and discussed the importance of keeping physically active. The service project for March was to collect items for the local food pantries. The lunch was prepared by the Epworth UMW group and the officers supplied the desserts and drinks.

Three \$500 scholarships were awarded at the March meeting. Recipients were Shawn Shiflett (Covington High School), Abby Hicks and Beverly Silver (Allegheny High School). The scholarship fund is funded through member donations, a 50/50 drawing at each meeting, memorial donations to honor a deceased teacher and District P annual contributions to each unit.

Due to the COVID-19 virus, ARTA was unable to have their May meeting. We hope to resume in September.



Allegheny High School choirs entertained retired teachers.



2020 ARTA Scholarship Recipients Pictured are (left to right) Anita Rice, ARTA Vice President, Shawn Shiflett, Abby Hicks, and Beverly Silver.



School supplies were donated to four schools. Pictured are ARTA members Brenda Lawson and Valerie Humphreys

Henrico Retired School Personnel Association

The Henrico Retired School Personnel Association canceled its April luncheon because of Covid-19. The Board of Directors handled all association business virtually including sending out the newsletter via email. It did however award its 2020 scholarships as follows: the \$2000 student scholarship went to Makayla Lewis, a graduating senior from Mills Godwin High School; the two \$1000 personnel scholarships were awarded to Samantha Spigel, a third grade teacher at Tuckahoe Elementary School and Jenine Cotman, a physical education teacher at Ratcliffe Elementary School. The members of HRSP also supported its spring philanthropy project, the Henrico Education Foundation's SS Challenge which provided much needed classroom supplies. The board continues to address association business virtually in these unusual times. Stay safe and healthy everyone!

Augusta Retired Educators

Augusta Retired Educators Association members Virginia Martin and Georgianne Hull stand before a mountain of snacks collected by the group at their December meeting. The snacks went to the Valley Mission After School program, which serves resident school age children. Jane Hammond and Georgianne Hull spearheaded the project and delivered a Highlander filled with goodies to the Mission.



News From Around the Commonwealth

Suffolk Retired Teachers Association

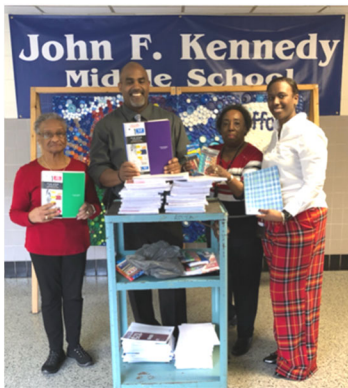
The Suffolk Retired Teachers Association (SRTA) is excited about starting off a busy year for 2020. Our focus is to increase membership, visibility within the schools and community, continue to award scholarships and inform retirees of the various changes in public education and retirement.

SRTA had the pleasure of having a representative, Debbie Biesecker, of the Senior Solutions of Virginia to meet and share information covering health insurance, life insurance and Medicare.

Members of SRTA participated in and supported the following: school supplies collected and delivered to John F. Kennedy Middle School in February; monetary gifts given to Salvation Army, Western Tidewater Free Clinic and The Genieve Shelter. A scholarship will be awarded to a high school senior that will be attending a college or university in the fall of 2020. This scholarship is based on academic achievements and community services.

Because of the Covid-19, we have had telephone conference calls. Updated information from VRTA was shared such as ways of increasing membership and ideas for fundraisers. Hopefully, many of us will attend the combined Spring/Fall Conference in October.

SRTA looks forward to a wonderful year of serving, giving, and caring, while enjoying professional interactions. We take a strong stand on our beliefs about the education of our students and improving public service in our community.



Collected school supplies for John F. Kennedy Middle School

District G

The Spring 2020 meeting of District G had to be postponed due to the pandemic, but the program which was planned has been rescheduled to October 28, 2020, at 10 AM at Traditions Restaurant in Harrisonburg, VA. If the program cannot be held in person, a virtual meeting with the program is planned and VRTA members from around the state will be invited to join. Contact Karen Whetzel, president, at kswhetzel@gmail.com for more information.

Linda Dinsmore, a retired teacher who now lives in Rockingham County, Virginia, will speak about her grandmother Rose Ida Main Warden, born in 1875, who used family traits of grit and strong-willed determination after getting her teaching credentials to set out for Montana. She taught and claimed land through the Homestead Act. Her experiences with native Americans, bringing a Carnegie library to Lewistown, working on women's suffrage, and more are an interesting story!

District G of the Virginia Retired Teachers Association has elected officers for 2020-22. Left to right: Jim Hines, treasurer; Sharon Lucas, secretary; Rich Thompson, vice president; and Karen Whetzel, president.



Pittsylvania County Retired Teachers Association



Pittsylvania County RTA proudly recognizes Carol Peterson, Greta, who received one of two Most Active Members awards from the Virginia Retired Teachers Association for 2018-19. President Mable Scott accepted the award on Peterson's behalf at the VRTA fall conference and presented the plaque to her, along with a fall bouquet, at their November meeting.

The award was based on Peterson's work with her church's clothes closet ministry where she spends numerous hours accepting donations, organizing items, and managing Blanche's Closet. In addition, she is chairman of the Scholarship Committee of PCRTA and is responsible for advertising, accepting applications, and presiding over the selection of the recipients of two \$500 scholarships given by the organization to graduating county seniors who are entering the field of education each year.



News From Around the Commonwealth

Members of the FCRTA Remain Active Despite Coronavirus

The officers of the Floyd County Retired Teachers' Association held an executive meeting on February 6, 2020, at which time the agenda for our yearly meetings in March, May, July, September and November was discussed. Of course the coronavirus changed our well-intentioned plans! Floyd County has been fortunate in that less than 25 cases have been confirmed so far.

Regardless of the lack of meetings, the association members haven't been idle...time well-spent has been the order of the day! A survey was recently sent out to the members of the FCRTA to gather responses regarding ways they have been spending their time during the pandemic. Feedback included: 1) Helping a friend / the elderly move 2) Babysitting grandchildren so the parents could work from home 3) Donating / Taking food to local food banks 4) Taking meals to a neighbor in need 5) Making monetary donations to Red Rooster Coffee Roaster and Café in Floyd for meals for the needy; Red Rooster was picked by Forbes as one of 12 top best coffee roasters 6) Serving as director of a ministry to oversee a local church food bank 7) Volunteering for PLENTY (which nourishes the community and preserves Floyd County traditions by encouraging neighbors to grow and share food 8) Helping to provide boxed meals for needy families at a local restaurant 9) Grocery shopping for the elderly 10) Working from home to benefit the Old Church Gallery – checking transcriptions for the oral history program, organizing paperwork and artifacts, and overseeing maintenance needs; the Old Church Gallery is a quaint museum which houses lots of local history, antiques from the area, and interesting displays 11) Volunteering work for the Floyd County Historical Society (a museum which provides a tangible focus for seeing and learning about Floyd County's heritage) 12) Making monetary donations to Operation SMILE (a non-profit medical service organization which provides cleft lip and palate repair surgeries to children worldwide), Childfund (whose mission is to help children improve their lives regardless of circumstances), New River Community Action (whose services address basic needs such as food, shelter, employment, and also provides comprehensive early childhood programs), and St. Jude's Research Hospital 13) Volunteering at Angels in the Attic (a ministry composed of 4 non-profit stores and a donation center that rely on the sales of donated goods to fund support for numerous Floyd County charitable organizations 14) Making face masks for family and friends 15) Made 60 face masks for a director of Social Services for her employees 16) Cleaning homes for the elderly 17) Volunteering in many charitable local church activities. Aside from these activities, we have spent time relaxing, crocheting, sewing, gardening, reading, working crossword puzzles, and catching up on "spring cleaning"!

In other news, the FCRTA provides a yearly scholarship of \$1000 to a graduating senior at Floyd County High School who plans to pursue a teaching degree. This year's recipient was Mya Elizabeth Cockram (shown in photo), daughter of Gina and Sean Cockram. Mya plans to attend Radford University where she will major in art education.



Depending on existing circumstances, the FCRTA's agenda for the remainder of the year includes plans to meet in July at Slusher Park, a beautiful garden and picnic spot owned by one of our local members, for a potluck picnic. In September, we plan to have a representative from PLENTY to discuss the wonderful work the organization does for the community. Finally in November, we plan to meet at Slate Mountain Evangelical Presbyterian Church, one of the famous local rock churches founded by Reverend Bob Childress, where we will share a Thanksgiving meal and also hold a memorial service to honor those members who passed in 2020.

Fred Rogers once said, "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'" That's us...the Floyd County Retired Teachers' Association!

Mya Elizabeth Cockram, Scholarship recipient

Sussex County Retired Teachers' Association

In keeping with our motto: "To Serve, Not be Served" the SCRTA has strived to remain positive, motivated and encouraging by being concerned about our youth and seniors in the community. We have mentored teachers and parents when schools closed in March due to the pandemic and helped with virtual learning. We continued our ongoing community service activities such as donating and volunteering at food banks.

We helped people during emergencies by going to the grocery store for neighbors, transporting people to doctors' appointments and assisting with doctors' conference calls.

The SCRTA presented its \$1,000 scholarship to Tidasia Pegram, a graduate of Sussex Central High School. She plans to attend Norfolk State University.

Most Active Member



Ruby Ingram from Lunenburg-Nottaway receives the Most Active Member Award from Patricia Holland, chair of the Most Active Member Committee. Ruby was recognized at the Fall 2019 VRTA Meeting in Richmond.

News From Around the Commonwealth

Arlington Retired Teachers Association

On March 11, ARTA unknowingly met for the last time. Our program, introduced by the Honorable Karen Darner and presented by the Honorable Mary Margaret Whipple, was fascinating. Mary Margaret described the long process between the generating of the idea for the Virginia Women's Monument and its unveiling in October 2019. It is a process still ongoing since not all of the statues have been completed. Quoting a handout that Mary Margaret, the vice chair of the monument commission, shared, "*Voices from the Garden* will acknowledge the genius and creativity of Virginia women and their presence and contributions to the Commonwealth. The monument is a metaphor for the many unrecognized voices that have been responsible for shaping our culture, country and state for over 400 years. It is intended to be a thought-provoking and interactive experience that complements the more traditional heroic monuments on Capitol Square. *Voices from the Garden* is the first monument of its kind in the nation recognizing the full range of women's achievements. It takes the form of an oval-shaped garden that encompasses twelve bronze statues of significant women from the state, surrounded by a glass pane etched with names of other Virginia women. The twelve women selected reflect various spheres of influence and geographic areas of the state. The 12 statues have been predetermined, but the glass wall of other notable Virginia women can be added to over time." For more information visit: <http://womensmonumentcom.virginia.gov>.

The ARTA scholarship funds are invested with the Arlington Community Foundation (ACF) which also handles the application/selection process, as our scholarships are part of many administered by the foundation. Members can either go on line to make a donation or send a check, and they continue to be generous. We award two \$2,500 scholarships each year, the Arlington Retired Teachers Association Scholarship and the Future Educators Scholarship. Each recipient is eligible for five years of support, \$2,500 each year. With our two newest freshman year recipients, we will be supporting four students in the next academic year.

The ARTA Board met via Zoom in late June to plan for next year. No in-person meetings are scheduled at this time. Some virtual meetings planned for this year include Happiness 101 with Paul Singh, local historian Charlie Cook sharing how and when Arlington broke off from neighboring Alexandria, and a much-anticipated visit with Dr. Francisco Durán, the new Arlington Public Schools Superintendent.



The Honorable Mary Margaret Whipple shared details of the process leading up to the October 2019 dedication of the Virginia Women's Monument in Richmond.

Shenandoah County Retired Teachers

The Shenandoah County Retired Teachers Association (SCRTA) has awarded two scholarships for 2020: one to a future teacher and one to a current teacher furthering her education.

Brianna Mathura, a 2014 graduate of Strasburg High School, and a rising senior at Bridgewater College, is one of the scholarship recipients. Mathura is a family and consumer sciences major who plans to teach.

Cynthia Brunk, of New Market, is a fifth grade math teacher at North Fork Middle School in Quicksburg, and will be moving with her math students to sixth grade. Brunk is working on her master's degree in educational leadership. She has 24 years of teaching experience and received her undergraduate degree from Eastern Mennonite University.



Brianna Mathura



Cynthia Brunk

Shenandoah County RTA Officers—2020-2022



Left to Right: Virginia Stultz, secretary; Adina McInturff, treasurer; JoAnn Racey, vice-president; Ramona Daugherty, immediate past president; Leigh Devier, president

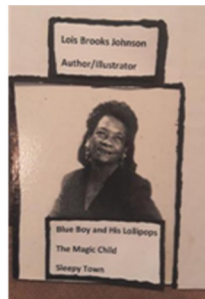
VRTA Directory

July 2020-June 2021

Leigh McKay, directory chairperson, has revised the VRTA Directory. It will be printed and distributed by mail in October. Send corrections to Leigh McKay at: clo491m@gmail.com as soon as possible and they will be included in the next directory. You may also mail Leigh at: 4720 Sweetfern Row, #210, Wilmington, NC 28411

News From Around the Commonwealth

Richmond Henrico Retired Teachers Association



R-HRTA members participated in Read Across America at several District Q Elementary Schools and one Preschool Center on March 2, 2020. Our very own Lois Brooks Johnson, author and illustrator, donated several of her books to each school. Our readers had just as much fun as the children. Pencils and stickers culminated this fun day for each child. During the Coronavirus Pandemic, R-HRTA members continued to stimulate children's interest in reading through the use of social media.

Loudoun Retired Educators

LREA has been busy this year. Eighty-five members of 112 were active in volunteering over 13,000 hours of community service. At our monthly meetings, an average of \$1,000 was donated, along with food supplies, to the local Loudoun Hunger Organization. Members volunteered in July for Kids R First school supplies effort in Loudoun and Fairfax counties. In September 20 members manned food drives at four local grocery stores. In October 20 members participated in the Annual INOVA Hospital Rummage Sale; \$10,000 was raised from donated books alone. Forty-five volunteers supported the District N warm clothing drive in October, as well. At our annual silent auction, held in October, we raised over \$700 for our scholarship fund. In November over 60 members brought food items for 20 complete Thanksgiving dinners and donated to Loudoun Hunger. Christmas presents for Mobile Hope clients were collected in December. Throughout the year, volunteers helped pack food bags for at risk Loudoun County students every Tuesday afternoon. At each meeting volunteers donate "Happy Dollars" and sell raffle tickets to support our scholarship fund. Four \$1,000 scholarships will be given this summer to graduating Loudoun County seniors going into education careers. In March and April, members were busy sewing "masks" for local Covid-19 combatants. Last spring volunteers also donated school supplies to the District N Community Services drive. Beside church activities and organization contributions, LREA members have donated over 4400 hours of individual services for family, friends and neighbors.



Janet Dye sewing



Peggy Darr at the sewing machine



Bobbie Johnson dropping off masks at Loudoun Hospital.



Marcia Kline Libertz with masks.

Teacher Stories

Thank You for the Lunch Money

A twelve-year-old fifth grade student entered my classroom on the first day of school in September 1973. This student was an active little boy from a troubled home. It saddened me when he was withdrawn from school the following March.

However, it has been a joy to me that he has stayed in touch with me to this day. I asked him why he stayed in contact with me all those years. He replied that “on the first day in your classroom, you gave me lunch money and always saw to it that I had a school lunch.” Even though he had weathered years of struggles at home and in school, he always showed me respect.

He is now a fifty-nine-year-old hard-working man. My heart filled with joy when he appeared at my home to carry me out to dinner for my seventy-third birthday!

Submitted by Roslyn deCodova-Bolden
Richmond-Henrico RTA

No Justice for an Expelled Student

My substitute teacher sent two of my fifth-grade boys to the office for fighting. John (not his real name) was sent home and Tom (not his real name) was allowed to remain at school.

The next day I returned to school to find my class upset that the wrong boy had been expelled. Tom confessed that he did start the fight as a joke on John. I immediately asked the principal to let John, my expelled student, come back to school. However, the principal refused to correct this injustice.

I recruited a visiting teacher to hold my class while I went to John’s home and brought him back to school. Both parents and John were overjoyed that I cared enough to risk my job for justice made right just for him. John received an apology from Tom.

My students were happy when I returned to school with their classmate and that the class would receive the 100% perfect attendance banner for the month because justice was done.

Years later, I was visiting my mother in an area hospital when a young doctor approached me with a big smile and a “bear” hug. He told my mother how I had saved his life when he was in my fifth-grade class. He is now the director of the medical department of this hospital. His words of gratitude brought tears to my eyes and joy to my heart.

As teachers, we never know the impact that we make on our students’ lives.

Submitted by Marguerite Cowans
Richmond-Henrico RTA



VRTA MISSION STATEMENT


“TO BE THE VOICE, RESOURCE, AND CONNECTION FOR ALL RETIRED SCHOOL PERSONNEL”

VRTA VISION STATEMENT

“ALL RETIRED SCHOOL PERSONNEL WILL BE SAFE, PRODUCTIVE, INFORMED AND FINANCIALLY SECURE IN RETIREMENT”

VRTA BRAND

“WE ENRICH RETIRED SCHOOL PERSONNEL’S LIVES!”



I apologize to Roslyn de-Codova-Bolden and Marguerite Cowans, both members of Richmond-Henrico RTA. I accidentally omitted your stories from the Voices of the Classroom volume. Thank you both for your submissions. Your stories are printed here for all to read.
Phyllis Eastridge

Spotlighting VRTA Charitable Donations

The Virginia Public Access Project is one of the six organizations that receive a donation from VRTA each year. It was founded in 1997 so that Virginians could follow the money in politics. VPAP has developed a nonpartisan approach that helps the public understand the complex data related to Virginia elections, demographics and the legislative process. The mission of VPAP is to “elevate public understanding of Virginia politics and government by organizing and presenting public information in ways that are easily accessible to all and free of partisan bias.” The vision is “an enlightened and inclusive democracy powered by an informed electorate.”

VRTA has the following goals:

1. Create resources that inform voters.
2. Invest in our mission through innovation and efficiency.

More information can be found at: vpap.org



Coronavirus Scams

Coronavirus scams are spreading throughout the country. AARP has advice for people to follow as these scams continue to grow. AARP says that scammers are using phishing emails, texts, robocalls, imposter schemes and more. They closely follow the news and adopt their tactics as new medical and economic concerns arise.

Tips to avoid coronavirus scams published by AARP:

- Avoid online offers for coronavirus-related vaccines or cures; they aren't legitimate.
- Be wary of emails, calls and social media posts advertising "free" or government-ordered COVID-19 tests. Check the FDA website for a list of approved tests and testing companies.
- Don't click on links or download files from unexpected emails, even if the email address looks like a company or person you recognize. Ditto for text messages and unfamiliar websites.
- Don't share personal information such as Social Security, Medicare and credit card numbers in response to an unsolicited call, text or email.
- Be skeptical of fundraising calls or emails for COVID-19 victims or virus research, especially if they pressure you to act fast and request payment by prepaid debit cards or gift cards.
- Ignore phone calls or emails from strangers urging you to invest in a hot new coronavirus stock.



Because of the coronavirus, we are uncertain of the status of the Spring 2021 Delegate Assembly. Once that situation is resolved, a deadline for the Spring 2021 VRTA Newsletter will be announced. We will inform you of that deadline as soon as possible and with enough time to send information to the newsletter editor. Articles should be sent to Susan Martin at susanmartin730@gmail.com or 1049 Martins Lane, Fincastle, Virginia 24090.

Reminders:

1. In order to insure accurately, it is helpful for articles to be typed and sent in a word document.
2. When including pictures, permission should be obtained for their use.
3. Be sure that the articles are received by the due date.

VOTE VOTE VOTE

On November 3, 2020, we will not be voting just on specific issues or who will hold various offices. We will be voting on the direction of our democracy. And yes, your vote will count regardless of the method you use.

- Be sure you have registered and that your registration is up to date. Has your address changed in the last year? The deadline for a valid registration is October 13. This can be done at your local registrar's office or online at <https://www.elections.virginia.gov/registration/>
- **If you think you might not be able to go to the poll on Election Day, apply for an absentee mail-in-ballot at the above website by Friday, October 23. Don't wait until this deadline! You can apply now.** The mail is likely to be heavy close to the deadline, and the registrar's office will be busy. When the ballots are ready, they will be mailed to those who have applied.
- **Follow the directions carefully and proofread it several times before returning your mail-in-ballot.** You may hand deliver your ballot to your local registrar's office or put a stamp on it and mail it back. **If mailed back, it must be postmarked by November 3, Election Day. Be sure to mail it early in case there is a hitch with the postal service.** If you decide you want to vote in-person after all, hand in the unmarked ballot at the poll. If you misplace your ballot or don't receive it in time and still want to vote in-person, you can go to your polling place and vote provisionally on Election Day. Once it is confirmed that you did not also submit your absentee ballot, your provisional ballot is counted. There is no way to vote twice.
- There also is a newly expanded in-person absentee voting option. Beginning September 19, you may vote early in-person, usually at the registrar's office or some other place designated by your locality. Check the place by calling your local registrar. This is a good way to still vote in person but avoid the crowds and lines. You do not have to give a reason for voting early, but you will have to present a valid ID.
- Curb service voting will still be offered at the polls on Election Day for those who are unable to go into the polling place; however, this is another demand on precincts that may be short staffed. Voting by mail or in-person absentee would be much better, but by all means, do vote.

See the July Creekside E-Newsletter article "Will My Vote Count?" Let me know if you did not get this article and I will send it to you. Much has been on the news about the possibility of fraud with mail-in-voting. In this article, two Virginia registrars explain more details of the process and why fraud is a very remote possibility.

Bea Morris, Legislative Chairperson

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

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From the VRTA Treasurer

These are challenging times for all of us and I am grateful to the local unit treasurers and other officers who are working diligently to maintain and grow our VRTA membership, as well as membership in your locals and districts. Quite a few treasurers have been sending in the VRTA dues that you have been collecting and I appreciate your effort. During these times when it is difficult to have in person meetings, it is important to use all the means at your disposal to keep in touch with the membership and to encourage them to renew their dues for 2020-2021. Remember that there is strength in numbers and our government officials need to know that we are a strong and vibrant organization.

Please keep in mind that I will be happy to mail membership forms, dues settlement statement forms and membership cards to local unit treasurers whenever you need them. If you are unable to have in person or virtual meetings, you should try to use other ways of contacting your membership to request membership renewal. Some units are mailing out membership forms to the membership. Others may be using social media or email to remind members to mail in their checks for membership. Thank you for all of your efforts to keep our membership active and strong during this period. Like all of you, I am looking forward to joining my colleagues and friends at in person gatherings as soon as it is safe to do so.

Here are some reminders to treasurers:

- Please do whatever you can to encourage your members to renew their VRTA dues. Remit payments to me for state dues as soon as possible. New and renewal annual memberships are \$20 and one time lifetime memberships are \$200.
- Continue to recruit new members any way that you can.
- As you are collecting dues, don't forget to distribute a VRTA membership card to each of your new or renewing members. (You may decide to hold the membership cards for distribution until you have an in person meeting.) Let me know if you need more membership cards and I will be happy to mail them to you.
- If you are a part of the VRTA IRS Tax Umbrella, please remember to submit your e-post card to the IRS to fulfill your reporting obligation to the IRS. The deadline for filing is November 15 annually and you must file the e-post card in order to maintain your tax exempt status. Please remember that filing with the IRS is a legal requirement. If your unit or district is not currently under our VRTA IRS Tax Umbrella, you should consider contacting me for more information.
- Please continue to update me on VRTA membership changes, especially address changes and names of deceased members.
- Don't forget to submit a copy of your 2020-2021 budget, signed and dated by at least two officers. I keep these on file, as required by the IRS, in case of audit.

Thanks for all that you do. The best way to contact me is by email at hooman4949@gmail.com. My mailing address is Weldon Martin, 1049 Martins Lane, Fincastle, VA 24090, and my phone number is (540) 473-2636.