



VRTA Newsletter

Publication of Virginia Retired Teachers Association

Member, NRTA—Division of The AARP

Spring 2025 Edition

A Message from YOUR VRTA President Karen Whetzel – Moving Forward Together!



The VRTA Spring 2025 Delegate Assembly will be held on Tuesday, April 29 and Wednesday 30, 2025, at the Doubletree in Midlothian, Virginia. The Executive Committee will meet at 5 pm on Monday, April 28. The deadline for both the hotel registration and the VRTA registration is April 5. The registration form is posted on the website vrta.us and is included in the VRTA printed newsletter! The hotel link is available now:

<https://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/ricksdt-90s-4114bc42-eaac-499f-bb67-1c0bfe3810db/> Please book your rooms using the online link if possible. If calling to reserve your room, use Doubletree central reservations at 1-800-548-

8690, and use the code 90S. Do not book through other agencies or you won't get the discounted rate. If you are told that no rooms are available in the block, contact me at 540-740-8589 or email me at kswhetzel@gmail.com. I may be able to add a few rooms, but we can't hold too many or we pay for any not booked.

District Presidents and Committee Chairs are voting members of the VRTA Board of Directors which will meet on Tuesday, April 29, at 9 am. Please arrive early enough to register before the meeting! If you are sending an alternate to vote for your district, contact me before the meeting and send a signed note with the alternate for records.

OnSharing our reflections and perspectives, learning from others, and committing to action will be an inspiration for all e important item of discussion for both the Board of Directors and the Delegate Assembly is the printed/mailed VRTA newsletters which cost almost \$15,000 per year to print and mail out. The Executive Committee voted to recommend that the print newsletter which is now mailed out will be distributed electronically only, with the final print issue being mailed in Fall 2025, with notice that this will be the last paper copy printed, and future newsletters will be published on vrta.us.

Four breakout sessions are planned for Tuesday afternoon, and will be repeated once. The Legislative and Membership Committees will present "Using the new VRTA Benefits Seminar to Attract and Retain New Members." The Legislative Committee will present "Reflections and Perspectives: A Discussion with Members on the work of the Legislative Committee." Dave Palanzi, President of the Loudoun Retired Educators Association, will present a breakout session "Cracking the Code: What Do Members Want?" The fourth session which is tentatively planned is about VRTA and AARP working together to make both organizations stronger. Descriptions of each breakout session will be included in the packet received at registration.

On Tuesday night, Committee Chats will be held at which members can learn about what committees do, as well as make suggestions to committees (for example, bylaw changes can be given to the Bylaws and Structure Committee). It will also be a time to meet your officers.

On Wednesday, the Virginia Retirement System presentation will be done by VRS staff. (This is always one of the most popular things at each state meeting! An inspirational talk will be given by Tom Allen, editor of the VEA Journal, who has published two books based on his newspaper columns.

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"Our wisdom and good judgment are necessary, and we must be prepared with facts and strategies. Sharing our reflections and perspectives, learning from others, and committing to action will be an inspiration for all of us. All of us must do whatever we are able to do."

President’s Message, continued

The final thing happening at the 2025 Spring Delegate Assembly is the Delegate Assembly, which will vote on the budget, as well as other important business for VRTA. According to the bylaws Article VII Section A: “Voting members of the Delegate Assembly shall be members of the Executive Committee, district presidents, and two delegates from each local unit. If a local unit has over 100 VRTA members, it shall have an additional delegate for each 50 VRTA members or fraction thereof. All voting delegates to the Spring Delegate Assembly shall be members of the VRTA.” (The VRTA bylaws are on the website vrta.us for reference.) Be sure your local sends voting delegates! Local presidents: send delegate names to me by April 5.

Thanks to everyone who has contacted me to offer me support, answer questions, make suggestions, or express concerns! Continue to reach out to me at kswhetzel@gmail.com, 540-740-8589, or Facebook Karen Whetzel VRTA President if you have questions, suggestions, or concerns!

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.

Community Service — With Our Youth

The Virginia Retired Teachers report for the year of May 2023-April 2024 is the following:

- Twenty-eight of the eighty four units reported this year.
- There was an increase of seven units from last year.
- 252,367 youth were reported served by 415 volunteers in various communities for a total of 136,276 and ½ hours.
- The volunteer hours convert into a monetary value of \$4,333, 592.70.

The Virginia Retired Teachers are still making a difference in the state. We thank you all for your work, dedication, and reports. Please continue to volunteer you services.

Louise Mont-Adams – Chairperson, Linda Ellis – Committee Member, Joyce Williams – Committee Member



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!”

In Memory



Kennon Bland, president of VRTA from 2008-2010 passed away on Sunday, March 9th. Kennon designed the graphic for the cover of the program for the VRTA state meetings.

Virginia Retired Teachers Association

“Organized November 28, 1936”

2024- 2026 Officers

President—Karen Whetzel	(540)740-8589 kswhetzel@gmail.com
President-elect—Drucilla Pollard	(804)339-3893 dholmes.Tate1@gmail.com
Vice President—Larry Hardesty	(540)533-5527 thehardestys@yahoo.com
Secretary—Janet Dye	(591)752-6172 jsdye5@yahoo.com
Treasurer—Weldon Martin	(540)473-2636 hooman4949@gmail.com
Immediate Past President Jean Marrow	(804)275-7278 marrowj@aol.com

Reflections and Perspectives



The Legislative Committee will provide several opportunities for members to reflect on the past and share their perspectives for the future at the VRTA Delegate Assembly on April 29 -30. The Legislative Session speaker will address the first Delegate Assembly event, the luncheon, on Tuesday, April 29, instead of later in the afternoon. Dr. Bob Holsworth, one of the leading political analysts in Virginia, will give us his thoughts on Virginia 2025: Issues and Elections. His comments have appeared in newspapers throughout the nation, including the Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, and The Washington Post. Dr. Bob is also the regular political analyst for WTVR in Richmond and has appeared on major television networks. We are fortunate to have him begin our assembly with thought-provoking analyses.

The Legislative Committee will host a breakout session on Tuesday afternoon in which members attending will share their reflections and perspectives concerning legislative activities and how VRTA can be more effective.

In addition, the Legislative Committee is looking forward to talking informally with members who have questions, suggestions, comments, etc., during the Committee Chats session after dinner on Tuesday evening.

The current political climate is producing frightening results, and many who have worked diligently in the past are either physically or mentally unable to continue. Others are experiencing mental and emotional fatigue. It is vital that we as teachers do not lose hope, perseverance, and patience. Our wisdom and good judgment are necessary, and we must be prepared with facts and strategies. Sharing our reflections and perspectives, learning from others, and committing to action will be an inspiration for all of us. All of us must do whatever we are able to do. We can't do everything, but we can do something. Our country, our state, and our children depend on it. Please join us at the DoubleTree April 29-30 to prepare for the future.

Bea Morris , Legislative Chairperson

VRTA 2025-26 DIRECTORY UPDATES

THE DIRECTORY IS GOING ONLINE!

Each VRTA District and Unit President and Treasurer will receive a password at the Spring Delegate Assembly and Fall Conferences to access the 2025-26 VRTA Directory on the VRTA Website: vrta.us
Updated versions of the directory will be available in July and January each year.

Continue to send updates of officer information to:

Leigh McKay, clo49lm@gmail.com,

or 4720 Sweetfern Row, Apt. 210, Wilmington, NC 28411 or 540-529-5131 by June 30, 2025.

Unit and Local presidents please continue to send your Annual Report to Daphne Miller, and your district president.

Recommendation for Charitable Donation

The Charitable Donations Committee recommends that the VRTA make a single donation of \$350.00 to the American Red Cross/Virginia. We chose the Red Cross because there have been many floods and other disasters throughout the state that they help. VRTA has been donating to six service organizations, but for budgeting reasons it seems necessary to cut back. Furthermore, individual units make many annual donations.

Committee:

Helen Tippie

Bea Morris

Door Prizes at the 2025 VRTA Spring Delegate Assembly

The VRTA Executive Committee read and discussed the comments on door prizes on the Fall 2024 Evaluation Form. Some of the opinions expressed:

--it creates a financial hardship for some presidents to bring a door prize because their local unit or district doesn't have money so it falls on the president.

--Door prize drawings take too much time.

--Have less and higher quality door prizes

--Do all door prize drawings at the end of the conference.

The Executive Committee discussed door prizes at their meeting. The decision was made to ask each DISTRICT to donate a door prize. If a district has many local units, it might be able to donate more than one door prize.

President Karen Whetzel has worked with the Doubletree by Hilton Midlothian, where we hold the Spring Delegate Assembly, to donate a door prize which will be given away at the end of the Spring Delegate Assembly on Wednesday. The door prize is a free night at the Doubletree for two people with breakfast at the Bistro included. Good luck!

Website

Be aware that the VRTA Website is now:

vrta.us



Eleanor Roosevelt: One Who Cared
By Bonnie Atwood

Most people of our age share a deep appreciation of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. The wife of FDR, she was not afraid to “get her hands dirty” and work hard for the neediest American citizens.

She took a great interest in caring for people in old age, as evidenced by her speech “Old Age Pensions,” delivered before the D.C. Branch of the American Association for Social Security in February of 1934.

She spoke up for people who have worked hard all their lives, and, through no fault of their own, have not been able to provide for their old age. A first provision was “terrible,” she said, through the institution of poorhouses. She witnessed “little by little” the passing of old age pension laws in the various states.

In this speech, she refers to laws in New York and in Washington, D.C., as being model laws. She praises the idea that these laws specify no fixed sum, but rather distribute funds on a case-by-case basis.

She criticizes the age that a person can receive these pensions. Some people are suffering at age 60, yet some are doing fine at age 70, for example. And she preferred a more universal funding.

Mrs. Roosevelt gave her audience a heartbreaking example of a family of two elderly sisters and their two elderly brothers, who desperately wanted to stay in their own home. When she visited them, one brother had died; one had been taken away as “insane” because of worry. The two sisters were crying and they were not sure how they could get enough to eat.

“...The community owes its old people their own home as long as they possibly can live at home...” declared Mrs. Roosevelt. “...it means so much to sit in the same old chair you sat in for a great many years...”

The reader is nearly brought to tears as Mrs. Roosevelt ends her speech: “For that reason I believe that this bill will be a model bill and pass without any opposition this year.”

I end by thanking VRTA for the work it does, and by urging the members not to give up the fight for a dignified life for our retired teachers and other seniors who have given so much.

Fall 2024 VRTA Fall Conference



Drucilla Pollard and Larry Hardesty

FROM THE VRTA TREASURER

VRTA Dues will Increase to \$30 Beginning with the 2025-2026 Membership Year

Everyone is reminded that VRTA Dues are increasing to \$30 per year beginning with dues paid for the 2025-2026 membership year. Many local unit treasurers will begin collecting dues for next year (2025-2026) during meetings this spring. The VRTA Delegate Assembly voted at last spring’s annual meeting to increase dues to help cover the deficit that VRTA has been experiencing for the past couple of years. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation as we transition to this new dues structure.



Louise Mont-Adams



Karen Whetzel—VRTA President

News From Around the Commonwealth

Alexandria Retired Educators

At our first meeting in September, we met with Carlton Nettles, the new Director of Compensation and Benefits. Since this is the third director in three years, Mr. Nettles heard numerous questions and concerns from members. In October we had Jimmy, from the Office of Historic Alexandria, who regaled the members with ghostly tales and mysteries of old Alexandria. This was a perfect program for the Halloween season! We did not meet in November. In December, we invited the choral group from Annandale High School to entertain us with holiday songs of the seasons. The group was fantastic and sounded like professional singers. One of our members announced that she was a 1963 graduate of Annandale High School and was delighted to have the group perform for us!



Annandale High School Choral Group

Brunswick Retired Teachers

Brunswick Retired Teachers entertained the senior citizens at their Christmas luncheon with a skit entitled "The Colors of Christmas." They also donated supplies to the center. During the year they did many other activities which included Trunk-a-Treat with the kids. The unit also awarded a deserving senior a \$500 scholarship.

"The Colors of Christmas"



Arlington Retired Teachers Association

Arlington's retired educators have had a busy fall and holiday season, welcoming guests, visiting local sites, celebrating the accomplishments of our members, and giving to others in the community.

In September we welcomed Elizabeth Cottrell, a speaker, blogger, business leader, and award-winning author of **Heartspoken: How to write Notes that Connect, Encourage, and Inspire**. Her message inspired all in attendance to consider the vital role of connection in our lives and how to harness our own note-writing superpowers.

In October twenty-two members carpoled to the county's National Landing to visit Amazon's second headquarters, HQ2, and its Metropolitan Park Art and Gardens. As we began our informal exploration of the park, the fire alarm evacuated the headquarters, giving us opportunities to chat with employees as we enjoyed the gardens and art installations.

On November 15, we gathered at the Renaissance Arlington Capitol View hotel to celebrate member Martha "Marty" Swaim as she was presented the Arlington Community Foundation's William T. Newman, Jr. Spirit of Community Award. Marty was honored for her work as the co-founder twenty years ago of Challenging Racism (CR), "a local nonprofit dedicated to empowering, inspiring, and giving individuals the tools to disrupt system racism." Marty retired as CR's unpaid director in 2020. ARTA celebrates Marty's well-deserved honor! We are also proud of other members who have received the Spirit of Community Award over its 31 years of existence: The Honorable L. Karen Darner in 2009; Meg Tuccillo in 2012; and The Honorable Dr. Emma Violand-Sanchez in 2018.

Potomac Harmony, a local chapter of Sweet Adelines, International (SAI), visited with us at our December 11 gathering. We enjoyed the wonderful music and program they created just for us; they wove in who they are as a group and individuals' links to Arlington. ARTA attendees brought many new towel and sheet sets for the residents of the Mary Marshall Assisted Living Residence. President Lynne Lilly and Vice President Nancy King delivered all to the home's staff after the meeting. It was a happy ending to a busy Arlington RTA year!

District G

The Fall 2024 District G Retired Teacher Association meeting featured Angela Crawford, Interim CEO and Cindy Avvenire, Advocate Manager for Blue Ridge (CASA — Court Appointed Special Advocate for Children) speaking on what CASA advocates do and encouraging members to volunteer. Blue Ridge CASA has recently expanded into Page and Shenandoah Counties. A business meeting was held with reports from the VRTA Fall Conference.



Angela Crawford (left) and Cindy Avvenire (right)



News From Around the Commonwealth

Buchanan County RTA

VRTA's Mission is "To be the voice, resource and connection for all retired school personnel." Members of the *Buchanan County Retired Teachers Association* support VRTA's Mission and strive to keep its vision alive; "All retired school personnel will be safe, productive, informed and financially secure in retirement." Even though Buchanan County is more than 350 miles from Richmond, BCRTA is represented at VRTA's Spring Delegate Assembly and Fall Conference each year. The VRTA conference information is shared during local meetings, and we encourage retirees to check the website, vrta.us, frequently and ask questions.

As a group, BCRTA members stay productive by working and supporting Buchanan County residents. Our yearly projects include helping Buchanan County Public Library's *Imagination Library* and *Storybook Walk*. Each year we provide food donations to *Feeding my Sheep*, a local food pantry. Also, we contribute to the Boys and Girls Club of Central Appalachia, *Shop with a Cop*, and *Social Services Coal Miners Christmas*. As individuals, members volunteer at churches and other organizations.

All volunteer groups are struggling to keep members active and find new members. Hopefully, family, financial, and world dynamics will improve and retired educators can continue to make a difference in our communities, state, and country.



Buchanan RTA continues to be active in the community

Danville Retired Teachers Association

The Danville Retired Teachers Association is excited to report that we are having a successful year. We are excited to have increased our membership from twenty-five members to thirty. We continue to serve, support and strengthen our community in areas where needed.

In August, we gave teachers of Northside Pre-School back-to-school supply kits with basics such as highlighters, markers, mints, tissues, aspirin, etc.

In November, we offered our time to the Salvation Army by ringing the bell.

In December, we partnered with God's Pit Crew with twenty Play Pails for children experiencing loss during a disaster. These Play Pails contain items such as blankets, balls, towels, crayons, stuffed animals, notebooks and other items that the children may have lost in the disaster. We celebrated the Christmas holiday together at the Olive Garden Restaurant where we gave the Play Pails to God's Pit Crew for distribution as needed.

We now look forward to awarding our two \$500.00 scholarships to qualifying recipients.



Helping the Salvation Army



Helping God's Pit Crew



Danville's Retired Teachers Association

Greenville Retired Teachers

GRTA donates money to the Fuller House that helps build homes for under-privileged families and also donates to the (CYC) Community Youth Center serving many youths during the summer months, offering recreational swimming and various activities. In both these organizations, they are managed by our very own retired teachers, Reverend George Pugh, Fuller House and Dr. Thelma Atkins Riley for the CYC. The GRTA participated in the annual Peanut Festival Parade in Greenville/Emporia in September to promote membership awareness in their organization bringing their membership now to 37 in District D.

Greenville President Arletha Cain partners with organization "I Got Your Back" during the Christmas season bringing cheers to Greenville Manor Nursing Home residents.



Peanut Festival Parade

News From Around the Commonwealth

Richmond-Henrico Retired Teachers Association (R-HRTA)

R-HRTA members and guests enjoyed the annual December luncheon with donations for District “Q” elementary schools/preschools, fellowship, delicious food, and holiday music. Members dressed in their festive colors came with gallon size bags of school supplies for four elementary schools and quart size bags with pairs of gloves/hats for two preschools. These bags were delivered to the schools and preschools after their winter break.

A delicious buffet, catered by “Around the Table” was enjoyed by all. Our holiday spirits were lifted higher with “Melodies of the Season” featuring local flutist, retired Richmond Public School music teacher, Glennroy Bailey, accompanied by pianist, Billy Evans.

R-HRTA President, Margaret Smith and Legislative Chairperson, Ernestine Dockery-Roy attended the VRTA Lobby Day on Thursday, January 30, 2025. They also met with Senator Lamont Bagby and his staff to lobby for issues that will be of concern for all Virginia students.

Annual December Luncheon

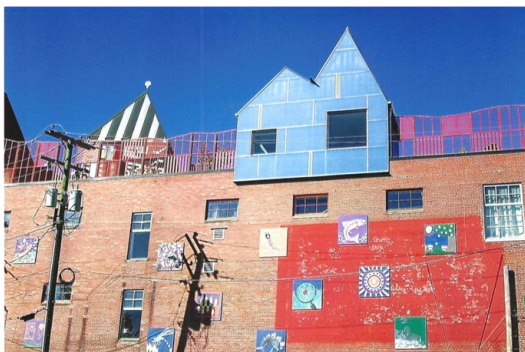


Lobby Day

District N

District N’s fall meeting was hosted by Winchester City RTA. It was held at the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum. Donations were Collected for “Family Promise.”

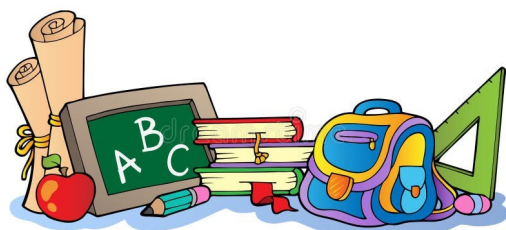
District N held its Spring Meeting in Front Royal, hosted by Warren County. VRTA President Karen Whetzel, center, installed new District N Officers Larry Hardey—President-Elect and Nancy Vollmer—President.



Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum



Prince William’s Sally Kenavan delivered District N school supplies to Appalachia in June.



News From Around the Commonwealth

Floyd County Retired Teachers

The Floyd County Retired Teachers' Association in beautiful Floyd County in Southwestern Virginia is and continues to be an active organization. Floyd County is a cultural hotspot, drawing visitors to music venues, wineries, art galleries/exhibits, and signature events. The FCRTA embraces the patronization of local shops, restaurants, and landmarks when scheduling our meetings and planning meeting agendas. We love giving back to the community that has given so much to us as residents and educators.

Our March meeting will be held at Floyd County High School at the state-of-the-art CTE building. Dr. Jessica Cromer, school superintendent, will be our guest speaker. The food service classes will provide our lunch. Each participant is asked to bring a canned food item for PLENTY, a local organization open to all residents in need of food.

In July, we will meet at the beautiful Slusher Park with FCRTA treasurer Alice Shusher hosting. We will enjoy a potluck picnic on the grounds of the park, as well as fellowship with one another. We will also have a Book Swap at this meeting.

In September, we will meet at the historic Floyd County Store where we will have lunch and enjoy a performance by the Handmade Music School. This is a group of local school-age children who play instruments and sing for various functions in the county.

In November, we have our annual Thanksgiving meal at Floyd Baptist Church. At this meeting, we have a brief ceremony in memory of all Floyd educators who have passed since the previous year. We invite their families for lunch, and to speak on their loved one's behalf if they choose. We also have a silent auction at this meeting to help fund our teacher mini-grants.

This year we will fund six \$300 mini-grants to local teachers, a record number for our organizations. We will also be giving two scholarships in the amount of \$1,500 each for two Floyd High School graduates who will be going into education. We are continuing to make monetary donations to RIFF (Reading is Fundamental in Floyd), Christmas for All, Young Life, and the New River Community Action Backpack Program, all local organizations. We continue to contribute canned food items to PLENTY for local residents who need food.

Many of our members volunteer their services at Angels in the Attic, a non-profit thrift store, which supports numerous Floyd County charitable organizations that feed the hungry, aid the needy, help children and the elderly, and provide for public safety.

We look forward to recruiting new members this year. We are in the process of mailing personal invitation to future retirees, as well as other educators, to become a part of our organization. There's something for everyone who joins the FCRTA!



Franklin Southampton

President Mrs. Daphne Miller of Franklin Southampton RTA is getting volunteer hours as an usher with the Virginia Symphony Orchestra (VSO) with Community Service in the Tidewater Areas, Portsmouth, Norfolk, and Virginia Beach. So far she has ushered at five concerts with more to come.



President Miller with Mr. Joe Benard, House Manager of VSO

Members of Franklin\Southampton RTA Mrs. Carol Logan and Mrs. Sitrina Pope assisted their sorority Lambda Psi Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. with packing totes which included personal hygiene items to be distributed to students at Southampton High School, Courtland, Virginia. Also, hats, scarves, and gloves were collected and packed for distribution to students at Franklin High School, Franklin, Virginia.



Mrs. Carol B. Logan and Mrs. Sitrina B. Pope

King and Queen-Prince William-West Point Retired Teachers

In September Mrs. Paula H. Canady who works with STEM and her daughter, Miss Shena Jones did a technology workshop on cell phones.

In November we had a Veterans Day Program. John Thompson talked about his service in Vietnam. Josephine Anderson told about her husband's service in Desert Storm. Bettie Hill and Rev. James Hill talked about their son's experience in the military. Wilbert A. Harris relayed his experiences in the Navy. He did two Mediterranean Tours and spent three plus years in the military. Dr. Alvin Lomax, a commissioned officer, talked about his service in the Army and Reserves. He retired as a Captain.

In March Leslie Babbitt-Belcher, who is a board certified healing arts practitioner, a master in reflexology, a massage therapist, aroma therapist, and a fashion designer held a workshop for the group.

We have had a wonderful year so far and we are always trying to get new members.

News From Around the Commonwealth

Hampton Roads Educators

Members of the Hampton Roads Educators Association were festive as they celebrated the winter holidays and welcomed the New Year. At the December luncheon we wore our most festive attire and gave thanks for another successful year by returning to our community. We donated enough books to Kraft Elementary School that all 400+ students were able to take a book home to enjoy over the holidays. We also donated canned goods, plastic bags, and money to THRIVE! Peninsula. This non-profit organization is committed to assisting Virginia Peninsula families through difficult times.



Virginia Owens, president-Eeect, poses with Josh Wright, Kraft ES Family Engagement Specialist as he accepted our book donations.



Joan Davis, past president and Penny Petersen, president pose with Dan Clark representative of THRIVE Peninsula as he accepted our donations.



Lunenburg-Nottoway

December 9, 2024, was a very busy day of giving and receiving for the Lunenburg-Nottoway Retired Teachers Association. During this season of giving, the membership packed up a trunk load of clothing and toys and delivered them to the Lunenburg Salvation Army. Earlier that morning, some members attended the District D Retired Teachers general meeting that was hosted by Dinwiddie RTA's unit. Lunenburg-Nottoway RTA's unit received five recognition awards for 2024: Community Service Participation, 2024 senior scholarship presentations, maintaining equalized membership, participation & banner display at Spring and Fall VRTA Delegate Assembly in Richmond, and for submitting reports by the deadline. Members pictured are Chrystal Wynn, Ruby Ingram, Evelyn Staples, April Hawkes, Gloria Pinckney and Roseann Sweetney. Not pictured: Wanda Hill, Carolyn Newbill, Willette Hazelwood, Mary Pat Johnson, Jean Overman, Doris Fisher, and Florence Oliver.



Delivery for Salvation Army

The Lunenburg Nottoway Retired Teachers Association (LNRTA) met on October 17, 2024, at the Victoria Public Library. New members joining the unit have contributed many years of experience to education. They are Wanda Hill (34), David Dalton (24*), Mary Pat Johnson (31), Carolyn Newbill (34), and April Hawkes (28). The unit's membership set goals and projects for the 2024-25 year. Along with contributing to the community, President Ruby Ingram said that the group looks forward to another productive year centered around its mission of maintaining and improving the social, educational, economic and recreational welfare of retired educators.

Petersburg/Prince George Retired Teachers' Association 2024 Scholarship Award

The Petersburg-Prince George Retired Teachers' Association Scholarship was awarded to Keon Maurek Lewis in the amount of \$1,000.00. Keon is a 2024 graduate from Petersburg High School in Petersburg, Virginia. He attends Virginia State University in Petersburg, Virginia, and his major is health, physical education and recreation. His career goal is to become a sports manager and/or a business/marketing executive. He is the son of Ms. Lakeshia Lewis.



Pictured: Wanda Hill, David Dalton, Mary Pat Johnson, Carolyn Newbill and April Hawkes.



News From Around the Commonwealth

Loudoun Retired Educators Association: A Fall to Remember!

The Loudoun Retired Educators Association has enjoyed an incredibly active and rewarding season, packed with exciting events, meaningful volunteer work, and enriching programs.

We kicked off our adventures in July with a delightful field trip to the American Celebration on Parade in Quicksburg, followed by a visit to the Route 11 Potato Chips factory, expertly planned by our Social Committee. In August, many of our members rolled up their sleeves to assist the Loudoun Education Association, organizing donated supplies for newly hired teachers—a heartwarming effort to support the next generation of educators. September brought our first annual “School’s Out Forever” themed potluck picnic, a joyous gathering that will surely become a cherished tradition. October saw members volunteering at the Inova Ladies Board Rummage Sale, while our Social Committee hosted a fascinating tour of the historic Davis Mansion in Leesburg. In November, we explored the National Museum of the United States Army at Fort Belvoir, and in December, we wrapped up the year with laughter and camaraderie at a White Elephant Gift Exchange, graciously hosted by Karen Elliott.

Honoring Our Outstanding Volunteers

At our January meeting, we celebrated the incredible contributions of our members who dedicate their time and talents to our community:

Platinum Stars (200+ hours): Francie Malone, Joy Griffith, Sue Clark, and Bobbie Johnson

Gold Stars (150+ hours): Pam Smith and Ann Thorsen

Silver Stars (100+ hours): Karen Elliott, Linda Greeley, Ron Petrella, and Janet Dye

A special recognition went to Maureen Vanderslice for her exceptional service as our Historian. Her beautiful scrapbooks bring our history to life, and we are deeply grateful for her dedication.

Engaging Programs and Inspiring Speakers

From September to June, our monthly meetings feature diverse and informative programs. This year, highlights included presentations on VRTA member benefits, volunteer connections, the Loudoun County Commission on Aging, a holiday high school choral performance, and an insightful discussion with Phyllis Randall, Chair-At-Large of the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors, on the state of the county.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to making a difference in our community, learning, and celebrating together.



Volunteers are helping with new teacher supply give away.



Rock Ridge High School Chorus performs at our December meeting.



Kickoff picnic in September



Volunteer Helpers with Inova Ladies Board Rummage Sale

News From Around the Commonwealth

Newport News Retired Educators

Newport News Retired Teachers Association (NNRTA) started the 2024 year with focusing on increasing membership for the new year. We welcomed all new members as well as returning members to the organization. NNRTA member, Juana Jones, requested members to bring Christmas cards to the October meeting. During the meeting, she presented information about the United Service Organizations Inc. (USO). Directions were provided about Christmas cards for soldiers under the USO American Heroes program. The cards help to assuage loneliness and the high suicide rate among the military. Members wrote holiday wishes and words of encouragement during the meeting. NNRTA Facebook page is up and running in hopes of reaching more prospective members.

On December 5, 2024, The Alfresco Italian Restaurant in Newport News provided a great atmosphere for delicious food and wonderful fellowship for our winter meeting. This event provided everyone an opportunity to get to know each other in a very relaxed setting. Music, games, and door prizes set the tone for our holiday gathering. Everyone looked great in their festive attire. Several new members attended this event based on the determination to increase our membership. Notes, texts, social media, emails and telephone calls are used as avenues to inform and encourage new members. NNRTA is pleased to announce that there was an increase in membership for 2024. Newport News Retired Teachers Association is on the move to get new retirees to join the organization.

Membership meetings
October and
December



Portsmouth Retired Educators

We were proud to host Jim DuBrueler, VRTA Benefits Advisor, at our Country and Western meeting in November. Other retired educators from Chesapeake, Suffolk and Emporia were invited to join us for an afternoon of information, fun, good food and lots of door prizes.

We provided tutoring support within our schools, participated in book labeling projects with the All Districts Read, One Book instructional program for our elementary school students and donated needed instructional supplies and resources through-out the Portsmouth school district.

We gave both monetary and food donations for the Thanksgiving Food Pantry at the Effingham YMCA, delivering 162 families complete Thanksgiving meals with turkeys and all the fixings.

The Christmas season afforded us opportunities to share gifts with 60 patients at the Fresenius Dialysis Centers, adopt a family of four, and provide a variety of *small white- elephant gifts* for pre-schoolers to *purchase Christmas gifts* for their loved ones.

PREA recently hosted their annual Pack the Bus for the HER Shelter, donating needed household items for victims of Domestic Violence.



Country Western
November meeting



Food donations for
Thanksgiving meals

Membership



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 Fall 2025 newsletter is **Monday, August 4, 2025**

Susan Martin, Newsletter Editor

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

susanmartin730@gmail.com

News From Around the Commonwealth

Roanoke City Retired Educators

The Roanoke City Retired Educators met on September 12 at the Williamson Road Library with Joyce Williams from AARP updating members about Social Security benefits. Activities included an election quiz, a Remembrance Service, and a catered lunch. Donations were collected for the Hurt Park Elementary clothes closet.

The annual Holiday Luncheon was held on December 12 at The Train Station with a buffet and music by Gary Bannister. Attendees in holiday attire participated in a gift exchange, a Soup for Seniors collection, and a jewelry show.



Joyce Williams from
AARP



Holiday Luncheon in December

Henrico Retired School Personnel

The Henrico Retired School Personnel Association held its Fall Luncheon at the ACE Center at Heritage High School on Thursday, October 24, 2024. Mac Beaton, Director of Workforce and Career Development gave us a virtual tour of the center and all the wonderful opportunities available to Henrico County Public Schools students. Career and Technical Education (CTE) provides students with the foundation and knowledge to jumpstart their careers, while preparing them for continuing education. Many graduate with nationally recognized certification or state license and have developed industry contacts for future employment. CTE offers 169 different courses and last year 1704 CTE students completed a two-year sequence of CTE courses and 5600 students earned a certification or a state license. Fifty corporate business sponsors helped students complete the renovation of Regency Square Mall to accommodate many of the offices and classrooms for Henrico County Public Schools at 1/4 the cost of bids for the project. The 2nd floor and the ACE center is a shell to be completed by the students under the tutelage of corporate sponsors and instructors. Attendees had a wonderful lunch prepared and served by the culinary students at the center.

Remarks and thanks were given by KJ Cook, Community School Resource Coordinator for Henrico County Public Schools for HRSPA's donations to the schools' food banks, clothing, and other needs.

Linda Melton, Henrico Christmas Mother, presented this year's overview of the Christmas Mother operation and thanked the organization for its many volunteer hours of service and monetary donations.

Shenandoah County Retired Teachers

The Shenandoah County Retired Teachers Association (SCRTA) met on Wednesday, September 11, 2024, at the Moose Lodge in Woodstock for their annual Back to School Breakfast. All newly retired employees from Shenandoah County Schools were invited and those attending were recognized. The speaker was Lisa W. McDonald, Shenandoah County Registrar, who spoke on "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Elections!" Ms. McDonald gave a thorough description of local elections and election security, and answered questions from the group.

The next meeting of the group will be held on Tuesday, December 3, (snow date Tuesday, December 10) at Triplett Tech in Mt. Jackson, with lunch served by Chef Paje Cross and Culinary Arts students. For more information, call 540-740-8589.

Lisa W.
McDonald,
Registrar for
Shenandoah
County



The Shenandoah County Retired Teachers Association (SCRTA) presented a \$1000.00 scholarship recipient to Miss Phoebe Alexander, a 2024 graduate of Central High School. Phoebe plans to get her bachelor's degree in early childhood education and come back to the county to teach. If anyone would like to make a donation for the next SCRTA scholarship, call 540-740-8589 for more information.



Phoebe Alexander
and Margaret
Figgins, SCRTA
Scholarship chair

Members were able to donate to these and other organizations and the HRSPA 2025 scholarship fund.

HRSPA President, Bonnie Thompson, introduced board members and committee reports, had the raffle drawing, and announcements, and adjourned the meeting.

VRTA Lobby Day January 30, 2025

The Virginia Retired Teachers Association held their annual Lobby Day at the Virginia General Assembly on Thursday, January 30, the first Lobby Day held since the pandemic. The members present at Lobby Day: (Karen Whetzel, VRTA President, District G and Shenandoah County RTA; Bonnie Atwood, VRTA Lobbyist; Tina Whitaker, VRTA Co-Legislative chair; Margaret Smith, President of District Q and Richmond/Henrico local unit; Ernestine Dockery-Roy, Legislative Chair of District Q and Richmond/Henrico local unit; as well as Mary Ann Cisne of District R/Henrico local unit). They visited their delegates and senators, talked about positions which VRTA supports (the free breakfast bill, improved nursing home facilities, reducing prescription drug costs, the JLARC study of recruitment and retention of teachers, and increasing the salary of Virginia teachers to meet the national average.) The VRTA opposes the Opportunity Scholarship program which would divert tax dollars away from public schools.

VRTA members were introduced in the House of Delegates by the Honorable Todd Gilbert, House District 33, and Minority Leader in the House, and in the Senate by the Honorable Louise Lucas, Senate District 18, and President Pro Tempore of the Senate. Both mentioned the number of VRTA members, the hours of community service VRTA members provided, and the dollar amount of scholarships given to students by VRTA units and districts. (Thanks to all who reported this information in the annual report!)

Hopefully many members were lobbyists through phone, email, or in person at home when the legislative co-chairs sent out an email asking members to contact your representatives. Districts and local units should follow up with their senators and delegates after the General Assembly ends.



Karen Whetzel, VRTA President, with House Minority Leader Todd Gilbert who introduced the VRTA members on the House floor.



Lobby Day participants: Margaret Smith (President of District Q/Richmond Henrico), Ernestine Dockery Roy (Legislative Chair District Q/Richmond Henrico), Bonnie Atwood (VRTA Lobbyist), Tina Whitaker (VRTA Co-Legislative Chair, District R/Henrico Legislative Chair), and Mary Ann Cisne (District R/Henrico)

Delegate Assembly 2025 VRTA Board of Directors Meeting

The VRTA Board of Directors will meet on Tuesday, April 29th 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; 540-740-8589) know if they plan to 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.

Save
the
Date

Fall 2025 VRTA Meeting

The 2025 Fall VRTA Conference dates have been changed! New dates are Tuesday, September 16 and Wednesday, September 17, at Doubletree Midlothian. (The Executive Committee will meet Monday, September 15, 2025.)

Voting Delegates

According to the bylaws Article VII Section A: "Voting members of the Delegate Assembly shall be members of the Executive Committee, district presidents, and two delegates from each local unit. If a local unit has over 100 VRTA members, it shall have an additional delegate for each 50 VRTA members or fraction thereof. All voting delegates to the Spring Delegate Assembly shall be members of the VRTA."

The Delegate Assembly will be voting on the VRTA budget and other business on April 30. Local Presidents: Send delegate names to Karen Whetzel by April 5.



Virginia Retired Teachers Association
Spring Delegate Assembly Preliminary Schedule
Monday, April 28 – Wednesday, April 30, 2025

Monday, April 28, 2025

5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Executive Committee Meeting Board Room

Tuesday, April 29, 2025

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***

(Hotel staff will set up for Luncheon)

12:00 p.m.

**First event for those not on the Executive Committee or
Board of Directors**

12:00 p.m. -1:45 p.m. Luncheon, Guest Speaker Bob Holsworth

1:45 p.m.—2:00 p.m. Break

2:15 p.m.-- 3:00 p.m. VRTA Benefits Update- Jim DuBrueler & committee

3:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m. Break; set up for Breakout Sessions

3:15 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Breakout Sessions

4:15 p.m.—5:00 p.m. Breakout Sessions Repeated

Dinner on Your Own

7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Committee Chats with VRTA Committees

Wednesday, April 30, 2025

Breakfast on Your Own

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

9:00 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 Tom Allen, VEA Journal

10:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Delegate Assembly

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.

Monday, April 28
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
** MEETS **
5:00 PM

VRTA 2025 Delegate Assembly

Registration Form

Tuesday, April 29-Wednesday, April 30

Tuesday, April 29
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MEETS
9:00 AM-11:00 AM

Note: Registration fees are per person. Each person attending the Delegate Assembly 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 Saturday, April 5, 2025. A late fee of \$10.00 will be charged for registration forms postmarked after April 5. Note: Lunch orders are due to the hotel week the week after April 5. You may not get a lunch if registration is late. Questions (?) 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
- ◇ Grilled chicken breast
- ◇ Vegetarian chef's choice
- ◇ Gluten free chef's choice

Entrees are served with mixed green salad/dressing; seasonal vegetables and roasted potatoes; rolls/butter.

Dessert: Mixed fruit cobbler

Beverages: Coffee and tea

Room Registration: Attendees make room reservations no later than **Saturday, April 5**, by contacting the Hilton at **1-800-222-Tree** or **804-379-3800**. Attendees request the Virginia Retired Teachers' Association rate of \$138.00 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-90s-4114bc42-eaac-499f-bb67-1c0bfe3810db/>

Should you decide to make reservations directly through Hilton.com the **three letter group code you should use is 90S**. **Only reservations made through the hyperlink or directly with Hilton will receive the discounted rate.**

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 meeting 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 by **Saturday, April 5**, to indicate that you plan to set up a table for the MarketPlace.

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

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**** Only members of the Executive Committee will meet on Monday, April 28. ****

Board of Directors — Please arrive early enough to register before the meeting starting a 9am on Tuesday, April 29.

The registration table opens at 8am.

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

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 \$45.00 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.

Send your completed registration form with a check for **\$45.00**, payable to VRTA, to Maudie Scott,
P.O. Box 282, Amelia, VA 23002 postmarked by **Saturday, April 5.**