



VRTA Newsletter

Publication of Virginia Retired Teachers
Association

Member, NRTA—Division of The AARP

Fall 2025 Edition

A Message from YOUR VRTA President Karen Whetzel

Moving Forward Together!

***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.



The 2025 Fall VRTA Conference will be held September 16 and 17, 2025, at the Doubletree by Hilton in Midlothian, VA. Registration forms and hotel reservation information will be found at vrta.us and in this newsletter. The conference is for ALL members; we hope that every local unit and district will be represented at the conference. The deadline for both VRTA registrations and for hotel reservations is Friday, August 29, 2025.

The Board of Directors will be meeting on Tuesday, September 16, 2025, starting promptly at 9 am! Members of the Board of Directors are all District Presidents (who can send a designee), all Committee Chairs, all Executive Committee members, and all Past Presidents. Breakout sessions are planned for Wednesday morning to help local and district officers as they plan for the year, and to help members become active and support local and district officers! Many ideas from others will be shared!

VRTA will also be celebrating 90 years at the 2025 Fall Conference! Look for a special bag at registration with the 90th anniversary logo designed by Emily Simmons, Creekside! A roundtable with Past Presidents talking about their legacies will be held on Tuesday afternoon. All available scrapbooks from the past will be displayed on Tuesday night, along with some special activities. (Bring any historical information that you have to share!) A Memorial Service is planned to remember VRTA members who have died since the Fall 2024 conference at the end of the business meeting on Wednesday, September 17, 2025.

Reminder: this newsletter is the final VRTA printed/mailed newsletter sent out to members. I know many of us love print (especially those who like me were librarians!) I looked forward to retirement and drinking my coffee as I read my newspaper each morning! Now my local papers are delivered by U. S. mail and I usually read them the next morning. Change is hard, but sometimes necessary. Be sure to read the article in this newsletter with suggestions on how to help VRTA members who don't have internet access. There are also suggestions for VRTA members who are not connected with a local unit.

Has your local unit contacted the local school division in your area about presenting the free "Retiring with Confidence" Seminar that VRTA will provide to school divisions through Creekside with Jim DuBrueler facilitating the seminar? VRTA members will also attend the seminar to help facilitate and to increase awareness of VRTA and local VRTA district/units. See the article in this newsletter by VP and Membership Chair Larry Hardesty for more info!

VRTA is looking for candidates for office: read the article about the Nominating Committee in this newsletter. If you are interested in being nominated or know someone who would be a good officer to be nominated at the VRTA 2025 Fall Conference with elections held at the Spring 2026, Delegate Assembly, contact Liz Goodson (lzbthgoodson@gmail.com) or me!

You can reach me at kswhetzel@gmail.com, by phone at 540-740-8589, or message me at Facebook Karen Whetzel VRTA President, if you have any questions or suggestions, or if I can help you your local unit/district in any way! Thank you to all of the VRTA members who have shown support during my presidency!

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"The VRTA will be celebrating its 90th Anniversary at the 2025 Fall Conference on Tuesday, September 16, and Wednesday, September 17, 2025, at the Doubletree by Hilton in Midlothian. Plans are to bring the old scrapbooks for display, as well as other historical information."

Membership

The past several years our membership decline has been a concern. This is most likely due to several things:

First, VRTA has not been proactive in requesting help from our district and local units. VRTA insinuates that the organization is for only retired teachers, however our membership is open to ALL retired school employees (secretaries, custodians, bus drivers, maintenance workers and anyone else that has retired through VRS). Membership is actually open to anyone 45 years of age that is working within or retired from a school division.

Second, VRTA Benefits are not being communicated effectively to new retirees. Our VRTA Benefits Committee has designed a pre-retirement seminar that is tailor-made for all personnel who are retiring or even thinking about retiring within the next several years. The seminar is being offered to all school divisions at no cost and at a time that is suitable at the discretion of the school division. The seminar will give step-by-step instructions as to what will be needed to comfortably retire.

The Membership and Benefits Committees ask for your help in this endeavor to get us information as to who to contact in the HR department of your local school division. The local VRTA unit membership will likely have the best relationship with their respective school division, and it is requested to reach out to them to schedule the seminar directly with Jim DuBrueler, our Agent/Advisor of Record. If you would like for the Membership Committee to reach out, please provide me with the name and contact information for your school division and I'd be happy to send information for this purpose.

We are hopeful this will help increase your local membership and VRTA state membership.
Larry Hardesty, Membership Chair

Iva Foust Retires as VRTA Co-Historian

Mary Copeland, president of the Suffolk Retired teachers and Iva Foust, president of the Portsmouth Retired Educators became co-historians of VRTA in 2012. VRTA celebrated its 80th Anniversary October 6, 2015. Iva and Mary lead this celebration, with the board helping out. Looking back, Iva says that this was her biggest contribution as a member of VRTA. It was hard work, but a pleasure in learning so much about the association.

In the Fall of 2016, VRTA returned to its birthplace in the Richmond area. Due to the Covid 19 virus, the state implemented virtual ways of communicating under the leadership of Glen Pair, president. It was under his presidency that the board decided to digitize VRTA's history. At that point, the history albums (scrapbooks) were discontinued. Ora Briggs began working with Iva as co-historian under the presidency of Jean Marrow, and has been working on digitizing the most recent albums. In-person meetings were resumed July 2022; Iva presented reports at Spring Delegate Assemblies and Fall Conferences on what had happened in VRTA each year after that.

At the Spring Delegate Assembly in 2025, Iva submitted her resignation as co-historian. She also displayed many historical documents at the Committee Chats event held at the Doubletree during the Delegate Assembly.

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Iva Foust and Karen Whetzel

Virginia Retired Teachers Association

"Organized November 28, 1936"

2024- 2026 Officers

President—Karen Whetzel	(540)740-8589 kswhetzel@gmail.com
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Immediate Past President Jean Marrow	(804)275-7278 marrowj@aol.com

Newsletter Notification

This is the last VRTA newsletter that will be printed and mailed. All future newsletters will be published electronically on vrta.us starting in 2026, as approved by the Executive Committee, Board of Directors, and the Delegate Assembly at the April 2025 meeting. Past issues are available at vrta.us. Contact Karen Whetzel (540-740-8589) for more information.

Nothing Like Firsthand Experience



Have you ever had friends so excited about a trip they recently took or a party they had attended or a play they had seen, who tried, through their enthusiasm, to recreate the experience for you, and you just didn't get it? No matter how dynamic the retelling is, it's impossible to feel the elation of the ones who experienced it firsthand. There will be many things at the VRTA Fall Conference that just cannot be retold. You just have to be there!

Dwayne Yancey, journalist and founding editor of Cardinal News, will be the Legislative Session speaker at the luncheon on Tuesday, September 16. Cardinal News is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit online news site whose mission is to report the untold stories of Southwest and Southside Virginia and to strengthen the voices of people in communities who have been sidelined in the commonwealth's political, economic, and cultural conversations because of where they live. In addition, articles often provide enlightening explanations of how and why people across Virginia are impacted by state and federal legislation. With a varied career of 40 years in journalism, Mr. Yancey is well equipped to speak on the importance of journalism in the past, present, and future.

Later Tuesday afternoon, the VRS staff will again provide details about our retirement system that might be difficult to find. Where else can you ask questions of VRS Director Patricia Bishop, Director of Customer Service Robert Irving, and Director of Strategic Communications Virginia Sowers?

Be among the first to be introduced to VRTA's new lobbyists, David Bailey Associates. We are fortunate to be represented by this well-known and highly respected firm. David Bailey and Chris Bailey (no relation) plan to be with us for the last event on Tuesday afternoon. We are sorry that Bonnie Atwood, who has been our lobbyist for 16 years, found it necessary to resign for health reasons. She has worked with this firm in a number of capacities for many years and highly recommended them to us. We are looking forward to continuing her good work for us with David and Chris.

Don't miss the firsthand experience of seeing and hearing these interesting people who have much to tell us.

Bea Morris, Legislative Chair

Nominating Committee Elected and Working on Nominees for VRTA Office

The VRTA Board of Directors has elected a Nominating Committee (which was nominated by last year's Nominating Committee as required by the VRTA Bylaws (Article VI, Section A, #11.) The nominating committee members are Elizabeth Goodson, Chair (District N, Fauquier); Debbie Myers (District P, Roanoke County); and Mable Scott (District E, Pittsylvania.)

The Nominating Committee is currently working to find nominees for the following positions to present at the Fall 2025 Conference on September 16 and 17 at the Doubletree by Hilton in Midlothian: president elect, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. The nominees will be voted on at the Spring Delegate Assembly on April 28 and 29, 2026, at the Doubletree by Hilton. Current President Elect Drucilla Tate Pollard will be installed as president and current President Karen Whetzel will move to past president on the executive committee on July 1, 2026.

If you have suggestions for VRTA members who would be good officers, please contact Karen Whetzel, president, at kswhetzel@gmail.com or 540-740-8589, or Elizabeth Goodson, nominating chairperson, at lbthgoodson@gmail.com or 703-532-8407.

VRTA will also need several new chairpersons for 2026-28. The Chairpersons of the following committees have let us know that they will be retiring from the committee as of June 30, 2026 – directory (Leigh McKay), finance (Weldon Martin). The publications editor Susan Martin will also be retiring. If you are interested in any of these committee positions, please let President Karen Whetzel or President Elect Drucilla Tate Pollard (dholmes.Tate1@gmail.com; 804769-0019) know; they will be working together to fill these positions. Note that the treasurer elected in Spring, 2026, will become the finance chair and the vice president elected in Spring 2026, will be the membership chair per the bylaws.

VRTA has been blessed with excellent leadership in the 90 years since it was started. Thanks to all of the past and present leaders for your service. As part of the 90th Anniversary celebration at the 2025 Fall Conference, a Past President's Roundtable will be held to hear from those who have lead the group until now, either in person or by written remarks.

Website

Be aware that the VRTA Website is now: **vrta.us**



Save
the
Date

Spring Delegate Assembly

The date for the Spring 2026 Delegate Assembly is April 28-29, 2026, at the Doubletree Hotel in Midlothian, VA.

A Tribute to Bonnie Atwood



Bonnie Atwood was the VRTA lobbyist from 2009-2005, resigning last May to focus on recovering from a recurrence of leukemia. During those 16 years, I valued her integrity, respect for others, thoughtful advice, and desire to represent us with facts and accuracy. She attended our state meetings because she believed the better she knew us as individuals and as an organization, the better she could advise us and lobby for the issues we supported or opposed. The many contacts she made over the years working in Richmond were an asset to us because she knew whom to approach and the best methods to use.

She had great respect for and understanding of teachers, perhaps because she knew that their work had much in common with hers. She had a contract but did more things than were required and at times were inconvenient. And although the pay was what we could afford, she never complained that it wasn't enough. (Well, teachers do complain about that!) As co-chairs of the legislative committee, Tina and I and Karen Whetzel, president, attended Zoom meetings of the two coalitions VRTA joined (Fund Our Schools and Virginia Voices for Nursing Home Reform) but we could always depend on Bonnie to be there, often with good questions and comments. She never hesitated to add the nursing home issue to the growing list of education legislation each General Assembly session. During the session, Bonnie was indispensable in taking care of details, both before and during in-person lobby days. She made sure legislators were prepared to make our introductions to the House and Senate, provided helpful materials for attendees, and last January she even drove Tina and Karen from her house to the GA Building.

Since Bonnie has worked with us so long, we consider her a colleague who is retiring but remains the friend she has become. We wish her good health and happiness in all her future endeavors.

Bea Morris

VRTA'S Past Lobbyists

Since Bonnie Atwood has been VRTA's lobbyist for 16 years, many don't remember the lobbyists before her. I could find no records on these lobbyists, but since I began working with Nelson Taylor, legislative chair, in 1998, I know of four previous lobbyists.

- ◇ John Spigle (c. 1999) – Son of Nancy Spigle, legislative chair for District P for many years. He served one GA session.
- ◇ Nancy Finch (c.2003) – A Richmond lobbyist whom Nelson knew. She served for about one year.
- ◇ Chris Peace (c. 2004 or 2005) – Young lawyer just starting a political career. Represented VRTA one session and from 2006-2019 represented New Kent Co., parts of Hanover Co. and King William in the House of Delegates. Now has his own law firm.
- ◇ Charles Todd (c.2005-2009) - Retired school superintendent from Hopewell. Recommended Bonnie Atwood. Now deceased.

A lobbyist is someone who works to influence legislation, policies, and regulations. By that definition, all of us are lobbyists when we present our positions and requests to lawmakers on the local, state, or federal level. However, most often the term refers to professionals who have special skills and training, must abide by a number of regulations and requirements, and are paid for their work. They play a crucial role in the political process, especially with legislators new to the office who are expected to know about every issue from agriculture to health care to energy, to education, etc. Professional lobbyists research the issues and give clear explanations to both lawmakers and clients but since they represent their clients' positions, nonprofessional lobbyists such as teachers, nurses, etc., who have personal knowledge of the effects of legislation on people, are also important in the process. Knowledge, integrity, respect for others, and good communication skills are necessities for both professional and nonprofessional lobbyists.

VRTA 2025-26 Directory Update

Each VRTA Officer has received an email copy of the VRTA 2025-26 Directory and had an opportunity to make corrections or additions. Also, the VRTA Directory 2025-26 is on the VRTA Website: vrta.us. The next directory, 2026-27, will be emailed in August of 2026.

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, 2026.

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

The VRTA 2026-27 Directory will be the last for me. Thank you to everyone who served on the Directory Committee and to all of you for your support. Anyone interested in assuming the job of chairperson of the directory committee should contact Drucilla Pollard, our president elect.

News From Around the Commonwealth

Alleghany Retired Teachers

The Alleghany Retired Teachers Association had a productive 2024-2025 year. It began with our September meeting at the Clifton Forge library. Pastor Mike Warren, our treasurer's husband, was the guest speaker at our September 3 meeting. He gave a highly informative presentation on breast cancer. School supplies and monetary donations were collected for our four local elementary schools. ARTA was able to donate \$302 towards school supplies for each school. We also collected food and monetary donations of \$254 for two local food pantries as part of the AARP September food drive.

In December, we met at Temple Baptist Church and were entertained by the Alleghany High School choirs under the direction of Amanda Sprouse. Our members always look forward to hearing the choirs. We were able to present a check to the choir for \$280. Our program featured Teresa Hammond who spoke about the Alleghany Highlands Christmas Mother program and how it supports the community for those in need. We were able to give items to the Christmas Mother and a monetary donation of \$575. A local restaurant, The Friendly Fork, catered our meal. Joan Green and Anita Rice informed the members about the Fall Conference in Midlothian and the Fall District P meeting.

For our March meeting, we met at the Jackson River Technical Center where the Culinary Arts students prepared our meal. Our very own Karen Brown gave a presentation on basket weaving. Her presentation was interesting and challenged us to be creative. Our service project for March was to collect food for the other two local food pantries. ARTA was able to give both pantries a monetary donation of \$321. ARTA was fortunate to give out four \$600 scholarships to very deserving students at our meeting.

Our meeting schedule for the year finished at the Discovery Center in downtown Covington in May. Paul Linkenhoker, President of the Alleghany Historical Society, gave a presentation about the Discovery Center. Our meal was catered by The Friendly Fork. Several members turned in their community service hours for the year totaling 7,255 hours. Anita Rice and Joan Green gave updates on the Spring Conference in Midlothian.



September meeting
Mike Warren and Anita Rice



March meeting - Karen Brown



May meeting - Paul Linkenhoker

Brunswick Retired Teachers

This year's scholarship recipient was Trevon Jones, an honor student at Brunswick High School. Trevon plans to attend Old Dominion University and major in strategic communications and Journalism.



Shown with
Trevon is (left)
Louise Mont-
Adams, secretary,
and treasurer,
Doris Love.

Fauquier Retired Teachers

The Fauquier Retired Teachers Association presented three \$1000 scholarships, named after long-time FRTA member, Joyce Mills. The high school graduates were honored at our FRTA May dinner meeting. All three recipients plan to teach. The recipients were; Leianna Thomas, Kettle Run High School; Aidan Kroetz, Liberty High School; and Maggie Arnold, Fauquier High School



Scholarship recipients with
Ben McCartney

News From Around the Commonwealth

Floyd County Retired Teachers

The Floyd County Retired Teachers' Association exists for retired educational personnel to continue lives of service to our community. We meet on the third Wednesday of the months of March, May, July, September, and November. The FCRTA has had a productive year thus far.

We kicked off 2025 in March at the Floyd County High School CTE Center. Our school superintendent, Dr. Jessica Cromer, was our guest speaker. She shared copies of the Floyd County Public Schools "Strategic Plan" for 2025 through 2030. The plan serves as a blueprint for our school division's future. She discussed the plan in detail, and was upbeat and confident that together, we will build a better future for our school division. We enjoyed lunch prepared by Katrina Knapp and the Food Service classes at the high school. Isabel Lovitt, chairperson of the Mini-Grants Committee, reported that because of our fall fundraiser as well as generous donations from the FCRTA members and community, we were able to fund requested mini-grants for local instructors. Also, we gave a sizeable scholarship to a graduating senior going into education following high school. We also gave generous donations to the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, Floyd Young Life, Christmas for Children, and the NRCA Backpack Program. For entertainment, we enjoyed presentations by students from the speech department at Floyd County High School.

For our May 21 meeting, we met at Wildwood Farms, a landmark in Floyd County since 2000. The gardens there include over 600 varieties of day lilies and other flowers. The general store offers a variety of garden décor, home décor, and gifts. George's Kitchen provides an assortment of sandwiches, salads, and pizza. Our program was titled, "What Are You Up To?", and members present shared how they were currently spending their time. The membership had a lot of laughs, and learned a lot about their fellow members! We ordered our meals from George's Kitchen, and enjoyed shopping in the general store.

We held our July 23 meeting at the beautiful Slusher Park, hosted by our treasurer Alice Slusher. Those present enjoyed a potluck picnic and good fellowship, as we sat under the cooling shade trees and viewed the beautiful gardens. We also had a book swap.

Our September meeting will be held at the Floyd Country Store, a well-known beacon for Appalachian culture. Its mission is to cultivate and strengthen community through experiences in music, dance, art, and food rooted in Appalachian traditions. Our final meeting of the year will be held in November at the Floyd Baptist Church.

Floyd County High School instructor Jason Burgard received a mini-grant from the Floyd County Retired Teachers' Association.



Franklin/Southampton RTA

Franklin/Southampton RTA-Franklin, VA - Members Mrs. Carol Logan, Mrs. Sylvia Claud and Mrs. Bessie Smith with their boots on the ground are getting their steps in at the BNOC (Boykins Neighborhood Outreach Center) where they packed CHIPP (Childhood Hunger Initiative Power Pack) bags which provided food for students over the weekend. The CHIPP Program is affiliated with the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., which all of the above persons are members in the Lambda Psi Omega Chapter, Franklin, Virginia.

Mrs. Miller, also with her boots on the ground, gets steps in with assisting with field trips as a volunteer chaperone with the students that attend the BNOC (Boykins Neighborhood Outreach Center). They toured the African American Museum on the campus of Hampton University, which is the oldest in the United States. While on campus they stopped at the Emancipation Oak Tree, which was land marked in 1863 and has been cited by the National Geographic Society as one of the ten great trees in the world. They also toured the Virginia Air & Space Museum while in the area. The next field trips were the African American Museum and the Children's Museum in Richmond, Virginia.

The zoom sessions for 2024-2025 concluded on Monday, June 30, 2025, and will resume on Monday, September 8, 2025.



Packing CHIPP bags for students



L-R: CEO of BNOC, Rev. Dr. Lillie Faison, students of BNOC, President Miller, and Mr. Carl Faison at the Emancipation Oak Tree on the campus of Hampton University

News From Around the Commonwealth

Culpeper Retired Teachers

Culpeper Retired Teachers Association (CRTA) inducted new officers assisted by District N's former President Janet Dye and current president Nancy Vollmer who joined us just for this occasion at our May 2025 meeting. Inductees are President Roger Eakin, Secretary Kim Price, and Treasurer Kathy Kaczmarek. Also noted were committee chairs Kathy Davis, membership; Libby Oullette, scholarship; Mary Ellen Hutchind, publicity; and Debbie Green and Donna Huff, program coordinators.

Our former CRTA president, Betty Craven, is moving to Maryland to be closer to family and she was celebrated for her many years of service both as a CRTA member and president and was presented a *Making a Difference Plaque*.

CRTA again gave two \$1,000 scholarships to students from our local high schools, Culpeper County High School and Eastern View High School. A delightful thank-you note from one of the recipients was read at our May meeting.



Installation of officers



Ball passed back to Roger Eakin

Hampton Roads

The Hampton Roads Educators Association was proud to present five \$1000.00 scholarships at our June luncheon. Ruth Simmons, our scholarship chairperson, introduced each student and their guests. What a wonderful way to end our year!



Scholarship winners and their guests



Roger Eakin, presenting the plaque to Betty Craven



Ruth Simmons

Notice

**** Only members of the Executive Committee will meet on Monday, September 15. ****

Board of Directors — Please arrive early enough to register before the meeting starting a 9am on Tuesday, September 16.

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.

News From Around the Commonwealth

Loudoun Retired Educators

In June, the Loudoun Retired Educators Association awarded five \$1,000 scholarships to future educators. These scholarships are made possible through generous member donations and proceeds from our monthly 50/50 raffles. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the members who presented the awards at local school ceremonies. Bobbie Johnson presented two scholarships at Broad Run High School; Ron Petrella presented two at Loudoun County High School; and Karen Elliott presented one at Independence High School. A shout out to our long-time scholarship coordinators Marilyn Edmondson and Sheree Hickman whose hard work makes this an annual success.

In addition to our scholarships, our unit proudly sponsored two \$500 SHINE (Spotlighting Heroes in Education) employee recognition grants. These grants were awarded to outstanding educators through a program managed by the Loudoun Education Foundation.

Our Program Coordinator, Bobbie Johnson, deserves recognition for arranging a series of engaging and informative presentations at our monthly meetings. In March, Jeanette Evans, Director of Employee Benefits, Leave & Disability for LCPS, updated members on current retiree benefits. April's meeting featured Dr. Rachelle Dorne from AARP, who spoke on "Downsizing and Decluttering," offering practical advice and inspiration. In May, Navjeet Chabbewal, also from AARP, gave a compelling presentation titled "Vigilance Against Cybercrime," which provided members with important tips on protecting themselves online.

Thanks to the renewed energy of our social committee, led by Karen Elliott, members enjoyed a variety of special outings this spring. In March, a group toured the National Museum of the Marine Corps. Then in May, members traveled to Fort Myer to attend the *Twilight Tattoo*, a high-energy, live military performance featuring soldiers from the U.S. Army Military District of Washington's ceremonial units, including The Old Guard and the U.S. Army Band, "Pershing's Own."

Our community service efforts, led by Chair Ellen Bawiec, continue to be a source of pride. We maintain an ongoing partnership with Loudoun Hunger Relief, collecting food, egg cartons, and monetary donations at each monthly meeting. Throughout the year, we also organize focused food drives to meet specific community needs. Several of our members volunteer with the *Fueled* program, operated by the Loudoun Education Foundation, delivering food and hygiene products to local schools every week. This program is a compassionate, student-centered initiative dedicated to ensuring every child has access to essential resources.

Additionally, our unit participated in District N's spring collection of school supplies, which supports students in Appalachia. We are proud to be part of this important outreach and to continue our commitment to service in retirement.



At the National Museum of the Marine Corps



Helping out at the Food Pantry

News From Around the Commonwealth

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!"

Rockbridge Retired Teachers

The Rockbridge Retired Teachers Association (RRTA) has had a very busy Spring! On April 1, RRTA members toured the new Joe Wilson Workforce Center of Mountain Gateway Community College in Buena Vista and attended their ribbon-cutting ceremony in June. On April 21, we toured the Rockbridge Innovation Center (RIC) which is the newly-renovated CTE center at Rockbridge County HS in Lexington. RRTA member and Chairman of the Rockbridge County School Board (Kathy Burant) was on hand to share information about all the upgraded programs and to help lead the tour. The RIC culinary students provided members with a delicious lunch! The RIC will now be the new RRTA meeting location! Also in April, RRTA President (Mary Jane Mutispaugh) was elected as President of VRTA District F and attended the VRTA Spring conference. In May, during local high schools' senior nights, RRTA awarded scholarships to future educators Parker Dameron (Rockbridge County HS) and Ethan Coonce (Parry McCluer HS). On June 5, members attended the RIC's official ribbon-cutting ceremony. At the June 16 meeting, RRTA hosted an information update from Virginia Sowers, Robert Irving, and Andy Feagans of the Virginia Retirement System to help get members organized and plan for the future.

Tour at
Mountain
Gateway
Community
College



Richmond-Henrico Presents Scholarship

Each spring the Richmond-Henrico Retired Teachers Association (R-HRTA) awards the W. Roland Galvin Scholarship to one or more Thomas Jefferson High School (TJHS) seniors. This scholarship was established to honor the memory of W. Roland Galvin, retired TJHS science teacher/administrator and devoted member and Finance Committee Chair of R-HRTA.

On May 15, 2025, two TJHS seniors were each awarded \$1,000.00 scholarships at the Thomas Jefferson High School Senior Awards Program. Anabell Santana will attend Virginia Commonwealth University to pursue a degree in nursing. Alexander Davis, whose mother accepted his award at the ceremony, will attend Norfolk State University majoring in music.

Our members look forward to supporting this scholarship each year.



Anabell Santana
accepts her award.



Alexander Davis'
mother
accepts his award

Henrico Retired School Personnel

The Henrico Retired School Personnel Association (HRSPA) held its spring luncheon at the Recreation Center at Deep Run Park on Thursday, April 24, 2025. The luncheon was catered by Deep Run Roadhouse. HRSPA retirees and several members from the Henrico Public Schools Administration enjoyed a delicious meal and camaraderie.

The main program was a look at and celebration of our long standing HRSPA Scholarship Program, its history its impact on its recipients, a look at past recipients who are now Henrico County Public Schools teachers, and the 2025 scholarship winners.

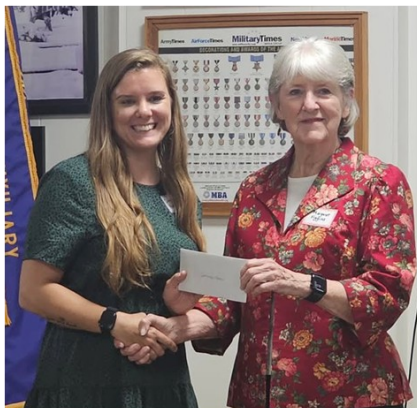
We received an overview of the Teachers Apprenticeship Program at the Ace Center at Hermitage High School from Heather McMunn, who heads the program, and from Alyse Peters, a student in the program. Ryan Densley, the 2013 scholarship recipient, spoke about the significance of the scholarship to his educational journey and his position as a teacher at Henrico County's Freeman High School. Andrew Harris, the 2019 winner, sent in a video with thanks and is now a teacher at Henrico County's Crestview Elementary School. Treasurer Cathy Durin read thank you letters from our 2024 winners Meredith McCaffrey and Reese Wasserman. The winners of the HRSPA 2025 scholarships are Alyse Peters and Ryan Williams.



News From Around the Commonwealth

Shenandoah County

The Shenandoah County Retired Teachers Association presented a scholarship in 2025 to Corissa Good, from Fort Valley, Virginia. Corissa is a student at Laurel Ridge Community College, and works as a substitute teacher for Shenandoah County Public Schools. Corissa is working on her degree in education and plans to be a teacher in Shenandoah County.



: Corissa Good (left) receives the 2025 Shenandoah County Retired Teachers Association (SCRTA) scholarship which is given each year to a student planning to become a future teacher from Margaret Figgins, SCRTA Scholarship Chairperson.

Patrick County Retired Teachers Form a Book Club

One of the projects of the Patrick County Retired Teachers Association is the organization of a book club that meets monthly in the local library. Anyone in the community who enjoys reading and sharing is invited to attend. Attendance is growing and interest in books has increased.

September is the organizational meeting. Members choose books to discuss, one per month for the following year.

The book club offers more than reading. Local and regional authors and librarians have been guests and have discussed their novels and their decision to work as librarians. It is a time for socializing, as well. Discussions touch on culture, world and local history, ancestry, biographies, genres of literature in different time periods, and life in general, often the lives of the members themselves and their backgrounds. Book discussions are stepping stones for interesting conversations and further book choices.

Some of the books shared are The Measure, Things We Cannot Say, Frozen River, Christmas Box, Homeward, West with Giraffes, The Muralist, Secret Lives of Booksellers and Librarians, The Color of Water, and The Orphan Collector.

All are welcome.



Row 1: Deborah Foster, Angela Mullins, Ellen Elgins, Betty Perry, Phyllis Eastridge. Row 2: Sue Bleckley, Michele Arnder, Anita Knight, Carol Russo, Barbara Pendleton, Suzanne Hutchens, Janet Moore, Joanne Hill, Carol Rupprch

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.

We kicked off our March meeting dressed in festive St. Patrick's Day attire. We welcomed a dynamic speaker, Shawn Smith, the State Director of Virginia Senior Medicare Patrol. Mr. Smith offered interesting tips on how to protect, detect and report fraudsters to the appropriate authorities.

During our last quarterly meeting in June, we presented our annual Future Educator Scholarship awards. This year, the NNRTA Scholarship Committee was able to grant two one thousand-dollar scholarships. Both recipients were Denbigh High School graduates. Arriana Deboise will be attending Old Dominion University and Dulce Tapia- Venancio will be attending James Madison University. We are hoping to provide more scholarships and gain new members with innovative ideas for the upcoming year.



Celebrating
St. Patrick's Day



Shawn Smith, State Director of Virginia
Senior Medicare Patrol

News From Around the Commonwealth

District N

Thirty-four members attended the May District N meeting which is composed of eight local units. At our spring meeting, hosted by Clarke County, members collected a generous supply of school materials to benefit students in Appalachia. Three District N members currently serve on the VRTA Board of Directors: **Larry Hardesty** of Clarke County as vice president, **Janet Dye** of Loudoun County as secretary, and **Ben McCartney** of Fauquier County as parliamentarian.



District N has surpassed expectations with the school supply collection. Thanks to all donors who supported this worthy cause that will benefit students from Appalachia.



District N was well represented at the VRTA Delegate Assembly in Richmond on April 29-30.



Photo District N Meeting May 14
Hosted by the Clarke County Retired School Employees Association

Look at what's in the District N gift basket for the VRTA Delegate Assembly.

A wonderful assortment that reflects the culinary and cultural richness of the eight counties that comprise District N.



Arlington Retired Teachers

On May 21, Arlington's RTA members celebrated a successful year by gathering for our annual luncheon at the Patton Hall Community Club & Conference Center on Joint Base Ft. Myer-Henderson Hall. We enjoyed a delicious lunch while catching up with each other. The highlight of the gathering was member **Dr. Emma Violand-Sanchez** speaking of her life experiences as told in her recently published memoir ***Dreams and Shadows: An Immigrant's Journey***. Emma's inspirational story was shared with many emotional moments, as friend and fellow member Evelyn Fernandez questioned Emma about elements of the book that tell of her life as an immigrant from Bolivia who, as a high school senior, began a new life in Virginia. As coworkers of Emma's, we knew her as the successful supervisor of Arlington Public Schools ESOL student and parent programs, and, after her retirement, the first Latina elected to the APS School Board, and the founder of The Dream Project, a successful college scholarship program. Evelyn guided the questioning, so that we slowly became aware of the personal sadnesses and life challenges that Emma faced. A heartfelt standing ovation brought Emma's presentation to a close. As Congressman Don Beyer said of Emma's memoir: "This is not just the story of Emma's remarkable achievements: it's a blueprint for how compassion and determination can create lasting change in our communities and beyond"

At the end of the luncheon, past president Lynn Juhl swore in the new officers: Vice President Nancy King, Secretary Terry Bratt, and Treasurer Randy McKnight. As we adjourned, everyone donned our sunglass favors to get ready for a sunny summer!

News From Around the Commonwealth

Portsmouth Retired Educators Association Continues to SERVE

Serving and meeting the needs of families and supportive agencies throughout the communities, have kept us connected and involved in many *Boots on the Ground* activities. Thanks to All of PREA members!!

It has been our pleasure to support our schools and serve within our community! Over the past four years, PREA has provided yearly financial donations of \$100 to the Ida Barbour Learning Center, Salvation Army Angel Tree, OASIS Food Ministry, Union Mission and Effingham Family YMCA Youth Programs for summer camp and swim lessons. Monthly activities within the schools and the Y keep us physically engaged in on-going family activities.

Once again, we awarded four \$1,000 scholarships to recent high school graduates. We are amazed, realizing we have awarded thirteen \$1,000 scholarships to high school seniors over the past four years.

At our last meeting in May, members rallied in response to an announced grocery shortage threatening the Effingham Family Y's Food Pantry for that Friday. Within one hour, members dug deep and personally gave \$600 in support of this food pantry which is one of our major community service projects. We received help from family and friends and did not disappoint our community. This initiative garnered overwhelming collaborative support, and within three days, received \$1,300, providing critical relief to the pantry and ensuring continued food distribution to the 64 families who received food assistance in need for May.

This spontaneous act of collective action showcased the Heart of PREA and the organization's commitment to be of service to others during these times of need.



Helping the Food Pantry



Petersburg/Price George Retired Teachers.

The Petersburg/Prince George Retired Teachers Association gave multi-colored *organza* gift bags filled with goodies to show appreciation to the teachers at Walnut Hill Elementary School, Petersburg, Virginia, in recognition of *National Teacher Appreciation Week*. Gift bags were also given to the administrative, office and maintenance staff.

The Petersburg/Prince George Retired Teachers and their spouses took the Black History Trolley Tour of the City of Petersburg. The tour included historical sites such as: the "safe house" where MLK, Jr. stayed while he was in Petersburg, the first all-black hospital building, and the former all black schools which were Peabody and Giles B. Cook and other historical sites. After the very enlightening and educational tour the retired teachers and spouses had lunch at one of the historical buildings that is now a well-known restaurant in Old Town Petersburg.



Gift bags for National Teacher Appreciation Week



Trolley Tour of Petersburg

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 2026 newsletter is **Monday, March 30, 2026**

Susan Martin, Newsletter Editor

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

2025 VRTA Fall Newsletter – Last Printed and Mailed Document

The VRTA Executive Committee, Board of Directors, and Delegate Assembly voted at the VRTA Spring 2025 Delegate Assembly to publish one final printed newsletter in Fall, 2025, and then publish the newsletter online at vrta.us and email a notice when it is posted to all VRTA members who have given the treasurer their email address. Please note that some addresses are bouncing back; if you have a new email address, let your local treasurer know so they can correct it in their records and send it to the state Treasurer. Even if your email address is not on file, the VRTA newsletter can be accessed at vrta.us under the Newsletters tab.

The other publication that can be accessed monthly at vrta.us is the Creekside VRTA Spotlight, which is produced each month by Jim DuBrueler, the VRTA Agent of Record Creekside. This update is emailed out to district presidents to share with local unit presidents, who then are asked to share it with their members. Members who are not in a local unit can go directly to vrta.us to see the current issue and back issues of the Spotlight under the Newsletters tab. The Spotlight goes out the 15th of each month.

Here's how VRTA members and local units can assist members who may not have internet access: 1. Assign a "buddy" to members who need help seeing the newsletter; the buddies can either get together and look at the newsletter online, or the buddy can print out the newsletter for the member who can't. 2. Print a newsletter for any member without internet access and take the copies to a local meeting to distribute to those who need it.

AND if you are a member who is not affiliated with a local unit, here are some ideas for you: 1. Ask a grandchild or neighbor to help you on their device (computer, iPad, phone) to see the VRTA newsletter at vrta.us. They can also print it out for you. 2. Go to a public library which offers computers for public use; librarians at most libraries will help patrons get online and find the newsletter at vrta.us, and print it out if desired.

For anyone experiencing challenges with reading the monthly Creekside Spotlight newsletter or the twice yearly (Spring and Fall), VRTA Newsletters contact Karen Whetzel, President, at 540-740-8589. If you have the skills to help others and would like to assist, or if you have other ideas for those without internet access, contact Karen at kswhetzel@gmail.com.

Finally, a big shout out to Susan Martin, who has been the VRTA newsletter Editor two times a year for MANY years. Not only has she combined many articles from district and local units, but she has added many photos and other information. Not only does she compose the newsletter, in conjunction with her husband Treasurer Weldon Martin, she also has the newsletter printed and folded, labels printed and put on, and mailed them. Her newsletters have been great! Many districts and local units have sent articles and photos which have been published. Past years' newsletters are available under the Newsletters tab at vrta.us so you can see if your district and/or local have things in them! The wonderful thing about the online newsletters is that the photos are in color!

Susan is continuing to do the newsletter for Fall 2025 and Spring 2026. After that, VRTA needs a new Editor! If you are interested, or curious about what the job entails, contact President Karen Whetzel, or Susan Martin, current Editor.

President Karen Whetzel has two door prizes from First Bank to give away at the end of the conference. AARP/NRTA is providing some giveaways for the Tuesday night event which they are sponsoring. The Doubletree has also donated an overnight stay with complimentary breakfast. Door prizes from local units, districts or individuals are welcomed but not required!



From the VRTA Treasurer

Local treasurers are reminded that the VRTA treasurer can accept membership dues at any time. You should be collecting and submitting 2025-2026 dues at this time. VRTA dues are now \$30 per year for new or renewal payments. Life memberships are a one-time payment of \$200. As always, I hope that you are reaching out to your membership in various ways to encourage them to renew membership in their local, district and state. VRTA is a vibrant, proactive organization and is a wonderful advocate for retired educators across the state of Virginia. I am hopeful that you will recruit new members to join our organization. Thank you for all you do to encourage your members to join and support VRTA.

If you are a part of the VRTA IRS Group exemption (tax umbrella), don't forget to file your e-postcard this fall. The deadline for your electronic submission is November 15. Don't forget to send me a copy of your verification that the report has been submitted.

You are also reminded to submit a copy of your 2025-2026 budget to me, signed by two officers and dated. These are due no later than December 31, 2025. Please let me know of any VRTA members in your unit who have passed, so that I can update the VRTA membership rolls.



Virginia Retired Teachers Association 2025 Fall Conference Schedule

Monday, September 15 – Wednesday, September 17, 2025

Monday, September 15, 2025

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

Tuesday, September 16, 2025

8:00 a.m.—11:30 a.m.	Registration—Maudie Scott & Arrangements Committee
9:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m.	Board of Directors Meeting Parlor EFG
11:00 a.m.—12:00 noon	<i>VRTA members will vacate the room (Hotel staff sets up lunch)</i>
12:00 pm	First event for those not on the Exec Comm or Bd of Dir
12:00 p.m.—2:00 p.m.	Luncheon, Speaker Dwayne Yancey
2:00 p.m.—2:15 p.m.	Break
2:15 p.m.—2:45 p.m.	VRTA Benefits Update – Jim DuBrueler and Committee
2:45 p.m.—3:00 p.m.	Break
3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.	VRS Presentation
4:00 p.m.—5:00 p.m.	90th Anniversary Past Presidents' Roundtable
	Dinner on Your Own
7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	AARP/VRTA Event TBA

Wednesday, September 17, 2025

	Breakfast on Your Own/Beverages in Lobby
8:00 a.m.—9:00 a.m.	Registration—Maudie Scott & Arrangements Committee
9:00 a.m.—9:15 a.m.	Pledge of Allegiance & Introduction of Breakout Sessions
9:15 a.m.--10:00 a.m.	Breakout Session I
10:00 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.	Breakout Session II
10:45 am – 11:00 am	Break
11:00 – 12:30 p.m.	90th Anniversary Presentation & Business Meeting
12:45 – 1 p.m.	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.

Monday, September 15
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
** MEETS **
5:00 PM-7:00 PM

VRTA 2025 Fall Conference

Registration Form

Tuesday, September 16-Wednesday, September 17

Tuesday, September 16
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 **Friday, August 29, 2025**. **A late fee of \$10.00 will be charged for registration forms postmarked after August 29.** Note: You may not get a lunch if registration is late. **Questions (?)** maudiescott76@gmail.com or kswhetzel@gmail.com

The registration fee includes the organizational costs of the conference, as well as the Tuesday 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: Carrot cake

Beverages: Coffee and tea

Room Registration: Attendees make room reservations no later than **Friday, August 29**, by using this link:

<https://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/ricksdt-903-a2e4864b-84fd-47c5-ba68-2cfbc0511525/>

When you click the link, it will take you straight to the event page where you can book rooms for the designated dates—no code is needed. However if you or your guests choose to book by calling Hilton Central Reservations, provide the 3-digit code “903”. Rooms booked in other ways will not receive the special rate of \$148 per night.

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 **Friday, August 29** 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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Scenes from the 2025 Delegate
Assembly

