

VRTA Newsletter

Publication of Virginia Retired
Teacher Association
Member, NRTA—Division of AARP

Spring 2026 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 2026 VRTA Spring Delegate Assembly will be held April 28 and 29, 2026, 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 send members to attend! The deadline for both VRTA registrations and for hotel reservations is Friday, April 17, 2026.

The Board of Directors will be meeting on Tuesday, April 28, 2026, 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. If you are a VRTA officer, District President, or Committee chair, please let me know by April 17 if you will be attending the Board of Directors meeting or sending an alternate! Thanks!

The Bylaws committee will be presenting proposed changes to the Executive Committee. If the changes are approved by the Executive Committee, they will go on to the Board of Directors, and if passed there, changes will be voted on by the Delegate Assembly. Bylaws Chairperson Nina McClanahan has posted the changes on vrta.us for everyone to see before the Spring DA. Please review the changes with your district and local units. Contact Nina if there are questions.

Breakout sessions are planned for Tuesday afternoon on the theme Healthy, Wealthy and Wise! Virginia AARP and Creekside Insurance will provide some of the breakout sessions!

The VRTA Delegate Assembly will conduct business on Wednesday, April 29, after the VRS presentation. District presidents are voting members, as are members of the Executive Committee, and two delegates from each unit. If a unit has over 100 VRTA members, they have an additional delegate for each 50 VRTA members or fraction thereof. All voting members must be members of VRTA. SEND NAMES OF VOTING DELEGATES TO PRESIDENT KAREN WHETZEL BY FRIDAY, APRIL 17!

VRTA will be electing new officers at the Delegate Assembly and installing them at the end of the meeting! Current President Elect Drucilla Pollard will become President on July 1, 2026. Nominees presented in the Fall by the Nominating Committee are President Elect: Mary Jane Mutispaugh; Vice President: Larry Hardesty; Secretary: Loula Brox; Treasurer Dave Palanzi. Nominees will also be accepted from the floor.

Reminder: the VRTA newsletter is no longer being printed and mailed out; the expense just got too large. If you know members who are not tech savvy, please keep them involved by helping them access vrta.us!

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“Education fared better this year than it sometimes has. It was easier to kill bad bills that seem to show up each session, and there was more support for bills that will improve education and other areas of state business.”

President's Message continued

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. Thanks to the local units which have sponsored the seminar; they have been amazing. BUT more local units need to do them! Contact Membership Chair Larry Hardesty for more info!

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!

**Virginia Retired Teachers Association**

"Organized November 28, 1936"

2024-2026 Officers

President—Karen Whetzel	(540)740-8589 kswhetze@gmail.com
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Secretary—Janet Dye	(591)752-6172 Jsdy5@yahoo.com
Treasurer—Weldon Martin	(540)473-2636 Hooman4949@gmail.com
Immediate Past President Jean Marrow	(804)275-7278 marrowj@aol.com

Never a Dull Moment

When dealing with legislation, there truly is never a dull moment. The Legislative Committee would like to thank everyone who kept up with legislation this year by using the "Tools" emailed at the beginning of the 2026 GA Session, made legislative contacts, and contacted us with questions. Although we still don't have a state budget for this biennium, we should have one soon. Education fared better this year than it sometimes has. It was easier to kill bad bills that seem to show up each session, and there was more support for bills that will improve education and other areas of state business.

There surely won't be a dull moment at the Spring Delegate Assembly April 28-29. We can read facts about VRS in its publications and on its website, but there is nothing that takes the place of hearing directly from Trish Bishop, Director of VRS, and asking her questions about our retirement system. Also, when we meet Robert Irving, Director of Customer Services, it is much more satisfying to tell him any difficulties we are having with VRS programs than to try to explain them through a faceless device. And it's nice to be able to thank Virginia Sowers, Director of Strategic Communications, in person for the excellent information VRS makes available to its members. Andy Feagans, VRS Employer Relationship Program Manager, also will be able to explain how he works with school divisions on our behalf.

We always look forward to the legislative speaker who often begins the meeting as a luncheon speaker, usually someone we rarely have an opportunity to hear in person at any other time. The recently appointed Virginia State Superintendent of Instruction, Jenna Conway, will give us her assessment of the current state of education in Virginia, her goals, and what we can expect in the future, as our luncheon speaker. During the Q and A session we will have an opportunity to share our concerns.

We hope that during the Committee Chats session on Tuesday evening you will come by our table and discuss the legislative issues that are of interest to you. Such discussions can clear up misconceptions, bring to light problems we need to address, etc. Good talks with friends and colleagues are never dull.

We expect to leave with information and inspiration that will lead to ideas and action. When there is learning and using our knowledge for good, life is never dull.

Bea Morris, Legislative Chair

Bylaws Committee

Nina McClanahan, Chair

The current VRTA Bylaws were adopted at the Spring Delegate Assembly in May 2022. This past year the Bylaws committee has worked to bring information up to date and improve the document. The proposed changes will be up for adoption at the Spring Delegate Assembly. Changes include: rewording to clarify some entries, omitting items that are repeated, adding information to clarify meaning, adding a Financial Secretary to assist the Treasurer in record keeping, adding an Assistant Secretary to assume the duties of the secretary when the secretary is absent, changing Dues to \$30.00 (already approved), and Nominating Committee change. The revised document can be found on vrta.us under Forms and Documents.

Most Active Member

At the Fall VRTA Conference, Doris Bolton was awarded the Most Active Member Award from the VRTA. Doris taught for over 30 years in the Pittsylvania County School System, in both middle and high school. She has been an advocate for PCRTA initiatives, promoted membership, donated to scholarship and has served as treasurers for PCRTA. In one of her letters of nomination, she is described as doing a “great job with the financial recording and reporting.”

Mrs. Bolton is a member of High Street Baptist Church in Danville, Virginia, where she has served as deaconess, secretary, choir member and visiting sick and shut-in members. It is said that Doris was “skilled in transferring her ability to relate to children in the school setting to the church setting. She used her talents as she molded the minds of teenagers in Sunday School and Bible School.”

Doris participates in community service organizations. She serves as a motivational/historical speaker for community events about the local education system. She performed over 500 hours of volunteer service during the 2024-2025 year, making her PCRTA’s “Most Active Volunteer.”



Doris Bolton

From the VRTA Treasurer

After 14 years, I am writing my last “From the Treasurer” article for the VRTA Newsletter. It has been my honor and privilege to serve as your VRTA Treasurer over these years. I will be retiring from my position effective June 30, 2026.

Please continue to send dues to me up until July 1, 2026. And don’t forget that dues for the current membership year of 2025-2026 are past due, but can still be remitted to me through the end of the current membership year. It is also now time to start collecting and remitting VRTA state dues to me for the 2026-2027 membership year. VRTA encourages you to start collecting dues in the spring if you can, and then to continue collecting them next fall.

Our new VRTA treasurer will take office on July 1, 2026. After July 1, dues payments and other matters regarding VRTA finances should be directed to our new treasurer, Mr. David Palanzi, a member of the Loudon Retired Educators in District N. David is highly qualified and I welcome him to the job and am confident that he is ready and willing to help you in any way that he can. David will also be ready and eager to accept your dues payments beginning July 1. His address is 603 McCleary Square SE, Leesburg, VA 20175. His email is dave.palanzi@gmail.com and his phone number is (703) 869-4765.

Just a reminder to you as you are beginning to prepare your 2026-2027 budgets, don’t forget to send a copy to me (or to Dave after July 1) signed and dated by at least two officers. Also, please continue to send in the names of any deceased members to me so that they can be removed from the active roles.

Finally, I want to express my appreciation to all the dedicated local and district treasurers who have worked so hard and cooperated so much with me over the years. I have relished the opportunity to get to know so many of you from throughout the state over the years. I have made lifetime friends in the process and I look forward to continuing to seeing many of you at the state meetings as time goes on.

Sincerely,
Weldon Martin
VRTA Treasurer



News from Around the Commonwealth

Buchanan County RTA

The Buchanan County Retired Teachers Association continues to support its local citizens. On September 9, 2025, we conducted our annual food drive for The Feed My Sheep food pantry. We donated a total of 250 pounds of food which was greatly appreciated. On October 25, 2025, we participated in The Buchanan County Public Library’s Haunted Storywalk Adventure by providing treats and reading story boards. Over 200 children attended. For our Christmas activity three groups were selected to receive donations. Donations were made to Buchanan County Social Services Coal Miners Christmas, The Boys & Girls Club of Central Appalachia, and Shop with a Cop.

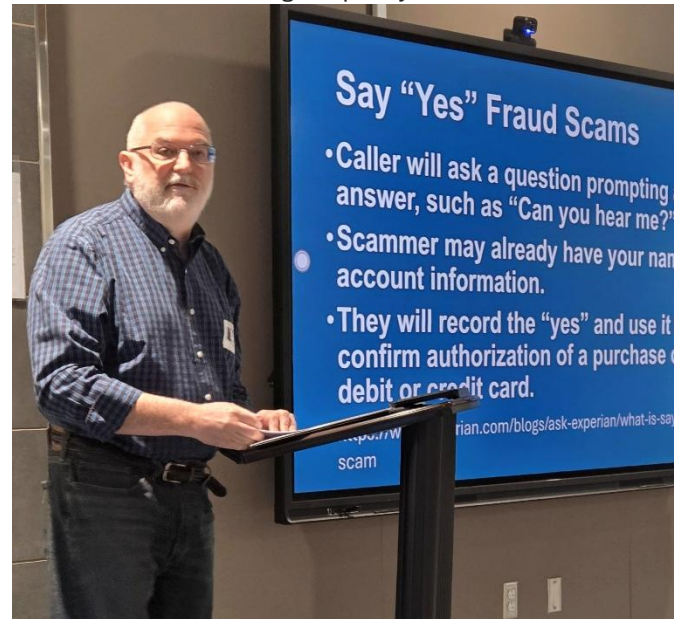
Sadly, we lost two of our most active and loyal members, Doris Lee Stiltner in September and Patricia Hogston in October. They are greatly missed.

Rockbridge Retired Teachers Association

The Rockbridge Retired Teachers Association had a busy end to the calendar year! In November, retired business teacher and newest member, Mike Lenoir, shared his expertise in avoiding financial scams and identity theft. Valuable information was shared about protecting our communications and financial resources. Members understand clearly how easy it can be to be defrauded. RRTA thanks Mr. Lenoir for his wise counsel! At our December meeting, members created gift items for our craft bazaar with proceeds from the sale benefiting our Scholarship Fund. We also held our annual memorial candlelight ceremony honoring those educators we lost during the past year.



Food Drive for the *Feed My Sheep* Food Pantry



Mike Lenoir, speaking about how to avoid financial scams and identity theft.



Haunted Story walk Adventure



News From Around the Commonwealth

Alleghany Retired Teachers

The Alleghany Retired Teachers' Association, ARTA, has had a great start to our 2025-2026 year. We met at Alleghany Highlands Arts and Crafts Center in Clifton Forge, VA, on September 2. The program featured Joyce Williams, AARP State President and former District P President, who presented a program on Social Security. Our September service projects gathered support for our local schools and local food banks. ARTA was able to donate \$65 to each of the four local elementary schools along with school supplies. In support of the AARP food drive, each of the two local food banks received \$241 plus food collected. The meeting was catered by the ladies of the Arts and Crafts Center.

In December, after numerous reschedulings due to bad weather, we finally met at Temple Baptist Church in Covington. The members were entertained by the Alleghany High School Choir under the direction of Amanda Sprouse, who will be retiring at the end of this school year and will be missed. They presented a selection of holiday songs which is an anticipated annual highlight of our Christmas season and got the members into the holiday spirit. Our membership presented a check for the donated amount of \$310 to show our appreciation to the AHS choir program. After the choir performance, the meeting resumed with our guest speaker, Denise Pillow, 1995 Christmas Mother, filling in for the 2025 Alleghany Highlands Christmas Mother, Rachel Thompson. The theme for the Christmas Mother program was "Christ as Your Neighbor." She wanted all to think of Christ calling us to be His hands and heart and serve our neighbors in need, serving Him in each person. ARTA members collected monetary donations of \$480 and needed items for the Christmas Mother program. The members enjoyed a delicious luncheon catered from Family TreeTs Restaurant of Clifton Forge. The recently retired school personnel from the Alleghany Highlands School system were invited to our September and December meetings.



W. L. Dressler, local landscaper and guest speaker for March meeting

At our March meeting, we met at the Jackson River Technical Center. W. L. Dressler, a local landscaper and a graduate of VT, spoke on landscaping and plants. He gave suggestions on what to plant and what to avoid for this area. ARTA was able to present three \$600 scholarships to Alleghany High School students planning to major in education. The scholarship recipients were Hannah Hensley, Kiera Lowman, and Mackenzie Nicely. The scholarships are funded by member donations, 50/50 raffles at each meeting, and a donation from District P. Members and guests enjoyed a wonderful lunch catered by the culinary arts students at Jackson River Technical Center and enjoyed talking to the scholarship recipients.

ARTA plans to continue to be active in the community and have representation at the spring VRTA Conference. We continue "to serve, not to be served."

Website

Visit the VRTA website at:

vrta.us

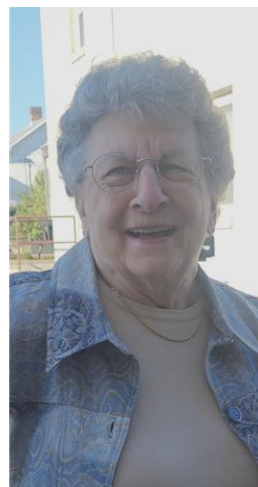


Shenandoah County Retired Teachers

Beatrice "Bea" Morris of Harrisonburg spoke to the Shenandoah County Retired Teachers Association (SCRTA) about volunteering. Bea is the Legislative Chair for the Virginia Retired Teachers Association (VRTA) as well as District G Retired Teachers Association and has received the VRTA's Most Active Member award. She noted that volunteering can be a rewarding experience as one helps others

VRTA collects volunteer hours by members from local units and uses them in lobbying. Barbara Halvorson, President of SCRTA, prepared a list of volunteering opportunities in Shenandoah County and shared it with all SCRTA members.

At the meeting, SCRTA collected cans of pasta and monetary donations for Luke's Backpack, which distributes food for weekends to elementary and middle school students who need it.



Bea Morris, VRTA Legislative Chair

News from Around the Commonwealth

Newport News Retired Teachers

In October 2025, the Newport News Retired Teachers Association (NNRTA) gathered for our Western themed meeting. All new members were welcomed as well as returning members to the organization. We listened to an awesome presentation about the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel Expansion. The speaker, Zanari Love, provided pertinent details about the history of the HRBT as well as the future plans of the tunnel expansion project. Every member that was in attendance was able to join HRBT info @ VDOT.Virginia.gov to continually keep them informed about the Hampton Roads transportation. We are pleased to have VDOT HRBT traffic alert email to provide us with weekly updates on traffic pattern changes and closures.

For our December meeting, we had fabulous faces dressed in their festive holiday attire. The Alfresco Italian Restaurant in Newport News provided a great atmosphere for delicious food and wonderful fellowship for our winter meeting. This event provided music, games, and door prizes to set the tone for our holiday gathering. We had two purposes for this event. Our first focus for this event was to accept donations for the scholarship fund. Every year we provide a scholarship for a Newport News graduating senior. Our other purpose was to celebrate members with flowers while they are amongst us. We acknowledged those members in attendance who served in education the longest. Each member that stood to be recognized was presented with a wrapped rose. Douglas Brown, Jr., a violinist, provided holiday music for the occasion. In addition, Newport News school board member, Douglas Brown, Sr. was in attendance to share in this holiday meeting. NNRTA continues to seek new members and we try to make each meeting interactive and interesting.



Douglas Brown, providing holiday music



Door prizes for Holiday Meeting



October's Wild West Themed Meeting

News from Around the Commonwealth

Alexandria Retired Teachers

In September our speaker had to cancel at the last minute. As a result, we were able to have a great discussion as to the needs of the group and prepare for our October speaker. The ACPS Director of Compensation and Benefits, Mr. Carlton Nettles, met with us in October and it was quite an interesting meeting. In November, we visited the only winery in Alexandria, Negus Winery, and learned about Ethiopian wine. We were able to have a tasting of Ethiopian honey wines and Virginia wines; all made on site. Several members left with bottles for holiday gifts! Our December meeting was a choral concert presented by the Annandale High School Chorus under the direction of Mr. Pat Vaughn. It was a great way to catch the holiday spirit! ARTA has been collecting food for the Alexandria food pantry, as well as pet food for Alexandria Animal Welfare League. We have had many people laid off by the government and people have been returning pets to the Animal Welfare League. We started collecting food in the fall at each meeting, Members were asked to bring a can of food for humans and/or pets. We then deliver the food to the food pantry and shelter.



Trip to Negus Winery



Annandale
High School
Chorus

Floyd County Retired Teachers

The Floyd County Retired Teachers' Association kicked off its first meeting of the year at the Floyd County High School CTE Center on March 18. It was probably the first meeting our organization has ever held in March with scattered snow on the ground! The cold weather would not deter us from having a great meeting, however, as we had spring in our hearts! Our school superintendent, Dr. Jessica Cromer, attended our meeting and made comments about our school budget, the cost of potential projects to improve our schools, and teachers' salaries. She stated that, considering some of our teachers' salaries are among the lowest in the state, our student performance is very good. This speaks highly of the hard work and dedication our teachers are devoting to their jobs.

Isabel Lovitt, chairperson of our Mini-Grants committee, announced that we were able to give four mini-grants to the following teachers: Brianna Ferrell and Annemarie K. Radke at Floyd County High School; Caroline Tesauro at Check Elementary; and Chelsea Gibbs at Willis Elementary. We also will award a \$1500 scholarship at the end of the school year to a graduating senior who will pursue a teaching career.

We are fortunate to have Debbie Snellings among our membership. She serves District C (Court House) on the Floyd County School Board. She shared a few comments regarding school board issues. She strongly encouraged the FCRTA members to attend meetings of the school board and board of supervisors in order to stay abreast of decisions that are being made concerning our school system.

We enjoyed the potato bar, barbecue, and cheesecake prepared by Chef Katrina Knapp and her food service classes at Floyd County High School. Our guest speaker was Laura Cantrell, an instructor at Floyd County High School on education, teaching, and human services. Her classes build skills for teaching careers and child development roles. She gave a visual talk on "Teachers for Tomorrow". Accompanying her were three of her students who commented enthusiastically that they liked Ms. Cantrell's classes, and they were excited about pursuing education after high school. This was very encouraging to all retirees present!

We will meet again in May when our guest speaker will be Andrew Morris, the Town Manager of Floyd, VA. We are looking forward to hearing about our town's operations and information pertaining to public services and projects, especially as they relate to education.

Finally, we are proud to be a part of devoting time and service to our community. Floyd County schools have achieved recognition as one of only 100 school districts nationwide surpassing pre-pandemic performance levels in both math and reading. We are honored to do what we can to support our schools, teachers, students, and community nestled here in the beautiful mountains of southwest Virginia!

News From Around the Commonwealth

Greenville Retired Educators

The Greenville Retired Teachers once again partnered with The Fuller House by donating funds to build a single-family home. These funds are used to accommodate a low-income family without cost.



Retired teacher and founder, George Pugh, seated left front, heads up this project along with his wife Ella Pugh, retired teacher. President Arletha Cain, center, looks forward to this banquet every year as it celebrates a new home owner cost-free. Also pictured are other retired teachers, Joan Fleming, Dr. Thelma Atkins-Riley, Carolyn High Minnie Mayes, and Arlene Williams.



Elfie Revis

President Arletha Cain attended a Black History event at Royal Baptist Church in Emporia, Virginia. One of the honorees was Mrs. Effie Revis who turned 104 years old in February. Mrs. Revis is a Life Member of the Greenville Retired Teachers. Her biop was read by Greenville retired teacher, Barbara Parker.

Williamsburg James City County

Members of The WJCC Retired Teachers Association have been busy. They presented food items to the Salvation Army for Thanksgiving; hosted Health Consultant Barbara Jordan who spoke on STRESS Awareness, coping and Prevention; and, they donated cute little socks and undies and hats and gloves for tots and children and provided fluffy new towels and washcloths for adults.



Barbara Jordan



Basket full of donations

Save the Date – Fall VRTA Conference

The date for the Fall 2026 VRTA Conference is September 29-30, 2026, at the DoubleTree Hotel in Midlothian, VA.



News From Around the Commonwealth

Franklin/Southampton RTA

Members of Franklin/Southampton-RTA entertained patients at the Courtland Health Center, Courtland, VA., with line dances with their line dance Instructor Ms. Sheena Graham. They were adorned with their Hayden Soulful Steppers T-shirts provided by Senior Services of Southeastern Virginia. They also line dance on each Monday from 1:30 until 3:00 pm at the Hayden Village in Franklin, VA.

Mrs. Bessie Smith, Mrs. Carol Logan and Mrs. Sylvia Claud are continuing to pack CHIPP Bags to be distributed to Boykins Neighborhood Outreach Center (BNOC) students who attend elementary schools in Southampton County Public Schools.

Also, President Miller read to two Kindergarten classes at Hodges Manor Elementary School in Portsmouth Public Schools during Read Across America Week. The featured book to read was entitled "See Marcus Grow".



Mrs. Sitrina B. Pope, President, Mrs. Daphne M. Miller, Line Dance Instructor, Ms. Sheena Graham, Ms. Patricia Sowell, and Mrs. Rose Parker

District M

The Fall District M Meeting was held at the Bull & Bones Restaurant in Christiansburg, Virginia, on Thursday, October 9, 2025. Our guests from the Floyd chapter were Reba Evans and Debbie Snellings. Many thanks to everyone who attended from our chapter for this informative meeting.

Our program speaker, Chris Sanchez (Executive Director of the Christiansburg Institute, Inc.), was ill so we were fortunate to have Erma Jones and Debbie Sherman-Lee speak to us about the Christiansburg Institute and their experiences attending that school. Questions were shared and information given to us about the school until it closed. The renovation projects with it are continuing at this time. We will try to get Chris for a program in the future and see the quilt that our chapter provided to the Institute.

Reba Goff, District M President, held a memorial service for our deceased members. She also shared about the state convention and announcements about changes within our district. We enjoyed celebrating the 90th Anniversary for VRTA with a delicious cake (thanks to Marsha Smith) after our lunch.

Adam Williams provided a wonderful musical medley for our entertainment. Adam is a Christiansburg High School graduate and music major. His performance was a wonderful conclusion for our meeting.

Many thanks to everyone who attended and donated door prizes. Our meeting was very informative and enjoyed by everyone!



90th Anniversary cake



Reba Goff, District M President and Barbara Stepp, MCREA President.

News from Around the Commonwealth

News from District N

District N is composed of eight local units. At our fall district meeting, hosted by Culpeper County, members collected a generous number of books for the Culpeper Book Drive. The total exceeded all expectations, with 970 children's books donated.

Culpeper County has six K-5 schools, and 100 books were delivered to each of their elementary school libraries. Additional books were distributed to the Culpeper Head Start program, Epiphany Catholic School, Culpeper Christian School, and the Empowering Culpeper community organization, which provides food, clothing, blankets, books, and other essential items to families in the community.

Three District N members currently serve on the VRTA Board of Directors: **Larry Hardesty** of Clarke County, Vice President; **Janet Dye** of Loudoun County, Secretary; and **Ben McCartney** of Fauquier County, Parliamentarian.



A small sample of the more than 900 books collected at the District N Fall Meeting!



Thanks to VRTA President, Karen Whetzel for attending the District N meeting

Danville Retired Teachers Association

DRTA, in 2025, continues to work, serve, support and strengthen our community in areas where needed. We have experienced another exciting and successful year.

In November again this year we volunteered our afternoon to ring the bell for the Salvation Army.

In December we partnered again with God's Pit Crew and donated 20 Play Pails for children who have lost everything in a natural disaster. These Play Pails contain blankets, balls, notebooks, stuffed animals, crayons, towels, and other items that are personal to the child. We celebrated the Christmas holiday together at Olive Garden Restaurant where we gave the Play Pails to God's Pit Crew for distribution, as needed.

Also in December, we participated in the Ballou Park North Pole Show. Organizations and businesses in the Danville area decorated floats that were placed in the park. Residents could drive through the park and view and judge the floats. On one night of the festivities, DRTA was in charge of games and refreshment in the auditorium.

We again anticipate awarding two \$500.00 scholarships to qualifying recipients.

Williamsburg James City County

The Williamsburg James City County unit of the Retired Teachers Association learned about a famous African American Chef who worked at the Williamsburg Inn! He received all kinds of awards and published a cookbook. This happened in 1945 at a time when Black people were not permitted to enter the Inn. The Williamsburg RTA Unit visited the Jamestown Settlement Museum to see their Local Arts Display and we're thrilled to be greeted by the Executive Director, Christy Coleman. It was a wonderful experience to be led on tour by the CEO herself who just happens to be a Williamsburg native.

News From Around the Commonwealth

Loudoun Retired Educators

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 day of service to help [Kids R First](#). LREA Members helped sort and organize school supply orders for students in need for several school districts. 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 second annual “**School’s Out Forever**” themed potluck picnic, a joyous gathering that has become a cherished tradition. October saw members volunteering at the **Inova Ladies Board Rummage Sale**. In November, our Social Committee hosted a fascinating tour of the historic **Graffiti House at Brandy Station**, and in December, we wrapped up the year with laughter and camaraderie at a **White Elephant Gift Exchange**, graciously hosted by Karen Elliott. Our Social Committee hosted a couple of fun game days to help us ward off the winter doldrums.

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 (300+ hours): Denise Powers

Gold Stars (200+ hours): Karen Elliott, Bobbie Johnson, Joy Griffith, Francie Malone, Janet Dye, and Sue Clark

Silver Stars (100+ hours): Linda Greeley, Dave Palanzi, Brenda Heap, Loretta Hall, Pam Smith, and Nancy Vollmer.

Engaging Programs and Inspiring Speakers

From September to June, our monthly meetings feature diverse and informative programs. This year, highlights included presentations on volunteer connections from Loudoun Cares, Local Authors, a holiday high school choral performance, and an insightful discussion with **Kristen Martinez**, Loudoun County Area Agency on Aging (AAA). “Aging in Place” whose mission is to foster independence, healthy aging and improve the quality of life for older adults and their caregivers through comprehensive programs and services.

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



Annual School’s Out Forever Picnic



Loudoun collected 18 bags of Thanksgiving Meals and 89 extra pounds of food; and \$150 in Thanksgiving Meal donations. In addition, we had 163 pounds of food and \$420 in monthly donations to Loudoun Hunger Relief.



February’s Meeting with Master Gardener, Brenda Bailey from Virginia Cooperative Extension

News From Around the Commonwealth

Patrick County Retired Teachers

Patrick County Retired Teachers Association has been busy organizing, volunteering, and donating funds for community and educational events. Our mission is to serve. We meet in September, December, March, and June at Landmark Center and enjoy a delicious meal prepared by the staff. We begin our meetings with prayer and a thought for the day.

Our programs this year have been interesting and educational. They have been on "Black Bear" in our area, "Exercises to Prevent Falling," "Nutrition," and "scams." Area residents provide the programs.

Some of our activities have been preparing new handbooks, delivering pizzas to residents at PARC Workshop, preparing December Birthday bags for Blue Ridge Therapy residents, making Christmas bags filled with goodies for residents at Developmental Center, volunteering at Career Day and Reality Store at the high school, and judging 4-H events. Several retired teachers are lunch buddies at different elementary schools and some volunteer to read to students particularly on Dr. Seuss Day. We continue to purchase and deliver lice medication to all elementary schools in the county. We enjoyed a social in January at the Community Room of Patrick & Henry Community College where we played games and received prizes prepared by Judy Lacks. Finally, we held a picnic to welcome prospective new members.

We make a number of donations. The largest is a \$500 scholarship to a graduating senior planning on going into the field of education; we have a fund to supply graduation attire to graduates who need that service. Other donations are to PARC Workshop, Developmental Center, Dolly Pardon Imagination Library, prize items for Blue Ridge Therapy bingo games, and gifts for speakers.

Last but certainly not least is our Retired Teachers' Book Club which meets monthly in the county library with individuals choosing books and leading discussions on them. Book club is open to anyone who loves reading; attendance is growing. Following the book club, several members sing at either the Blue Ridge Therapy or Landmark Center. It makes for a busy but rewarding day.

Portsmouth Retired Educators

PREA has 58 members in good standing for the current calendar year. PREA has received nine scholarship applications with plans to distribute six \$1,000 scholarships to the six highly qualified candidates after the committee selection process has been concluded. Our Community Solution Projects have been enriching and rewarding for our members, as they have expanded volunteer opportunities to align with the growing needs of our community.

Monthly Community Solutions Activities

- August 8th-15th Annual Backpack Drive donations given to Third Baptist Church, Portsmouth, VA, and Title I Office of Portsmouth Public Schools
- Donated 12 #10 cans of Green Beans to the Third Baptist Church Outreach Feeding Program
- PREA members attended the MLK Leadership Steering Committee Unity Luncheon on Saturday, 9/13/26
- PREA members attended the Title One Brunch and Learn on 09/27 and donated additional backpacks and school supplies
- PREA introduction to service with Mercy Chefs on 09/29/26
- PREA supported the Book and Fall Fest at Craddock Elementary on 11/3 and distributed grade-appropriate books and treats to grades K- 3
- 11/10/25 hosted The Black Cowboys and the Buffalo Soldiers Luncheon featuring Guest Speaker & Author, Ken Wright
- Donated \$100.00 each to the Salvation Army Angel Tree, Union Mission, OASIS Food Ministry, Ida Barbour Learning Center, Effingham Family Y, and Southampton Roads Food Bank
- Forty+ members and guests attended the January 13, 2026, New Year's Brunch at The Black Pelican Restaurant, Greenbrier
- PREA members attended MLK Day Church and Community in Action Breakfast on 01/19
- PREA served with Mercy Chef on 01/26/26
- March 9th Working Meeting -Packed Outreach Survival Bags for Homeless Outreach and Foster Care students enrolled in Portsmouth Public Schools.

Notice

****Only members of the Executive Committee will meet on Monday, April 27****

Board of Directors—Please arrive early enough to register before the meeting starting at 9 AM on Tuesday, April 28.

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



Wrapping
Holiday Gifts

Virginia Retired Teachers Association
Spring Delegate Assembly Preliminary Schedule
 Monday, April 27 – Wednesday, April 29, 2026

Monday, April 27, 2026

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

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

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 sets up lunch*

12:00 p.m. First event for those not on the Exec. Comm. or Bd. of Dir.

12:00 p.m. -1:45 p.m. Luncheon, Speaker Va. Supt of Inst. Jenna Conway

1:45 p.m.—2:15 p.m. Break

2:15 p.m.-- 3:00 p.m. VRTA Benefits Update- Chuck Swope & Benefits Comm.

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

3:15 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Breakout Sessions: Healthy, Wealthy, Wise and Wiser

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

Dinner on Your Own

7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Tuesday Night Shenanigans (Fun and Games Parlor EFG)

Wednesday, April 29, 2026

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.--10:15 a.m. Break

10:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Delegate Assembly Convenes to Conduct Business

12:30 a.m. –1:00 p.m. Installation of Officers/ Adjournment

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 27
Executive Committee
Meets
5:00 PM-7:00 PM

VRTA 2026 Spring Delegate Assembly
Registration Form
Tuesday, April 28-Wednesday, April 29

Tuesday, April 28
Board of Directors
Meets
9:00 AM-11:00 AM

Note: Registration fees are per person. Each person attending the Spring 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 **Friday, April 17, 2026**. A late fee of \$10.00 will be charged for registration forms postmarked after April 10th. 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 delegate assembly, 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 with lemon beurre sauce, steamed balsamic rice
- Grilled Chicken breast with olive oil and garlic, nut free pesto sauce
- Vegetarian Chef's choice

All menu choices are gluten free.

Each choice will include seasonal vegetables and roasted potatoes.

Entrees include mixed green salad, rolls/butter, cheesecake, coffee and tea.

Room Registration: Attendees make room reservations no later than **Friday, April 17**, by using this link:

<https://www.hilton.com/en/book/reservation/deeplink/?ctyhocn=RICKSDT&groupCode=CDT918&arrivaldate=2026-04-27&departuredate=2026-04-29&cid=OM,WW,HILTONLINK,EN,DirectLink&fromId=HILTONLINKDIRECT>

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 “918”. Rooms booked in other ways will not receive the special rate of \$148 per night.

Note: Hotel reservations need to be made by April 17th. Registration for the Delegate Assembly need to be made by April 10th.

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, April 17** to indicate that you plan to set up a table for the MarketPlace.