



# VRTA Newsletter

Publication of Virginia Retired Teachers Association

Member, NRTA—Division of The AARP

Fall 2024 Edition

## From the VRTA President

**Karen Whetzel**

### Moving Forward Together!



Your VRTA Executive Committee met virtually on July 24, 2024, to review evaluation forms and finances from the 2024 Spring Delegate Assembly and plan for the 2024 Fall Conference to be held on Monday and Tuesday, September 30 and October 1, 2024. The Committee also approved April 28 – 29, 2025, at the Doubletree for the 2025 Spring Delegate Assembly. (Mark your calendars.)

For the upcoming VRTA Fall Conference, registration forms and hotel reservations are due by September 8. The hotel reservation link is <https://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/ricksdt-90e-12b95a7b-6a42-4faf-9de2-423915548150/>. The hotel prefers online reservations but if you call instead, use group code 90E. VRTA has to pay the hotel for any rooms in the block not booked by attendees, so reserve your rooms as soon as possible. If you find rooms in the block are not available and it is before the deadline, contact President Karen to add rooms. (kswhetzel@gmail.com/540-740-8589)

The Fall Conference registration form as well as the hotel reservation link will be posted on the website [vrta.us](http://vrta.us). Because the conference cost \$10,443.09 and registrations only covered \$7070 (a deficit of \$3373.09), the registration fee will be \$80 for Fall 2024. The cost of the lunch has risen to almost \$50 when adding in taxes, gratuity, and room rent. Other costs are also up.

The VRTA Board of Directors will meet on Monday, September 30, from 9 to 11 am at the Doubletree by Hilton-Midlothian. Members of the Board of Directors are the VRTA officers, all past VRTA presidents, District Presidents, and VRTA committee chairs. Board of Directors members should let President Karen Whetzel know by September 23 if they will attend. District Presidents can designate an alternate; send info to Karen Whetzel also! It is important to have all Districts represented so the local members have a voice.

At the 2024 VRTA Fall Conference, VRTA State President Karen Whetzel and AARP Virginia State President Joyce Williams will co-host an after-dinner social in the hospitality suite of the Doubletree from 7 to 8:30 pm. Bring your AARP card if you are a member! We will have the opportunity for a dialogue about how cooperation between the two organizations with their overlapping membership can result in higher effectiveness for both groups. We are looking for some folks available to help move chairs into the suite on Monday at 5 pm.

Karen Whetzel, VRTA President, has visited District N to install officers, and the Clarke County local unit to speak about VRTA. Please invite Karen to events both in-person and virtually; she will come to as many as possible. Also, let her know you're your ideas for "Moving Forward Together" in Virginia Retired Teachers Association (VRTA)!

*Our vision: All retired school personnel will be safe, productive, informed and financially secure in retirement.*

*Our mission: To be the voice, resource, and connection for all retired school personnel.*

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**Meet the VRTA Officers**

**Karen Whetzel, President:** She served as Vice President and President Elect of VRTA as well as President of Shenandoah County RTA and District G. She graduated from Madison College (BS and MS) and got her school leadership credentials from JMU. She worked for Shenandoah County Public Schools for 38 years (elementary librarian 25 and high school principal 13); served on the Shenandoah County School Board for 12 years.

**Drucilla Holmes Tate Pollard, President Elect:** Currently the District C president; serves as the first woman to pastor the First Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Newtown, VA. She graduated from Virginia Union College (BS and Master of Divinity). She taught students with learning disabilities for 36 years (6 in King and Queen County and 30 at Thomas Jefferson High School in Richmond.)

**Larry Hardesty, Vice President:** He worked for Clarke County Schools as Director of Maintenance and Transportation for 30 years. He is currently president of Clarke County RTA and President Elect of District N.

**Janet Dye, Secretary:** She taught for 31 years (4 years teaching middle school English in Frederick County and 27 teaching English, world history, U. S. Hhstory at Broad Run HS and Park View HS in Loudoun County.) She served as Park View HS Social Studies Department Chair. She has served as Loudoun County Co-President and District N President.

**Weldon Martin, Treasurer:** His 32-year career was spent in Botetourt County where he served as an elementary school teacher, an assistant elementary and middle school principal, and an elementary school principal (Breckinridge Elementary 20 years, Troutville Elementary 6 years.) His BA in history and Masters in school administration are both from UVA. He has been Treasurer of VRTA for 12 years! He has also served as Vice President of Botetourt RTA, District P RTA and President of District P.

**Jean Marrow, Past President:** She taught English in Amelia County for her entire career, after graduating from North Carolina Central College (English with minor in French). She also has an MS in educational administration from Longwood College. She served as President Elect and President of VRTA, and is currently President of Amelia County RTA.



Officers being installed at the Spring 2024 Delegate Assembly

**Fun Facts about August**



In August 1762 the sandwich, as we know it, was created when the Earl of Sandwich requested meat between two pieces of bread.

It goes without saying, that August is a time to celebrate a good harvest and a good summer! Rock music lost a living legend on August 16, 1977, when Elvis Presley left the world behind.

On August 28, 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech during the March on Washington on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

**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!"

**Virginia Retired Teachers Association**

*"Organized November 28, 1936"*

2024- 2026 Officers

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**Information and Inspiration**



We seem to be awash with information, given the traditional news sources, the 24/7 cable news channels, and the constant stream of information on various social media platforms. The problem is that with this proliferation of news, some tune it out and others are confused by misinformation, half-truths, and even blatant lies. Nazi Joseph Goebbels said, “If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will believe it.” Sadly, in many instances, this has proven to be true.

VRTA makes every effort to give truthful, nonpartisan information through our newsletters, Creekside articles, emails, and especially presenters at the two state meetings each year. Effort is made to invite speakers who have expertise in their field that members are unlikely to hear at home, and they are people of character with whom we might disagree but can respect.

Relevant topics by qualified speakers are a must in planning the Legislative Session. We are so pleased that David Bailey will be our speaker at the Fall Conference on Monday, September 29, at 3:45 p.m. Mr. Bailey has been on the state political scene for many years as the owner of David Bailey Associates, a consulting firm that has represented entities across the state at the General Assembly. His firm also publishes Capitol Connections, a nonpartisan quarterly magazine featuring articles by and about Virginia’s leaders. Other publications are the annual red book Virginia Capitol Connections, a directory of state elected and appointed officials, and lobbyists & legislative liaisons, a directory of those who represent businesses and organizations at the GA.

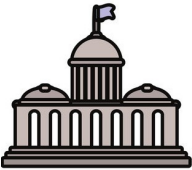
During the election season, which seems never to end, we are constantly hearing about who is leading in the polls, by how much, where, among which groups, a margin of error, etc. Don’t you wonder how the polls are constructed, who the people are who are polled, how many are consulted in each poll, how accurate the polls are, how are they used, etc.?

With his vast knowledge of the political world, Mr. Bailey will tackle such questions.

On Tuesday, October 1, at 8:50 a.m. we will welcome our friends from VRS again to give us the latest news as well as other things we should know about the Virginia Retirement System. In addition, Trish Bishop, Director; Jeanne Chenault, Public Relations Director; and Robert Irving, Director of Customer Service will entertain any questions we have.

One of many benefits of the Fall Conference and the information we receive there is the inspiration and optimism we take home to do the tough work necessary. As we are inspired by the speakers and discussions with colleagues, we also inspire others. We need each other! Hope to see you there!

Bea Morris, Legislative Co-Chairperson



Mark your Calendar!  
In-Person Lobby Day  
January 30, 2025

Look for details later



**Newsletter Delivery**

The VRTA Budget Committee made several suggestions at the Spring 2024 Delegate Assembly concerning the delivery of the VRTA Newsletter. Mailing the newsletters now costs almost \$2.00 per newsletter. The cost of printing and mailing newsletters continues to increase. Several ideas were presented to help defray the cost of the newsletters.

1. The newsletter will be available only on the VRTA website.
2. For members who still wish to receive newsletters by mail, a \$4.00 surcharge will be added to their dues.

There was no clear consensus at the Delegate Assembly about how to proceed with changing the delivery of the newsletter. The suggestions were tabled during the meeting. Each district and unit were asked to survey members about this issue. If changes are to be made, members will be made aware of the changes for several newsletter cycles before they occur.

**Note Change**

Be aware that the VRTA Website is now:

**vrta.us**

CHECK OUT OUR



**WEB SITE!**



## Retirement in the New Economy Bonnie Atwood

I just finished reading a book that left me angry and frightened. The book is “*Work Retire Repeat*,” by Teresa Ghilarducci. (University of Chicago Press, 2024).

One reason I read it was to help me understand the retirement experience of our public school teachers—past, present, and future. I did not anticipate how emotional I would become as I learned how retirement originated and where it is going. As a child, I vaguely remember my parents talking about retirement. They were secure in their federal government jobs. They worked many years, and enjoyed a good pension. They worried about their elderly parents, who worked just as hard, but did not receive either pensions or the time to accumulate much social security. Just as in past centuries, my parents provided for their parents.

But as a young working woman, I did not know about, or care about, retirement. I grew up in the era when women were just barely starting to invest in lifelong careers. Our home economics teacher, Mrs. Bain, told us to “*enjoy the career years*.” She emphasized that we would have only a short time before we would become housewives and become supported by our husbands. Looking back, that scene, to many of us, was a dream world. Pensions are eroding, family caregivers have to leave employment for various lengths of time, and saving money is a goal that often can not become a reality. Divorce, illness, natural disasters and other factors come into play and our retirement savings can become utilized as rainy day funds.

The author takes us through many such stories, and you have to ask yourself: where is the justice? For a time, retired teachers had defined benefits, which clearly are an important benefit for us. We have to watchdog them closely to see that they are not used as quickie loans for the other purposes, and that they do not continue to erode to defined contributions, or that they do not disappear at all, in this changing economy that is lacking respect for the older citizen.

I'd like to reprint the entire book here, but I'll conclude by listing the five things the author suggests that we can do:

As a **consumer**, be careful of your budget.

As a **saver**, try to save for emergencies and for retirement.

As an **investor**, if you have enough savings, create a smart, diversified, low-fee portfolio.

As a **worker**, try to negotiate for the highest pay you can possibly get.

Mobilize your role as a **voter**. “*Make sure the candidates you vote for are dedicated to adding more revenue to Social Security and Medicare and not in favor of raising the retirement age or otherwise cutting benefits.*”

I will add a sixth: Be an active member of VRTA.

### From the VRTA Treasurer

Thank you to all of our unit and district treasurers for your hard work and dedication. VRTA is effective in representing our interests when folks like you are effective. We appreciate our treasurers!! Here are a few important reminders for treasurers to keep in mind as we go forward with a new year.

- ◇ VRTA dues continue to be \$20 for the current year (July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025). You should be collecting \$20 per member for the current year. Beginning with the year July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026, dues will increase to \$25 per year.
- ◇ If your unit or district is a member of the VRTA IRS Group Exemption, commonly referred to as the “Tax Umbrella”, don't forget that the deadline for submitting your digital e-postcard to the IRS is November 15, 2024.
- ◇ Please submit the names of VRTA members from your unit who have passed away to me, so that they can be removed from the VRTA rolls.
- ◇ If you are a member of the VRTA Tax Umbrella, please submit a copy of your annual operating budget. Also submit a copy of your By-Laws whenever they are updated. All of these documents should be signed and dated by two officers.
- ◇ Please make sure that the Membership Enrollment forms are filled out completely. We are entering email addresses into our database and we are encouraging members to consider receiving your newsletters by email, rather than by USPS paper copies. There are places to provide information for both of these on the new revised membership enrollment forms.

Please encourage all of your members to become members of VRTA. As our state organization, we represent the interests of retired teachers across the Commonwealth. We need your support!



Weldon Martin, VRTA Treasurer

Treasurer's Breakout Session



## News From Around the Commonwealth

### Arlington Retired Teachers

Arlington Retired Teachers Association, ARTA, has had a wonderful end to our calendar year. The best part of it is that we have been able to meet in person. We have changed locations, now meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, VA, located in the heart of Arlington.

In January we met at the Goodwin House Retirement Home where we sat down with our members that live there, along with many of our other members and some of our newest members. We partook of a delicious meal along with holding our Executive Board meeting prior to the meal.

February we celebrated Black History Month with Dr Scott Taylor, President of the Black Heritage Museum of Arlington. Dr Scott's program brought us up to date on the ongoing mission of the museum and its work with the community and news of new and ongoing exhibits.

March brought to us the award- winning author, E.A. Coe. Coe has written four novels and is currently working on his fifth. His books are described as "stories with heart." Prior to writing his novels, Coe was, at one point in his career, the General Manager of the Dollywood Theme Park. What a delightful presentation!

April is what we call our "Field Trip Month". This time we took a trip to Hillwood Estate Museum & Gardens located in NW Washington DC. The weather was as beautiful as the gardens. We had a docent led tour of the museum and joined together to have lunch at the on-site Café. What a beautiful day.

On May 17, 2024, we ended our year at our annual May Luncheon at the Fairfax Army Navy Country Club. We were so fortunate to have as our speaker Virginia State Senator Barbara Favola. Barbara brought us up-to-date information on what happened in the General Assembly this year and what was yet to happen with the state budget. Barbara hails from Arlington. We were so excited to be able to have her join us as our luncheon speaker.

We have some wonderful programs planned for this year and are excited to be able to meet in person starting on September 11, 2024.



Barbara Favola , Virginia State Senator, our Spring Luncheon speaker



2024-2025 Officers, Ruth Yoritomo, Former President, Cathy Ecbreth, Secretary, Lynne Lilly, President, Nancy King, Vice President, Randy McKnight, Treasurer



Cindy Wilson, Lynne Lilly, Ellen Bartlett & Melanie Bartlett



Barbara Stuckey, Michele Milden, Nell Campbell

## News From Around the Commonwealth

### Charles City/New Kent Retired Teachers

The Charles City/New Kent Retired Teachers' Association has had an interesting year. We participated in Coats for Kids during the 2023 Christmas Season. Mrs. Joyce Williams spearheaded this project, and we were able to purchase many coats for the children of New Kent and Charles City Counties, Virginia.

Our Christmas Party was held at Cooper's Tavern in New Kent County, Virginia. We were happy to have twelve members present and two guests. Thanks to Mrs. Mary Collins who gave a half-dozen roses to each person in attendance. Her act of kindness was appreciated by all who witnessed her generosity.

The Charles City New Kent Scholarship was awarded to a 2024 New Kent High School Graduate. Mrs. Joyce Williams assisted with the awarding of our \$500.00 scholarship to Mr. Andrew Wallace who will be attending Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia.

On a more somber note, we have lost three of our dedicated members and this has been detrimental to our membership. During the month of March, we lost Miss Mamie Loney who was a faithful member for many years. She was always concerned about others and wanted to know how she could assist with any community projects that the organization was asked to complete. Miss Loney was noted for sending cards to any of our members who were considered the sick-and-shut in or on joyous occasions. She would always enclose a book of stamps in her cards. Many of us looked forward to receiving those stamps from Miss Loney. She was a middle school teacher in Charles City County for many years. We thank our former Superintendent, Dr. Janet Crawley, for speaking on our behalf at the funeral for Miss Loney. We were faced with another member who passed away in March and that was Mrs. Doris Parker who was ill for some time. We thank Mrs. Clemmie Miller and Mrs. Brenda Askew-Jones, who spoke on our behalf during her demise. Mrs. Parker was a middle school teacher for many years before retiring and becoming a member of our association. On July 7, 2024, another one of our members passed away. Mrs. Alethia Thomas was a long-time member of our organization. During her tenure, she served as president of our organization. Mrs. Thomas was dedicated to her duties during her many years of service to the Charles City/New Kent Retired Teachers Association. She was a math teacher at Charles City High School for thirty years. Thanks to Mrs. Hazel Charity, our president and Dr. Janet Crawley, our former superintendent spoke on our behalf at the funeral of Mrs. Thomas. Thanks to Mrs. Joyce Williams who also represented the Charles City/New Kent Retired Teachers' Association.

Our group is planning to participate in the Charles City County Angel Tree Project for the 2024 Christmas Season. Plans are also being made for our Christmas luncheon. Members are encouraged to invite retired individuals who may be interested in joining our organization.

### Dinwiddie Retired Teachers

The Dinwiddie Retired Teachers held its annual scholarship luncheon on Wednesday, June 5, 2024, at Joes' Steak and Seafood, North Dinwiddie. Dinwiddie Senior High Senior Maria Williams was awarded a \$500 scholarship. Maria was accompanied by her parents, Darrel and Flor Williams. She will be attending college this fall at Virginia Tech majoring in education. Maria stated in her essay "In elementary school everyone is asked what they want to be when they grow up. My answer has always enthusiastically been a teacher."



Maria Williams,  
scholarship recipient

### District G

District G Retired Teachers Association, a part of the Virginia Retired Teachers Association (VRTA), recently elected Linda Dinsmore (Rockingham County) as president for 2024-26. Other officers were installed with Ms. Dinsmore including Lois Alger (Page County) as vice president, JoAnn Racey (Shenandoah County) as secretary, and Jim Hines (Shenandoah County) as treasurer. The officers were installed by VRTA President Elect Karen Whetzel.

Membership of District G RTA is open to all educators from throughout the Shenandoah Valley. VRTA District G meets twice a year in a central location. The next meeting will be held in October 2024.



Front Row:  
Lois Alger, Linda  
Dinsmore  
Second Row:  
JoAnn Racey, Jim Hines





## News From Around the Commonwealth

### Lunenburg-Nottoway Awards Scholarships

The Lunenburg-Nottoway Retired Teachers Association met on Thursday, July 18, 2024, at Victoria Public Library. This year the unit received four student applications indicating an interest in pursuing teaching as a career and each applicant was awarded a LNRTA scholarship! The Nottoway High School recipient was Madison Redfern. She plans to attend Longwood University and major in special education. The Central High School recipients of Lunenburg were: Claire Bailey, who plans to attend Radford University and major in art education; Samiyah Cook plans to attend Virginia State University and major in business administration and finance and Katherine C. Casoni plans to attend Christopher Newport University and major in choral music education. Also, LNRTA contributed to the Southside Virginia Community College Scholarship Foundation Fund. The unit continues to be active and productive in the community.



Pictured (l-r): Evelyn Staples, Treasurer; Lunenburg Scholarship recipients: Claire Bailey, Samiyah Cook, Katherine C. Casoni; and Ruby B. Ingram, President, LNRTA.

### District N Members Attend Spring VRTA Delegate Assembly



### Newport News Retired Teachers

The Newport News Retired Teacher Association (NNRTA) meetings for March and June were held in the Newport News Public Schools administrative conference room. This meeting place has been excellent for the NNRTA members. NNRTA members have been able to connect with former colleagues and stay updated on current activities in the school system.

Newport News Retired Teachers Association continues to provide interesting and informative guest speakers at the regular quarterly meetings. On March 14<sup>th</sup>, just in time for spring cleaning, members enjoyed tips from professional organizer, Melissa Horton. Melissa is a graduate of Menchville High School and the owner of All About You: Organizing, Downsizing, Decluttering Services. Melissa offered interesting tips on managing clutter, and how doing these things will provide more time for retirees to do activities they really want to do. In addition, Melissa named several local businesses that accepted used items.

At our meeting on June 14<sup>th</sup>, the NNRTA was excited to have a \$1,000 scholarship recipient for the 2023-2024 school year. Committee chairs, Trilby Lynn and Margaret LaBell introduced the scholarship recipient, Mya Vincent, from Heritage High School (HHS). Accompanying Mya was Tarri Jones, HHS guidance counselor and Derrich Gurley, HHS graduate. Mya received glowing accolades from her teachers at HHS about her work ethic and many accomplishments. While at HHS, she also attended Virginia Peninsula Community College and took classes in early childhood education. Mya is a member of the National Honor Society, Science Honor Society and is the valedictorian of her class. She participated in a college prep program, Community Captains, through CNU. Mya has also recently been named recipient of the Wayne Lett Scholarship. In the fall, Mya will attend Old Dominion University. The NNRTA is excited to be able to support her as she furthers her education. During the meeting, Brenda Fowlkes (acting President) carried out the installation of officers, the program committee made plans for the fall and members wore their favorite vacation attire.

The goal of the NNRTA is to grow the membership. A Facebook page was recently established and several members have joined after connecting on Facebook. The NNRTA is pleased to be making a difference in the community and getting new members.



Tribly Lynn and guest speaker, Melissa Horton



Vice President, Charlyn Bonk and Acting President, Brenda Fowlkes

## News From Around the Commonwealth

### Loudoun Retired Educators

The Loudoun Retired Educators Association awarded five, \$1,000 scholarships to future educators. Our scholarship is funded from member donations and monthly 50/50 raffles. Thank you to the following members who presented the scholarships at the schools' award ceremonies: Pam Smith, Broad Run; Janet Dye, Freedom; Ellen Bawiec, Potomac Falls; Karen Elliott, Heritage; and Chris Stulga, Loudoun Valley. In addition, our unit sponsored two SHINE (Spotlighting Heroes in Education) \$500 employee recognition grants. Each grant was awarded to educators in this program overseen by the Loudoun Education Foundation.

Our unit would like to extend a special thank you to Co-Presidents Karen Elliott and Loretta Hall and Co-Vice President Pam Smith for their four-years of service and leadership on behalf of LREA.

Our eternal thanks go to our program coordinator, Pam Smith. Our unit has had many outstanding presentations at our monthly meetings. At our April meeting, a representative from the Loudoun County Sheriff's office gave an informative presentation on scams. In May, the Regional Older Adult Facilities Mental Health Support Team gave a presentation on Aging and Mental Health. During our June meeting members had the opportunity to discuss a favorite book or show and a list was compiled and shared to our members.



LREA Members discussing books and shows at our June 2024 Business Meeting.



We are very proud of our association with Loudoun Hunger Relief. Every month our unit collects food, egg cartons, and monetary donations for them. We have regular food drives during the course of the year which are focused on community needs. We have several volunteers who served as delivery drivers working for the "Fueled" program which is overseen by the Loudoun Education Foundation. This program is a compassionate, student-centered food security program ignited by LEF's mission to ensure every child reaches their full potential. Drivers deliver food and hygiene supplies to numerous schools on a weekly basis.



Pictured are volunteer drivers: Denise Powers and David Palanzi.

### Lynchburg Retired Teachers

The Lynchburg Retired Teachers met on May 19, 2024, and awarded three future teachers scholarships. Edward Christian Glass Scholarship of \$2,500 each for the following two students: Gabriella Layne of E C Glass High School, who will attend Longwood University and Kaushik Yadala who will attend Liberty University. The Edith B. Lee Scholarship of \$500.00 to a student going into elementary education went to Brittany Harris, who will attend Randolph-Macon in Ashland.

During Lynchburg's Bicentennial two scholarships were established in the name of Edward Christian Glass, who served as Superintendent of Lynchburg Schools for fifty-two years (1879-1931). The Lynchburg Retired Teachers Association and American Association of University Women raised money to start the endowment to award one student from each of the city's public high schools. The Edith B. Lee Scholarship was created by her family in her memory to recognize her years of service as an educator in the Lynchburg City Schools. Our LRTA members continue to add to the endowment in memory or in honor of educators.



## News From Around the Commonwealth

### Richmond-Henrico

Richmond-Henrico Retired Teachers Association presented the W. Roland Galvin Scholarship to two Thomas Jefferson High School Seniors on May 16, 2024. Shiane Taylor received \$1000.00 and will be attending Virginia Commonwealth University, majoring in art education. Shayla Neal received a \$500.00 Book Award and will be attending Norfolk State University, majoring in pre-nursing.

We also recognized our Past Present, Mary Collins, for volunteering her service to Richmond Feed More for 25 years. She received a certificate for serving at Feed More for a total of 19,055 hours. R-HRTA congratulates Mary Collins.

R-HRTA plans to continue the community service projects at selected District Q Elementary Schools/Pre-School Centers, Richmond Food Bank, Henrico Christmas Mother, Richmond Christmas Mother and the W. Roland Galvin Scholarship for 2024-2025.



Scholarship Winners



Mary Collins, receiving her certificate for her work at FeedMore

### Roanoke City Retired Educators

The Roanoke City Retired Educators met March 14 with historian and RCPS graduate John Long as the guest. Welcomed by former teachers, John spoke about his education, career, and work as Director of the Bedford D Day Memorial.



The May 9 meeting featured RCPS graduate, Ashlee Reed, who discussed her education, family, and career as a mental health counselor. She explained tips for senior longevity from the world's Blue Zones.



Books and clothing were collected for the Sheriff's Office and four \$500 Scholarships were awarded to RCPS Seniors planning to major in education. Lunch was served at both meetings at the Williamson Road Library.



### Suffolk Retired Teachers

Once again, the Suffolk Retired Teachers Association (SRTA) has succeeded in reaching one of our goals for 2023-2024 - increasing membership; in which we welcomed three (3) new members to the organization. Our most significant achievement was awarding the annual scholarship of \$1,000.00 dollars to a senior from one of the three (3) high schools in the City of Suffolk.

This year's scholarship recipient is Kaleigh Grace Bibbo, a graduating honor student of Nansemond River High School. She will attend Chowan University in Murfreesboro, North Carolina. "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

SRTA conducted in-person meetings at The Salvation Army in Suffolk, Virginia, as well as, telephone conferences to discuss pertinent information such as visibility, recruitment of retired educators, and promoting projects/activities for the year.

Members of SRTA actively participated and supported the following activities: purchased and collected can and dry goods for the pantry at Salvation Army, contributed monetary donations to The Genieve Shelter, which is a domestic violence emergency shelter for victims of violence seeking services; The Salvation Army, American Cancer Society; and lastly, two members Mrs. Mary S. Stevenson, (SRTA President) and Mrs. Mary Copeland (Former SRTA President) attended the VRTA Spring Delegate Assembly in April 2024.

Currently, plans are being implemented to donate books/school supplies to two elementary schools in Suffolk. Members of SRTA will assist with voter registration drives within the community. A food drive will also be done at Salvation Army in the fall.

As the time is approaching for the fall, SRTA looks forward to recruiting more members, increasing volunteer hours, partnering with other organizations, and attend the 2024-2025 VRTA Conferences (Spring & Fall). SRTA will continue to stand up for education "to be that voice, resource and connection."



Kaleigh Bibbi, Scholarship Winner

## News From Around the Commonwealth

### Alexandria Retired Teachers

We held our annual joint meeting with Arlington County Retired Teachers in March. Our speaker was Mr. Ed Gannt, a former naval aviator and educator, who is a reenactor for the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment and USCT (United States Colored Troops) groups. He wore his uniform and explained the role of the African American soldiers during the Civil War. It was a great opportunity for all members to have him speak to us.

In April, we met with Ms Susan Dalton, resident manager of Goodwin House, who spoke to us about “making a plan.” Goodwin House offers several alternative options for those of us thinking about changing our life style, including programs for aging in place, independent living, including a rental option, assisted living, memory care, and health care center. She urged us all to “make a plan” so that we can start thinking about what our choices are and how we plan to provide for ourselves as we age.

In May, we presented a \$3000 scholarship to Ms. Angie Fuentes Canales, who will be attending George Mason University majoring in psychology. She hopes to continue and get a masters degree in school counseling and return to work in ACPS in the future,

Our speaker at our May luncheon was Delegate Charniele Herring, House Majority Leader in the General Assembly, who represents parts of Alexandria and Fairfax County. She actively supports teachers and when asked about the hybrid retirement system, she is not in favor but sees little chance of changing it in the near future. She urged everyone to get out and vote in the coming elections, reminding us that she won her first election by 16 votes!



Ed Gannt, former naval aviator and teacher

Delegate Charniele Herring



### Charlotte County

On May 1st at the quarterly meeting, Mable Scott, President of District E, installed the officers for the Charlotte County Retired Teachers Association for 2024-2026. Those installed officers were: Co-Presidents – Kenny Howard and Betsy Hanmer, Vice President – Linda Hicks, Secretary – Linwood Davis, and Treasurer – Ned Locke. Mrs. Scott spoke to the attendees about the advantages of belonging to the district and state organizations.

At the August 7th meeting of CCRTA, Rebekah Sanderson, who was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship by our organization, spoke about her numerous accomplishments and her goals for the future. She will be attending VA Tech. She also included a motivational speech for us seniors. The newly retired school personnel were invited to the August meeting as our guests.

This year the CCRTA will present each second grader in Charlotte County a book, and members of our organization will read to all of the second graders. CCRTA plans to present a scholarship of \$1,000 to a graduating senior at Randolph-Henry High School.

CCRTA also plans to have informative and entertaining programs, including programs on estate planning, legislative information, and “staying fit in retirement.” We continue “to serve, not to be served.”



Mable Scott, District E President



Newly installed officers

### Winchester Retired Teachers

The Winchester Retired Teachers Association had two engaging speakers this spring. In March, Faith Powers of The Laurel Center Intervention for Domestic and Sexual Violence spoke to us of the Children's Project and the impact of violence on the children they serve along with the supports they offer. John Kegel of VRS spoke to us in June about VRS services and alerted the membership to several key items of which some were not aware. It was a helpful and informative session. Also in June, the parting co-presidents thanked the board for its support over the past four years and passed the torch to Patsy Stainback who will serve as president for the next two years. Thank you and best of luck to you, Patsy.



## News From Around the Commonwealth

### Henrico Retired School Personnel

The Henrico Retired School Personnel Association held its Spring luncheon on Thursday, April 25, 2024. The luncheon was held at the newly renovated and reimagined old Highland Springs High School renamed The Oak. The Oak Avenue Complex, is a multipurpose center that connects Henrico County Public School students and families with community services, and expands academic, career, and early childhood readiness options.

The '24 HRSPA Scholarship winners were Reese Wasserman from Glen Allen High School and Meredith McCaffrey from Freeman High School, both planning a career in education.

Kevin Robertson, the Community School Resource Co-Ordinator for The Oak, gave a wonderful walk and talk overview of all the resources the multipurpose center provides that connects Henrico County Public Schools students and families with community services.

Henrico County Manager, John Vithoukas gave encouraging remarks on how important teachers have been to the success of Henrico County and presented safety vests to all who wanted them.

Kristi Kinsella, Brookland School Board member, Tyrone Nelson representing Varina and chairman of the county supervisors and Jody Rogish representing Tuckahoe on the board of supervisors all made remarks supporting HRSPA's work in supporting Henrico County Public Schools.

Members and guests enjoyed a wonderful lunch catered by Deep Run Roadhouse and had a wonderful time catching up with friends and colleagues.

The membership unanimously voted in the new slate of officers as follows:

Bonnie Thompson-President, Beth Metcalfe-Vice President, Betsy Pike-Secretary, and Cathy Durvin-Treasurer.



Scholarship  
Winners



Guest Speakers at Meetings



Lunch catered by Deep  
Run Roadhouse

### Portsmouth Retired Educators

PREA celebrated our PREA support team: James Brown, Brent Ellis and Larry Porter, spouses of our members and all-around helping hands throughout the year. They assist with meeting set up, provide escort and safe entry to and from our meetings and assist us as we complete our many community projects. We are grateful for all they do to help us succeed. Many thanks to our PREA support team.

Fifteen members were awarded certificates for Outstanding Volunteer Participation at the Effingham Family YMCA Food Pantry. We have served more than 446 persons this year as we bag and distribute groceries each month at the Food Pantry Weekend. It's been our pleasure helping families meet the nutritional needs of their families.

PREA awarded four \$1,000 scholarships. Recipients were Raven Jones (Norcom High School) who plans to attend Virginia State,



PREA Support Team

Ray Royota (Norcom High School) who plans to attend Norfolk State, Mawusi Mansah (Manor High School) who plans to attend Norfolk State, and Nalaigha Williams (Manor High School) who plans to attend Delaware State.

PREA will host a four-unit meeting with Jim DuBrueler, VRTA Benefits Advisor, at our fall meeting on Monday, November 11<sup>th</sup>. Chesapeake, Suffolk and Emporia members have been invited to join us in this Country and Western theme meeting.



Members Receiving Certificates



## News From Around the Commonwealth

### PCRTA: Alive and Busy!!

Patrick County Retired Teachers Association has remained busy with outreach, social, youth, and community events and is preparing for another year of projects beginning in September 2024.

At the Patrick County High School Senior Awards Banquet in May, Cheyenne Clifton received the Patrick County Retired Teachers scholarship presented by Rhonda Gilbert, chairman of scholarship committee. Bobbijo Roberts received the District E Scholarship presented by Nancy Peters.

Members Dean Gilbert and Rhonda Gilbert made a monetary donation on behalf of Patrick County Retired Teachers to the guidance department of Patrick County High School. The money is designated to be used for the purchase of graduation attire for needy students and will be an ongoing project. Money was donated this spring to a band student who needed help for band camp. Donations of sanitizer and paper were made to two elementary schools in the county.

Induction of officers for 2024-2026 was held at the June meeting of PCRTA. They were as follows: Betty Perry, president; Phyllis Eastridge, vice president; Judy Lacks, secretary; and Stephanie Martin, treasurer. Program for the June meeting was a writing exercise from prompts with interesting responses.

A picnic for members and incoming new members was held at Dehart Park in Stuart on June 14.

In lieu of the book club meeting on June 19, members visited the Orlean Puckett cabin on the Blue Ridge Parkway, having read the book about Orlean Puckett 1844-1939: The Life of a Mountain Midwife.

Third Wednesday of each month is busy with book club discussions followed by lunch and then singing at the local nursing home and Landmark Center.

Plans for 2024-2025 will be made at the PCRTA Executive Board Meeting August 26. Jason Wood, Patrick County school superintendent, will be the speaker at the first general meeting September 16.

Stay tuned for more to come from Patrick County Retired Teachers Association!



Patrick County RTA Lead Singing at Nursing Home & Landmark Center

### Botetourt Retired Educators

The Botetourt Retired Educators have been busy this spring. Cheryl Willis presented a program about her family's African American heritage. Wanda Martin informed the group about the Character Counts Academy that selected rising sixth grade students participate in during the summer. The BRE presented two \$1,000 scholarships this spring. Each Botetourt County School's library received two books as a gift from the BRE. In the fall, the group will collect supplies for the Botetourt Food Pantry. Each year during the holidays, items are collected for residents at an assisted living facility in the area. Many of the people living there are veterans. Members of the BRE continue to be active in the community.



BRE members at March meeting

### 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. Also because of copyright issues, pictures taken by a professional photographer cannot be used. If you send a PDF document, necessary changes cannot be made. Please send articles in Word. All submitted articles will be used if space permits. Articles received after the deadline will likely not be included. The deadline for the Spring 2025 newsletter is **Monday, March 10, 2025.**

Susan Martin, Newsletter Editor

susanmartin730@gmail.com or 1049 Martins Lane, Fincastle, VA, 24090

**Social on Monday, September 30**



VRTA’s State President, Karen Whetzel and AARP Virginia’s State President, Joyce Williams, will co-host an after-dinner social on Monday night, September 30, 2024, in the hospitality suite of the Doubletree by Hilton Midlothian from 7:00-8:30 P.M. at the VRTA Fall Conference on September 30 and October 1. We will have the opportunity for a dialogue about how cooperation between the two organizations with their overlapping membership can result in higher effectiveness for both groups.

**Fall 2024 VRTA Board of Directors Meeting**

The VRTA Board of Directors will meet on Monday, September 30, from 9 to 11 am at the Doubletree by Hilton-Midlothian. Members of the Board of Directors are the VRTA officers, all past VRTA Presidents, District Presidents, and VRTA Committee Chairs. Board of Directors members should let President Karen Whetzel ([kswhetzel@gmail.com](mailto:kswhetzel@gmail.com); 540-740-8589) know by September 23 if they will attend the Board of Directors meeting. District Presidents can designate an alternate to represent the district; send that information to Karen Whetzel also! It is important to have all Districts represented so the local members have a voice.

**Virginia Voices for Nursing Home Residents**

For the past several years, VRTA has been participating with “Virginia Voices for Nursing Home Residents,” which is a coalition of organizations, advocates, residents, and family members led by AARP Virginia, the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, and Virginia Poverty Law Center seeking common sense nursing home reform to protect nursing home residents and staff and to improve the overall quality of Virginia nursing homes. Last year, the group worked on improving staffing standards for nursing homes in Virginia. VRTA members Bea Morris and Tina Whitaker, Legislative Committee co-chairs; Karen Whetzel, VRTA President; and Joyce Williams Virginia AARP President, as well as Bonnie Atwood, VRTA Lobbyist participated in virtual meetings of the Coalition in 2023-24.

*Save the Date* **Spring 2025 Delegate Assembly**  
Tuesday, April 29-Wednesday, April 30  
Doubletree by Hilton  
Midlothian, Virginia

**Scenes from the 2024 Delegate Assembly**



## Virginia Retired Teachers Association Fall Conference Schedule (as of 8.11.24)

**Sunday, September 29 – Tuesday, October 1, 2024**

### Sunday, September 29, 2024

5:00 pm to 7:00 p.m. Executive Committee Meeting

### Monday, September 30, 2024

8:00 a.m.—11:30 a.m. Registration—Maudie Scott

9:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m. Board of Directors Meeting

11:00 a.m.—12:00 noon ***VRTA members will vacate the room***

12:00 pm **(Hotel staff will set up for Luncheon)  
First event for those not on the Executive Committee or  
Board of Directors**

12:00 p.m.—1:45 p.m. Luncheon, Guest Speaker Jared Calfee, AARP  
(Advocacy/Health Care Focus)

1:45 p.m.—2:00 p.m. Break; Report to Breakout Sessions Upon Return

2:00 p.m.—3:15 p.m. Break Out Sessions

3:15 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. VRTA Benefits Update – Jim DuBrueler and Committee

3:45 p.m.—5:00 p.m. Legislative Session: Bea Morris (David Bailey speaker)

Dinner on Your Own

7:00 p.m. —8:30 p.m. VRTA/AARP After Dinner Reception – Suite 806

### Tuesday, October 1, 2024

Breakfast on Your Own/Beverages in Meeting Room

8:00 a.m.—9:00 a.m. Registration—Maudie Scott

8:50 a.m.—9:50 a.m. Virginia Retirement System (VRS) Presentation

9:50 a.m.—10:00 a.m. Break

10:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. Speaker TBD

10:45 am – 1:00 pm Business Meeting/Memorial Service

Locations for the various events will be assigned by the Doubletree Hotel. Each registrant will receive this information in a packet when checking in at the Registration Table.



Sunday, September 29  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
\*\* MEETS \*\*  
5:00 PM—7:00 PM

**VRTA 2024 Fall Conference**  
**Registration Form**  
Sunday, September 29-Tuesday, October 1

Monday, September 30  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
MEETS  
9:00 AM-11:00 AM

**Note: Registration fees are per person. Each person attending the Fall Conference should fill out a registration form. Send a completed registration form and a check for \$80.00, payable to VRTA, to Maudie Scott, P.O. Box 282, Amelia, VA 23002 postmarked by Sunday, September 8.**

**Questions (?) [maudie@tds.net](mailto:maudie@tds.net)**

The registration fee includes the organizational costs of the conference, as well as the Monday luncheon at 12:00 noon. **Please indicate your choice of entrée for the luncheon. Select only one option.**

- ◇ Grilled filet of salmon with a lemon beurre blanc sauce
- ◇ Tuscan grilled chicken breast with Italian herb crust, olive oil, garlic, nut free pesto sauce
- ◇ Vegetarian chef's choice
- ◇ Gluten free chef's choice

Entrees served with traditional Caesar salad with shaved parmesan and croutons, seasonal vegetables, oven roasted potatoes, rolls and butter

Dessert: Carrot cake

Beverages: Coffee and iced tea

**Room Registration:** Attendees make room reservations no later than **Sunday, September 8**, by contacting the Hilton at **1-800-222-Tree** or **804-379-3800**. Attendees request the Virginia Retired Teachers' Association rate of \$140.76 night. Check-in is at 4:00 PM. Check-out is at 11:00 AM. The direct link for registration at

<https://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/ricksdt-90e-12b95a7b-6a42-4faf-9de2-423915548150/>

Should you decide to make reservations directly through Hilton.com the **three letter group code you should use is #90E**. **The hotel prefers everyone to use the hyperlink to register.**

**1. Personal Information for Registration: Please print clearly.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

District: \_\_\_\_\_ Local Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Emergency Contact:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Banner Information** District and local banners will be displayed in the banquet room at the conference.

**Local and District Units are required to bring a stand to display their banners.**

**4. MarketPlace:** Send an email to [kswhetzel@gmail.com](mailto:kswhetzel@gmail.com) by September 8 to indicate that you plan to set up a table for the MarketPlace.

**5. Yes No (circle one)** I plan to attend the After Dinner Social hosted by VRTA and AARP Virginia on Monday evening from 7:00-8:30 P.M. in the hospitality suite. (If you are an AARP member, bring card!)

**\*\* Only members of the Executive Committee will meet on Sunday, September 29 \*\***

The luncheon at 12:00 noon on Monday will be the first function for those not on the Board of Directors.

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

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**Note: All VRTA members are required to pay the registration fee. Those of you that have a traveling companion who is not a VRTA member, can invite your companion to attend the luncheon by paying an additional \$35.00 to help pay the cost of the meal and service fees. Add the cost to the registration and indicate his/her meal choice as well as yours.**

**6. If you are planning on attending the VRTA 2024 Fall Conference on **Tuesday only**, the cost of registration will be \$35.00 per person. Please come early enough on Tuesday for registration before the meeting begins at 9:00. Each person in your party must fill out a separate form.**

**Personal information for VRTA 2024 Fall Conference Registration. Please print clearly.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

District and Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Send your completed registration form with a check for **\$35.00**, payable to VRTA, to Maudie Scott,  
P.O. Box 282, Amelia, VA 23002 postmarked by **Sunday, September 8.**