



# VRTA Newsletter

Publication of Virginia Retired Teachers Association

Member, NRTA—Division of The AARP

Fall 2021 Edition

## A Message from the VRTA President



I hope that you are doing well and staying healthy. We have certainly had a hot summer so far and in many areas a very dry summer. The VRTA Executive Committee met by ZOOM in both May and July and decided to plan a one day in person meeting this fall for VRTA. Since we had not met in person since October 2019, we felt that it was extremely important to have this meeting. The date was set for October 5<sup>th</sup> at the DoubleTree in Midlothian. We met again on August 3<sup>rd</sup> and made the decision **NOT** to have an in person meeting at this time.

There is a great deal of concern about the uptick in Covid-19 infections, especially with the Delta Variant. We were reluctant to cancel the October 5<sup>th</sup> meeting, but we felt that the safety of our members was more important than meeting. The hotel would require a deposit and we did not want to take the risk of losing money if we had to cancel at the last minute.

There will be a Board of Directors meeting by ZOOM on October 5<sup>th</sup> at 10:00AM. Also an informational meeting for the general membership will be held by ZOOM on October 26<sup>th</sup>. We hope to include a report from the Virginia Retirement System, VRTA benefits and a legislative report at this meeting. As details for both meetings are finalized, information will be sent to you. We will put details in the Creekside Newsletter in September. If you do not receive this newsletter, contact your unit or district president.

Hopefully during this difficult time, you have found ways to connect with your members. This past year many district presidents used ZOOM to have meetings. Those licenses will not be renewed this year, since most units and districts are resuming in person meetings. Keeping our members informed is very important for the continued success of the VRTA. Continue to send your VRTA dues to Weldon Martin, state treasurer, and district dues to your district treasurer. Districts and units included under the tax umbrella should file the e-post card by November 15<sup>th</sup>.

The Nominating Committee is beginning its work to present a slate of VRTA officers for the 2022-2024 term by our October informational meeting. New officers will be installed in the spring. Nominations will include president-elect, vice president, secretary and treasurer. If you are willing to become an officer or would like to recommend someone, contact Patricia Hogston at 276-935-7296.

Plans are already underway to have our Delegate Assembly Meeting this spring. Dates have not been set, but we usually meet in April. If possible, it will be our normal two day meeting at the DoubleTree. Information about our first meeting in two years will be in the Spring 2022 VRTA newsletter. I hope to see many of you in the spring.

### Awards Update

The Awards Committee is busy compiling and preparing a report and certificates for the units and districts that send reports. We are grateful for your support and it is hopeful that we can gather this fall. Receiving rewards is a means of recruiting new members if the report is shared and publicized. Keep this in mind. To retain and build our membership, let it be known what you are doing. When rewards are presented to your unit and district, make it a "Great Occasion" so in the future many will be inspired and excited. Many are to be congratulated for your effort and perseverance during the pandemic. Continue the good work.

Canzata Turner, Awards Chairperson



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**LET'S TAKE OUR TEMPERATURE**



For quite some time, we have been accustomed to having our temperature taken as we enter a public building to see if we may have the virus we are not aware of. It might be a good idea to check the temperature of VRTA to see if we're still a healthy organization. After all, we've not been seeing people for a while as we usually do. But is our work getting done?

I'm pleased to say that although Bonnie Atwood, our lobbyist, and I aren't seeing each other in person as we would like, we communicate by email and telephone. And VRTA has had a presence at Fund our Schools coalition meetings. Bonnie attended an in-person meeting, and she and Jenna Konizer from Augusta represented us at a ZOOM meeting. I had a lengthy telephone conversation with one of the FOS leaders. We have also communicated with members. A survey was emailed to 218 members concerning FOS priorities, the results of which were forwarded to FOS and were reported in the June Creekside E-Newsletter. The 70 responses indicate that some are alert and healthy, but some need to be checked on.

The Creekside E-Newsletter is published the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month and should be going to all members who have email. We have used this tool to make explanations of timely issues such as using the SMELL Test to identify fake news, ranked choice voting, critical areas defined by the FOS coalition, etc. If you are not getting this, you're missing a healthy ingredient in your diet and should let your unit and district presidents know that you are not getting it.

We also are communicating with VRS by email. We miss seeing the staff, and they say they miss seeing us in person, but they are planning some virtual information for us that will soon be available.

Just as a healthy body needs nourishment, we all need to read as much as we can from as many sources as we can and learn as much as we can about the issues and the candidates who will be on the ballot in November. The body can't make up for a poor diet by gorging on broccoli and carrots, and we can't make wise decisions on election day by waiting until just days before we vote to learn about what the candidates stand for. Issues are usually ongoing problems, so we must follow them over a period of time and not just become interested when a candidate takes a position or dodges the issue.

My assessment is that VRTA is a healthy organization, but health maintenance is important. As members we must :

- Continue to pay our dues and support our local units.
- Continue to read the newsletters and other communications and respond appropriately.
- Continue to be responsible for doing our homework to understand the issues.

No matter what the circumstances, let's work together to keep VRTA a healthy organization.

**Visit VRTA's Website at [VRTA.org](http://VRTA.org)**

**Virginia Retired Teachers Association**

*"Organized November 28, 1936"*

**2020- 2022 Officers**

President—Glenn Pair, Sr.	(434)594-9661 gpair1949@gmail.com
President-Elect—Jean Marrow	(804)275-7278 izybellha@verizon.net
Vice President—Karen Whetzel	(540)740-8589 kswhetzel@gmail.com
Secretary—Reba Evans	(366)200-1093 1924rlevans@gmail.com
Treasurer—Weldon Martin	(540)473-2636 hooman4949@gmail.com
Immediate Past President Ben McCartney	(540)347-9516 bhmcart@gmail.com

**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!"

## Inside Story: The Lobbyist's Red Tape

By Bonnie Atwood



"Lobbyist" is one of those terms that takes some explaining. It's the more casual term for "governmental consultant," and is a very specific term.

Who gets to be a lobbyist? Anybody can lobby for himself as an individual, or for a special interest, if he is a member of that special interest population. That is, I am free to speak my peace on, for example, gun laws. If I am a member of the Neighborhood Watch, and there is consensus among the other members, then I can speak on behalf of my Neighborhood Watch group. I cannot, however, speak for my whole city. If a group has complex issues, they may want to hire a professional lobbyist, usually someone who can make the time commitment and who has close access to the Capitol. That lobbyist should have expertise in government, and, if he is not a member of the group, he must register as a professional lobbyist.

Thus begins the maze of red tape. The process has always been somewhat cumbersome, but it doubled down after the McDonnell administration was criticized for acceptance of gifts that had the appearance of impropriety (*quid pro quo*).

The lobbyists typically register shortly before the start of the January Session. We fill out forms, which are now all online. These include information such as the name of the organization (the "principal"), its president, the president's contact information, etc. **All of this becomes public information.** If a president does not want his or her information available to the public, then the only options are to set up a post office box, or assign this presidential duty to a willing officer. The document must be signed by the president. Most now use a waiver form, which allows you to sign online. I encourage these.

Then, in mid-year, the lobbyist is required to submit "disclosure" forms. These reveal to the public whether gifts or money have been given to legislators. If there are no gifts or money, the forms must still be filed, stating that. (One free lunch and a jar of preserves can be overlooked.)

Here's the scary part: All paperwork is required by law to be submitted, again **with signatures**, by July 1. If we are even one day late, the lobbyist gets fined \$50 per day, and the organization gets fined \$50 per day. That's each and every day!

VRTA has always come through on these forms. For that I thank you. It saves our money, our reputation, and dozens of bottles of headache medicine!

## VRTA Membership Report 2020 – 21



VRTA received a grant from NRTA to keep members connected in 2020-21. President Glenn asked the membership chair to assign the 12 ZOOM licenses which were purchased to district presidents. Nine of the ten licenses were assigned; some districts did not want one and some had their own license.

The first-ever VRTA Virtual ZOOM Class was held on Thursday, February 18, 2021, from 10 to 11 am. Some of the topics covered were how to set up a ZOOM meeting, how to use features such as chat, how to share a screen with a co-presenter, how to change your background, and more.

Karen Whetzel, membership chair, was joined for the ZOOM class by Dr. Mary Ann Stripling, who is president-elect of the Augusta Retired Educators Association (AREA), owner of "Ducks in a Row" business which helps clients organize their estates, and teaches a class at Blue Ridge Community College through ZOOM. A survey sent out after the event, which had 60 sign up and 48 actual participants, indicated that 75% found the class "very helpful," 25% found the class "somewhat helpful," and 0% "not helpful."

The membership chair sent periodic reports to the Creekside Newsletter, the VRTA newsletter, and by email to officers, district presidents, and committee chairs. District presidents and local units were encouraged to keep members engaged through virtual meetings, Facebook postings, email messages, phone calls, the membership flyers on the VRTA website, local newsletters and more. She also answered questions received through email and phone calls.

Karen Whetzel, Membership Chairperson





### VRTA Executive Committee Plans Board of Directors Meeting

The VRTA Executive Committee cancelled the proposed in-person meeting which was tentatively scheduled for October 5, 2021. Instead, the Executive Committee approved having a virtual VRTA Board of Directors meeting on Tuesday, October 5, 2021, starting at 10 am via ZOOM. The Board of Directors has not met since October, 2019.

Karen Whetzel, VRTA vice president and membership chair, will set up the ZOOM meeting. According to the bylaws, "Members of the Board of Directors shall consist of the president, the president-elect, the vice-president, secretary, and treasurer, all past VRTA presidents, district presidents, and VRTA committee chairpersons."

If you are a member of the VRTA Board of Directors, please let Karen Whetzel know by Friday, October 1, 2021, if you will be attending (earlier if possible) so that she can send you the ZOOM link to use on October 5 for the meeting. District presidents may designate another district officer to attend in their place; please let Karen know if you are asking a person to attend the meeting in your place. According to bylaws, a quorum is 19 members of the Board so we will need that number to conduct business.

The bylaws state that all members of the Board of Directors must be members of the VRTA. Contact Weldon Martin, Treasurer, at 540-473-2636 or [hooman4949@gmail.com](mailto:hooman4949@gmail.com) right away if you need to start or renew membership.

### From The Treasurer

*"Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart."*

-Elizabeth Andrew



My sincere gratitude is extended to the many volunteers, local and district treasurers, local and district presidents, and the membership, for your efforts in keeping our association going and relevant during these turbulent pandemic times. We are continuing to face many challenges and stumbling blocks, but you have worked hard to keep our membership intact and informed. My appreciation is expressed to our treasurers in soliciting memberships and collecting and submitting dues for local, district and VRTA memberships. Please continue to submit dues payments to me for the 2021-2022 membership year. (If you have any dues payments left to submit for 2020-2021, please feel free to send that in also.)

Thank you to the local leadership in the many ways you have continued to encourage membership during the times when in person meetings were not possible. Some of you mailed out membership enrollment forms, sent emails, made phone calls, etc. to collect your dues. You may need to continue to do so in the foreseeable future as the pandemic continues to keep us at home. I have been mailing out supplies (membership enrollment forms, dues settlement forms, and membership cards) to local treasurers upon request and will continue to do so.

If you are a part of the VRTA Group Exemption (our VRTA Umbrella), don't forget to keep your unit or district up to date with filing your IRS 990 e-postcard in a timely fashion. They are due each year by November 15. If you fail to file for three consecutive years, your unit or district will automatically be dropped from our Umbrella by the IRS. If you have forgotten to file for the previous year, go to the IRS website, search for IRS 990 e-postcard and follow the prompts. If your unit or district has lost its status as a member of our VRTA Umbrella, you should consider rejoining in order to maintain your tax exempt status. Please contact me if you have questions.

Treasurers are also reminded to submit a copy of your 2021-2022 budget, signed and dated by two officers, to me if you have not already done so, but no later than December 31. Also, if you have made changes to your By Laws, a copy of your revised By Laws, signed and dated by two officers, should be submitted to me.

Sincerely,  
Weldon Martin, Treasurer  
[hooman4949@gmail.com](mailto:hooman4949@gmail.com)

### VRTA Benefits

With all of the 2020 COVID protocols, it will be refreshing to be able to attend meetings in-person very soon. Don't forget that VRTA Agent of Record is available for your local meeting programs if desired. It is important to keep your membership updated on all that VRTA Benefits has to offer. Please reach out to Janice Jones or Jim DuBrueler, Agent of Record at (800) 467-5425 to schedule.

- Medicare Supplement
- Long Term Care Insurance
- Life Insurance
- Financial Advisory Services
- Investment Management
- Annuities



Office locations in Winchester and Richmond, but telephone and ZOOM appointments are also available. Call (800) 467-5425.

## News From Around the Commonwealth

### Alexandria Retired Teachers

I would like to thank VRTA for providing the opportunity for Alexandria Retired Teachers to hold Virtual ZOOM meetings this year. It would have been very difficult for us to try and do it on our own!

In April we had Tracy Niro of Wise Moves talk to us about downsizing, what to do and what NOT to do. She gave us lists of what to look for and how to go about separating that which we should keep and that which we should put in a box to either recycle, give away, or dump. It really helped !

In May, our last meeting, we held a virtual wine tasting with Tara O'Brian of Scout and Cellar Clean Crafted Wine. For \$20 members could taste 4 different wines with cheese and chocolate to match each wine. For \$15 members could taste 4 wines and choose either chocolate OR cheese tasting. And for those who don't like wine, we provided cheese and chocolate tasting for \$15. Tara explained how clean crafted wine differed from the wine which is purchased in stores. how clean crafted wine does NOT include extra sugar and chemicals which are used in production of many wines. It was quite interesting! Participants picked up their packets of wine, cheese and chocolate on Saturday afternoon May 15 and then the meeting and tasting was held on Monday, May 17.

Alexandria Retired Teachers Association offers a scholarship each year to a graduating senior of TC Williams High School. This year the award was given to Mr. Leonel Naves. The award was presented at the Thirty-Fifth Annual Award Ceremony on Wednesday, June 2, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.



Wine tasting supplies



Leonel Naves, Scholarship Winner

### Dinwiddie Retired Teachers Present Scholarship

The recipient of the Dinwiddie Retired Teachers' Association Scholarship for the 2020 – 2021 school year is Kevin Allen Gunn, a graduate of Dinwiddie High School. Kevin is a lifelong resident of Dinwiddie County and is the son of David and Sarah Gunn of Stony Creek, Virginia.

Kevin will be attending Longwood University this fall in Farmville, Virginia, majoring in health and physical education. Congratulations to Kevin and best wishes for all of his future endeavors!



Pictured from left to right- Sharon Yates, DRTA president; Willa Harrison, scholarship committee chair; Kevin Gunn, scholarship recipient; David Gunn, father; Sarah Gunn, mother

### Carroll County Retired Teachers

The Carroll County Retired Teachers Association met May 14, 2021, for the first time since March 2020. We met with the Alpha Kappa Chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma for a High Tea at the home of Betty Patton. Linda Cox was co-host for the meeting. After the tea our guest speaker, Yvonne Thayer, talked about a book she co-authored with Saul Carlinet and Margaret Driscoll. The book is *Career Anxiety: Guidance Through Tough Times*.



1st row — Linda Cox, Julia Frazier, Reba Evans, Betty Patton  
2nd row — Yvonne Thayer, Debbie Hill, Jackie Smith

### Chesapeake Retired Teachers

The Chesapeake Retired Teachers Association met 5 times this year, face-to-face, and had 10 members present each time. We were able to donate to four projects and had guest speakers, as well. Our three scholarships were given as usual, so we are happy with our service during this hard year. At our last program we met and made 30 greeting cards to be taken to a local nursing home.



## News From Around the Commonwealth

### Floyd County Retired Teachers

Despite the pandemic cancelling our meetings for most of 2020, Floyd County Retired Teachers have managed to stay involved in our community and have reached out to teachers to offer assistance whenever possible. Our organization presented \$200 mini-grants to two deserving teachers last year as well as \$50 checks to four community groups involved with our youth. These gifts were warmly welcomed as was the \$1,000 scholarship presented to a deserving graduate of Floyd County High School who aspires to open her own daycare center upon graduation from Radford University. Various members have also continued to serve the community through volunteerism throughout the pandemic. As restrictions were lifted in the spring, we enjoyed an outing to Charlie Brouwer's "Out There" sculpture studio and walking trail adorned with his works. Charlie was very generous of his time and we greatly enjoyed meeting him and seeing his works as well as a picnic at Wild-wood Farms daylily garden on May 19th. We continued the outdoors picnic theme for our annual July meeting at Slusher Park. Slusher Park was built by a member of our group, Evelyn Slusher, who started the July picnic tradition before she passed away. Her daughter, Alice, is also a retired teacher and serves as our treasurer. We have enjoyed many years of fellowship and delicious food in their beautiful backyard garden park and all of us appreciate their kind hospitality. Our 2021 retirees were invited to be our guests for this meeting, which is our tradition to build our membership. We enjoyed seeing old friends and catching up with one another after a difficult year. Our future plans are to hold our September 15th meeting at Plenty Farms, which is a working farm/food pantry serving our community. We are looking forward to a tour and learning more about their mission as well as meeting their new director. Our November Meeting of Remembrance and Thanksgiving is currently not finalized but we do hope the Covid situation will allow us to enjoy what is traditionally one of our favorite meetings. We feel we have much to be thankful for including many special friends at our retired teachers' organization, as well as those who have gone on but left such an inspiring example for us to follow!

### Henrico Retired School Personnel Association

The Henrico Retired School Personnel Association continues to handle all association business virtually. Depending on the spread of the Delta Variant of Covid and restrictions on gatherings, the Board of Directors will decide whether it will hold its October luncheon. HRSPA will send a newsletter with current association business and ask members to support our fall philanthropy project, the Henrico Christmas Mother. The board continues to address association business virtually in these unusual times. Stay safe and healthy everyone!

### Prince William Retired Teachers Association



PWRTA President Sally Kenavan delivered school supplies collected by District N. They were then sorted by the Appalachia Lions Club for distribution.

PWRTA finally had an in-person meeting, meeting outdoors in Manassas. President Sally Kenavan collected school supplies for the children of Appalachia.



### District N



Board member Ann Combo and President Janet Dye at District N board meeting in August.



Several District N units collected school supplies for the children of Appalachia. The coordinators were:

- Fauquier — Linda Spellman and Liz Goodson
- Loudoun — Karen Elliot and Loretta Hall
- Prince William — Sally Kenavan
- Winchester — Debbie Foltz and Connie Shipp

## News From Around the Commonwealth

### Richmond-Henrico Retired Teachers Association

R-HRTA was encouraged by VRTA to follow the CDC guidelines and to keep membership connected through technology. The challenges of COVID did not completely shut down our efforts to support several of our community projects.

R-HRTA education committee members delivered gift boxes of pencils and goodies to our selected District Q schools during Teacher Appreciation Week (May 3-7, 2021). We appreciate all that teachers do for children, especially during this challenging school year.

R-HRTA members did not let the COVID-19 Pandemic stop our annual donations. We made generous donations to Feed More, Richmond and Henrico Christmas Mother Funds and the W. Roland Galvin Scholarship Fund. We stayed in contact with members through phone calls, e-mail, newsletters, and ZOOM meetings. Hopefully, R-HRTA will be able to meet in person beginning in October.



R-HTA President Ernestine Dockery-Roy and Lakeside Elementary School media specialist, Tonya Moore

Mary Collins, Marian Banks, and Laburnum Elementary School Principal, Nicole L. Boone



### District G Hosts Virtual Meeting

The spring 2021, virtual meeting of District G VRTA was another virtual meeting. Speaker Nancy Sorrells, a local historian and journalist with degrees from JMU and Bridgewater College, presented an illustrated talk entitled “Coughs and Sneezes Cause Diseases: The Pandemic of 1918.”

Sorrells, who has worked at the Museum of Frontier Culture, Arlington House: The Robert E. Lee Memorial and the Woodrow Wilson Birthplace, also has published a number of her research papers in scholarly journals and books. She is currently president of the Augusta County Historical Society.

Sorrells had many articles and advertisements from the archives of local newspapers, which helped her tell the story of the Flu of 1918 (erroneously called the Spanish Flu) and how it impacted local people and schools.

Part of the program that was of special interest to attendees was the comparison that Sorrells made between the Pandemic of 1918, and the current pandemic. Many similarities existed. Sorrells noted that the Pandemic of 1918 led to the “Roaring 20s” as people got out of quarantine and restrictions; some predict that there might be another Roaring 20s in the 2020s!

### Arlington County Retired Teachers Continue Meetings Via ZOOM!

ARTA held three board meetings and seven general meetings by ZOOM during the year. Many members were able to attend meetings and they had the opportunity to chat with each other and enjoy each other’s company.

Paul Singh presented *Happiness 101* in September. He helped us to think, share and reflect on the bright side of the pandemic. In November Charlie Cook helped us celebrate Arlington’s 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday by giving the story behind the county’s 1020 separation from Alexandria. Members from Alexandria’s RTA joined us for this interesting presentation. Pianist, singer and songwriter Chris Urquiaga entertained the group in December. He presented holiday music and good cheer from New York City.

Loki Mulholland, Emmy-winning filmmaker, author, activist and son of ARTA’s own civil rights hero, Joan Trumpauer Mulholland, joined us in February from Utah. He spoke about his work to end racism and his most recent documentary *After Selma* which dives into the history of voter suppression and the need for us to challenge it. Check his website, [www.lokimulholland.com](http://www.lokimulholland.com) for more information about his work. In March, Robert P. Watson, PhD., historian, author, professor, political commentator and community leader, engaged us with his informative presentation, *The Nineteenth Amendment and 100 Years of Women in Politics*. First year superintendent of Arlington schools, Dr. Francisco Duran, spoke to the group in April about the challenges of the upcoming school year. In May Canadian entertainer Daylin James entertained from his studio in Manitoba. He has performed all over the world and shared one of his most popular show, *Bits of Broadway*.

The ARTA Board met via ZOOM in late June to plan the 2021-22 programs. We are optimistic that we will be able to return to in person meetings early next year. Virtual meetings planned include Meredith Wadman, author of the *The Vaccine Race*, Tom McGeady, competitive trivia, and Mary Ann Jung, the story of Rosie the Riveter. We hope that many of our members will be able to join in these opportunities for learning and fun.




ARTA Board met by ZOOM in January to plan. Pictured here: Top — Sandi Green, Nancy King, Cathy Eckbreth Middle — Michele Milden, Ellen Bartlett, Randy McKnight Bottom — Lynne Lilly, Lynn Juhl

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We have been unable to meet together for over a year and a half so we have not been able to participate in a Necrology Service at our state meetings. We want to remember all those members that we have lost during this time. Let us say a special prayer for them.

Dear Father,  
There is a season and time for everything in this world. Father, give us the peace that surpasses all understanding. Give us the strength to share the beautiful moments that we shared with our friends. Amen

I give you this one thought to keep.  
I am with you still. I do not sleep.  
I am a thousand winds that blow.  
I am the diamond glints on the snow.  
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.  
I am the gentle autumn rain.  
When you awaken in the morning's hush,  
I am the swift, uplifting rush of quiet birds in circled flight.  
I am the soft stars that shine at night.  
Do not think of me as gone.  
I am with you still in each new dawn.



Anonymous



**VRTA Spring 2022 Newsletter**

Since the statue of the VRTA 2022 Delegate Assembly is unclear at this time, the deadline for the spring newsletter has not been determined. As soon as possible, information will be sent to VRTA officers, chairpersons and district presidents.

Articles for the newsletter should be sent to Susan Martin at: [susanmartin730@gmail.com](mailto:susanmartin730@gmail.com). You may mail articles to Susan at: 1049 Martins Lane, Fincastle, VA 24090.

**Reminder:** People who are in pictures that are to be included in the newsletter must give permission for the picture to be used.