



SPRING 2023

Wise Owl News

from the Tree of Knowledge



ROCK ISLAND COUNTY RETIRED TEACHERS FOUNDATION
BLACKHAWK UNIT 21 IRTA

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BLACKHAWK RETIRED TEACHERS MEETINGS

are held at
The **QUAD CITY BOTANICAL CENTER**
2525 Fourth Avenue, Rock Island IL

Board Meeting 8:15 AM
Social Hour 9:15 AM
Business Session 9:45 AM

Thursday, MARCH 9: "STRIKE UP A TUNE"

QC Chord Busters Barber Shop Singers
Introduction by Bobbie Lastrapes
Greeters: Lynne Rumler and Steve Haines
Servers: Lynne Brandenburg and Jane Schmidt

Thursday, APRIL 13: "Viva the Music"

Glenview Middle School Band - Directed by Monike Hill
Introduction by Kathy Killam
Greeters: Janet Johnson and Carol Clay
Servers: Alice Traylor and Joan Beck

Thursday, MAY 11: "Insurance Forum on TRIP, TRAIL & MEDICARE"

Illinois Dept. of Central Management Services Representative
Introduction by Mike Schmidt
Greeters: Teri Stickler and Darla Walters
Servers: Kathie Bekel and Nancy Luckenbill

ATTENTION MEMBERS:

The 2023
Directory was
mailed in February.
Please notify us if
you did not receive
a copy or your
address has
changed.

**THANK
YOU!!**

Newsletter	Articles Due	Mailing Date
Summer	5/15/23	5/22/23
Fall	8/14/23	8/21/23
Winter	11/13/23	11/20/23

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – JOE VERMEIRE

Kansas City wins... Kansas City wins... Kansas City Wins!!! And the Kansas City Chiefs Win Super Bowl LVII 38 to 35 over the Philadelphia Eagles. Eagles QB Jalen Hurts played well, but Chiefs QB Patrick Mahomes fought through an ankle injury to bring KC this nail-biter win in the last eight seconds! It was fantastic!

OK, NFL football aside, this is the Wise Owl Spring, 2023 issue and Blackhawk Unit 21 IRTA is looking to score as well. I'm as excited at our upcoming monthly meetings as I was watching the Super Bowl. Really!!! Our February Meeting at the QC Botanical Center informed attendees about the exceptional work of the New Kingdom Trailriders and their healing efforts with children and young adults. *Thursday* March 9th will feature the QC Chord Busters Barber Shop Singers. These guys really have the pipes! *Thursday* April 13th is going to be Super with the Glenview Middle School **Mariachi Band** and "Viva the Music". I just love watching those kids! *Thursday* May 11th will get us the latest Insurance information with a CMS presentation on TRIP, TRAIL & MEDICARE. We all need to know this stuff. Back to Wednesdays, June 14th has the Figge Art Museum coming by to present to us the new, exciting programming that will be available this Summer and Fall. After a break in June and August, we'll be Welcoming New Retirees to IRTA at a delicious breakfast on Wednesday September 13th at the Oakwood Country Club. And that's not even the entire year. JOIN US! IRTA's CEO, Jim Bachman, will bring us up to date on our IRTA's lawsuit against Illinois' underfunding of the Retired Teachers' Healthcare Benefits. Yes, your IRTA is fighting for your current and future benefits. (see www.irtaonline.org for details)

So, if you haven't already noticed; we would like as many of our members to join us for our monthly General Membership Meetings as possible. Your retired friends and I look forward to seeing each and every one of you. What the heck! An educational program, great coffee and scrumptious donuts, congenial fellowship and more... all for \$15 a year! You can't beat it!

God's Blessings, Joe

ROCK ISLAND COUNTY REGIONAL SUPERINTENDENT of SCHOOLS – TAMMY L. MUERHOFF



Dear Retired Educators and Administrators,

Spring will soon be upon us! Enjoy the upcoming warmer weather and beautiful signs of spring. As we approach spring, I'd like to remind those who have an educator license that will be expiring as of June 30, 2023 that the option to renew your license begins as of April 1, 2023.

There is no fee for retired educators and administrators to renew an educator license. However, if you are recently retired, then professional development hours still may be needed in order to renew your license based upon how many years in which you were under contract in a TRS eligible position within your current licensure cycle.

To obtain more information or for questions, please contact our office at 309-736-1111 or connect with Brandi Schwanke, Licensure Specialist, by email at brandi.schwanke@riroe.com.

IRTA FOUNDATION – MICHAEL DALY

The Finance Committee of Blackhawk IRTA Unit 21 met on January 4, 2023 to complete a 2022 calendar year audit for the Blackhawk Foundation. The reports were presented at the Foundation Board Meeting on January 11, 2023 at the RIROE Building. At that meeting the Board approved the 2022 reports and awarded 2023 grants. Seven grants for local secondary schools regarding academic achievement and thirteen grants for non-profit community groups. The Board also created a new "Donation Request Form" for 2024 grants and amended the BYLAWS to include this form.

Currently, the Blackhawk IRTA Foundation checking account balance is \$3,918.78. Twelve grant checks have been processed. The Foundation is working on the upcoming "Birdies for Charity" event for the summer newsletter.

DIRECTORY COMMITTEE - MICHAEL DALY

The 2023 Blackhawk IRTA 21 Directory has been mailed to each member. If you have not received your copy or if you have noticed any errors or omissions, please contact Mike Daly at 309-721-6005 or mjd7104@yahoo.com. Any Directory put on HOLD for "snowbirds" will be mailed to home addresses in early May, unless otherwise directed.

Several of the local companies that published our Directory in past years were unable to do so this year because of a shortage of employees. At the suggestion of several UTHS retired teachers we approached MacKenzie Jackson, UTHS Area Career Center Graphics Arts Program Coordinator. She and her students published this year's Directory. We were pleased with the opportunity to have Blackhawk retired teachers work with an active UTHS teacher and her current students to provide such an experience.

TRS UPDATE – DOUG STRAND

TRS Long-term Finances Are Stable. All is well at TRS and over 60 billion assets are under management. TRS will be careful of the economy this year. Despite several "challenges" that continue to shake the economy and the investment markets, TRS finances remain stable – with the long-term financial outlook improving moderately for the second straight year. "The System's improved funded ratio is a bright spot in a challenging investment year," said Stan Rupnik, Executive Director and Chief Investment Officer of TRS. Now that the required external audit of the System's finances in fiscal year 2022 has been completed, here is the current status of TRS:

All benefits will be paid. TRS will continue to pay all future benefits that are due to our members. This year, TRS will pay close to \$8 billion in benefits on time and in full to more than 128,000 members and their families. Benefits paid in fiscal year 2022 totaled \$7.6 billion. Total revenue during the period was \$6.3 billion. At the end of September 2022, TRS had \$60.7 billion in assets.

TRS certifies \$6 billion fiscal year 2024 state contribution. In December, the TRS Board of Trustees certified a \$6.04 billion state government contribution for the System in fiscal year 2024, which begins in July. The fiscal year 2024 state contribution is a 2.5% increase over the state's \$5.89 billion contribution for the current fiscal year. That's the smallest year-to-year increase in the state contribution in the last decade. During that period, the average annual increase in the state's appropriation for TRS averaged 6.7%. "Over the last four years, a steady commitment by Gov. JB Pritzker and the General Assembly to appropriate the full statutory contribution for TRS has helped bring more stability to the System's finances," Rupnik said.

FINANCE COMMITTEE – TREASURER’S REPORT

The Finance Committee – Mike Daly, Scott Turnipseed, Annie Robinson, Carlene Matern, Nancy McManus – met on January 4, 2023 to audit the Blackhawk IRTA Unit 21 accounts for 2022 and to create a budget for 2023. The audit and budget reports were presented to the Blackhawk Unit board on January 11, 2023 and approved. At the February 8, 2023 general meeting the 2023 budget report was presented to the general membership and approved. If any Blackhawk member wishes to have a copy of the financial statements for 2022, contact the treasurer, Nancy McManus, at 309-794-0490 or nancymcmanus12@mediacombb.net.

NECROLOGY COMMITTEE

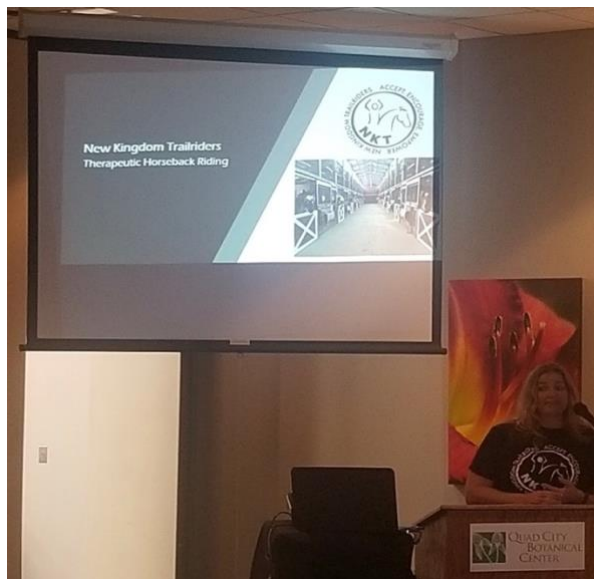
As of February 13, 2023 the Blackhawk IRTA Unit 21 has 640 members. Since our November 2022 Memorial Service, the following members have died: Mary Bartman, Beverly Coder, Willie Newenham, Gordon Cornelius, and Beulah Venable.

Reminder: At age 90, both local and state IRTA organizations grant their members LIFE designations, and no further dues are required. However, birth date confirmation is necessary for both. If you will reach age 90 or older during 2023 and have not notified us, please contact Nancy McManus (309-794-0490) with your name and birth date.

BLACKHAWK UNIT 21 – STATE UNIT OF DISTINCTION

The Blackhawk RTA Unit is again being recognized as a 2022 IRTA “Unit of Distinction.” The “Unit of Distinction” Program is a voluntary program based on the honor system that is designed to help guide and direct local unit leaders, as well as recognizing IRTA units that are the best in the State. Units receiving this award will be recognized at the October IRTA Biennial Convention, in the IRTA *ACTION*, e-newsletter, and on the IRTA Website. Our unit will also receive a gift of \$250 which the Board has dedicated to the BHU Foundation’s 2023 Grants. Congratulations!

BHU IRTA FEBRUARY MEETING - New Kingdom Trailriders





ILLINOIS RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

- A. The scholarship will be awarded to one full-time student each academic year for each IRTA Foundation area.
- B. The scholarship recipient shall receive a grant of \$1,000 each for fall and spring semesters, totaling \$2,000 for the year, to be used for educational expense.
- C. If for any reason the recipient does not conform to any or all policies, the IRTA Foundation Board has the right to revoke the scholarship
- D. All applications must be postmarked/emailed on or before March 7, prior to the applicant's junior or senior year in college, and mailed or emailed to the office of the IRTA Foundation. Recipients will be notified by April 21 of that same year.

2. ELIGIBILITY

- A. An application must be postmarked or emailed no later than March 7 and mailed or emailed to the IRTA office prior to a student's junior or senior year in college. The student must be accepted into a Teacher Certification Program in order to receive IRTA Foundation Scholarship funding.
- B. Applicants must be a resident of Illinois or have graduated from an Illinois high school.
- C. Applicants may attend school in any state as long as the school attended maintains an accredited Teacher Training program.
- D. Applicants must have and maintain at least a 3.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale.
- E. The recipient must furnish a copy of the university or college official transcript prior to receiving funds.

3. APPLICATION PROCEDURE

- A. Each applicant must complete an application provided by the IRTA Foundation.
- B. The applicant must submit a one page (double spaced) personal statement of need and reasons for applying for the scholarship.
- C. Three letters of recommendation, from other than family members, must accompany the application. Please include name of reference, applicant's relationship to the reference, and a means of contacting the reference.
- D. An official transcript from all colleges attended by the student must accompany the application.
- E. Each applicant must sign a Consent to Release Information form authorizing the IRTA Foundation to verify the accuracy of all information and documentation submitted with the scholarship application.
- F. Verification of acceptance in a teacher education program. (If a community college student, a letter of acceptance from a university or a university class schedule with a course of study indicated. If a university student, a school of study must be on the official transcript.)

Inquiries or questions, please contact: Susan Goetz at the Illinois Retired Teachers Association Foundation, 828 S Second St, Springfield, IL 62704, 1-800-728-4782 or email susan@irtaonline.org



2023 Excellence in Education Grants for Teachers

The IRTA Foundation continues to work toward the future by offering **\$42,000** in grant money to educators.

Being an educator, do you often think of this phrase — Extra Funds Needed — when it comes to planning special projects for your students? You may be finding that revenue sources are not available for such unique activities.

The Illinois Retired Teachers Association Foundation is making \$42,000 in grant money available to ALL counties in Illinois. This special grant will provide additional funds to public school educators (Pre-K through 12) so that their students will have the means to participate in special projects. The funds are not intended to provide regular curricular materials.

Please visit the **IRTA website at www.irtaonline.org** for further instructions. You can download, complete, and submit the application online from the IRTA website. All proposals must be submitted by **June 1, 2023**. A special committee will select the recipients of the grant money over the summer. Grant awards will be presented in the fall.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Illinois Retired Teachers Association (IRTA) Office by phone at 1.800.728.4782 or by e-mail at irta@irtaonline.org.

Illinois Retired Teachers Association Foundation, 828 S. Second St., 4th Floor, Springfield, IL 62704

** Chicago Public School employees are not eligible for this grant program.*

Printed January 2023

- **\$42,000 is NOW available in Grant Money!**

- **Deadline: June 1, 2023**

- **Submit your application online Today!**



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE – JOHN FLAHERTY

There have been 1,207 Senate bills filed and 2,254 House bills filed. Approximately 2,000 of these are “shell bills” and about 500 are meaningful bills. Most of you know that a “shell bill” may do nothing but is given three readings and passed over to the House or Senate. These bills may later be used for substantial changes. Frequently a “shell bill” is used for a budget bill. They just file an amendment that deletes everything in the bill and then the amendment becomes the bill. The amendment could be a 500-1,500-page amendment and is presented for a vote without most members ever having seen the new amended bill and everyone is expected to vote on it. Only in Illinois!

There are twenty-three new first-year House members and eleven first-year Senators. The total makeup of the new General Assembly is 78 Democrats and 39 Republicans in the House which is still waiting on two appointments. The Senate is 40 Democrats and 19 Republicans.

The two major issues for the Governor and the Legislators are the SAFE-T act and the newest law banning various types of guns. Both have been challenged in court and are examples of legislation being passed by the majority party without input from the minority party. It will be interesting to see how the courts rule on both of these issues.

Our legislators did manage to squeeze in a bill to give themselves a 6.9% raise at the end of session. This makes their base salary about \$80,000. They did meet for 45 days of session last year so that works out to \$1,778 dollars a day not counting the per diem they received for 40 of those days.

Thank you for all that you do for Illinois schools!

John Flaherty
Past President, Illinois Retired Teachers Association

<p>Governor: JB Pritzker 207 State House, Springfield IL 62706 Phone: 217-782-6380 Email: Governor@illinois.gov</p>	<p>US Senator Dick Durbin 711 Hart Senate Bldg., Washington D.C. 20510 1504 3rd Avenue, Suite 227, Rock Island, IL 61201 Phone: 202-224-2152 / 309-786-5173</p>
<p>Representative Emanuel Chris Welch (Dist. 7) 300 Capital Building., Springfield, IL 62706 10055 W. Roosevelt Rd., Suite E, Westchester IL 60154 Phone: 217-782-5350 / 708-450-1000 Email: repwelch@emanuelchriswelch.com</p>	<p>US Senator Tammy Duckworth 104 Cannon House Bldg., Washington DC 20515 1701 E. Woodfield Rd., Ste. 704, Schaumburg, IL 60173 Phone: 202-225-3711 / 847-413-1957</p>
<p>State Senator Neil Anderson (Dist. 47) 208 Capital Building, Springfield, IL 62706 103 College Avenue, #201, Aledo, IL 61231 Phone: 217-782-5957 / 309-230-7584 Email: Senatorneilanderson@gmail.com</p>	<p>US Representative Eric Sorensen (Dist. 17) 1205 Longworth House Bldg., Washington DC 20515 2401 4th Avenue, Rock Island IL 61201 Phone: 202-225-5905 / 309-786-3406</p>
<p>State Senator Mike Halpin (Dist. 36) Sect. C - Office J, Stratton Bldg., Springfield, IL 62706 1504 3rd Avenue, Rock Island, IL 61201 Phone: 217-782-4307 / 309-558-3612 Email: senatormikehalpin@gmail.com</p>	<p>State Representative Gregg Johnson (Dist. 72) 258-W Stratton Bldg., Springfield, IL 62706 Phone: 217-782-5970 / Email: support@repgreggjohnson.com</p>
<p>State Representative Daniel Swanson (Dist. 74) 200-3N Stratton Office Bldg., Springfield, IL 62706 275 N. Division St., Box 173, Woodhull, IL 61490 Phone: 217-782-8032 / 309-344-7474 Email: swanson@ilhousegop.org</p>	<p>State Representative Norine Hammond (Dist. 94) 314 Capitol Building., Springfield, IL 62706 331. N. Lafayette St., Box 170, Macomb, IL 61455 Phone: 217-782-0416 / 309-836-2707 Email: rephammond@macomb.com</p>



ROCK ISLAND COUNTY
RETIRED TEACHERS FOUNDATION
3324 37th Avenue Drive
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Wise Owl News

Blackhawk IRTA Unit 21, Volume MMXXII, Issue No. 57
Editor: Michael J. Daly

Committee Members: Nancy McManus, Virginia Shaffer, Annie Robinson, Sheree Rogers,
Scott Turnipseed & Joe Vermeire

Send your comments or notify us of any name, address or email changes to:
wiseowlnewsletter@gmail.com
Thank you

Printing made possible by an agreement with Tammy Muerhoff at the Regional Office of Education