



WINTER 2023

## Wise Owl News

from the Tree of Knowledge

ROCK ISLAND COUNTY RETIRED TEACHERS FOUNDATION

**BLACKHAWK UNIT 21 IRTA**



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### BLACKHAWK UNIT 21 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**

### DECEMBER 14: “Sing in the Holidays”

Rock Island High School Choir

Mr. Scott Voigt, Choir Director

Introduction by Joe Vermeire

Greeters: Pam Gross and Jane Schmidt

Servers: Karen Anderson and Gloria Wisley

### ATTENTION MEMBERS:

Please let us  
know ASAP how  
you want us to  
handle your 2024  
Directory - hold it  
until you return or  
mail it to your  
winter address.

**THANK  
YOU!!**

### JANUARY 10, 2024: BOARD MEETING ONLY

### FEBRUARY 14: “Financial Planning Today”

Chris Zimmerman, Edward R. Jones Co. Representative

Introduction by Scott Turnipseed

Greeters: Dick Cole and Mike Daly

Servers: Gloria Wisley and Jane Schmidt

Newsletter	Articles Due	Mailing Date
Spring	2/19/24	2/26/24
Summer	5/13/24	5/20/24
Fall	8/19/24	8/26/24
Winter	11/18/24	11/25/24

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – JOE VERMEIRE**

Winter, 2023 Issue and Blackhawk Unit IRTA is on the move. September's meeting found us enjoying a very tasty breakfast with New Retirees at Oakwood Country Club – looking forward to next year's already. October's meeting included Cheryl Setser, AMBA Representative, highlighting several member benefits. A complete listing of member benefits provided to IRTA members is available at: <https://www.irtaonline.org/association> November's meeting had two presentations; a talk by Don Arns of the Quad Cities Veterans Outreach Center and our own BH IRTA Annual Memorial Remembrance – thank you Kathy Killam for the touching service. Of course, song by Bobbie Lastrapes and piano by Joan Beck highlight each meeting with coffee and pastries served by Ginny Payton's crew of lovely ladies. Virginia Shaffer and her Nametag helpers welcome all in the Lobby. AND now you know that I am sliding on the proverbial Slippery Slope of Gone Too Far.... Hey, you all know that it takes a Village to run this well-oiled Unit; come join us and meet all the rest of the gang!

In December, President-Elect Janet Lockhart-Johnson will be installed and take over the helm of our Blackhawk Unit #21. I wish her and her team good sledding as she takes over a healthy 643-member organization. Let's all join in and help keep the Blackhawk Unit one of the finest in all of the State IRTA. I thank all of you for supporting me these last years and I enjoyed working with you and for you. I'll still hold my position of Past President and Regional Director, so you are not getting rid of me yet!

Again, we would like as many of our members to join us for our monthly General Membership Meetings. Your retired friends and I look forward to seeing each and every one of you. What the heck! A program, coffee and donuts and fellowship... 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,

Congratulations, to the educators and administrators who are recent retirees! Thank you for your many years of dedicated service.

Upon retirement, it is important to update your ELIS account to indicate your employment status as "Retired". To change or update your Professional Development or Employment Status, you may log into your ELIS account, look for the Profile section and change your PD/Employment status to retired for each applicable school year for your licensure cycle. If you have worked in a position that required educator licensure at any point during your licensure cycle, then you will be required to submit professional development hours for the time within active status in order to renew your license.

As a retiree, please note that there is not a fee to renew your license. However, you must have the retired status indicated in the profile section in your ELIS account for no renewal fee.

If you are interested in serving as a substitute teacher, please contact our office at 309-736-1111 and we will be happy to help you.

I greatly appreciate your continued support of our office and the services that we provide throughout our region.

Happy Holidays and wishing you good health!

Tammy Muerhoff

## BLACKHAWK UNIT 21 SEPTEMBER RETIREE BRUNCH



**New 2023 IRTA Blackhawk Unit 21 Retirees** (from the left): Mike Golding, Carla Golding, Lisa Mitchell, Cindy Murphy and Lorri Larsen. Not in attendance – Brad Burkland.

## 2024 IRTA STATE CONVENTION



**Michael Schmidt,  
IRTA 2024 STATE  
PRESIDENT**



**BLACKHAWK UNIT 21 MEMBERS:**  
Doug Strand, Mike Schmidt, Jane Schmidt, Joe Vermeire  
and Ann Vermeire

## 2023 IRTA "UNIT OF DISTINCTION" AWARD

Blackhawk Unit 21 is again recognized as an IRTA **"Unit of Distinction."** This award is a voluntary program designed to help guide and direct local unit leaders, as well as acknowledge IRTA units that are the best in the state. Units receiving the "Unit of Distinction" Award were recognized at the IRTA Biennial Convention, in the IRTA **ACTION** e-newsletter and on the IRTA website. Units will also receive a gift of \$250.

## IRTA FOUNDATION REPORT – MICHAEL DALY

On October 31, 2023 we received 2 checks from the John Deere Classic "Birdies For Charity" – \$2,320.00 was provided from the pledges made by the members of IRTA Blackhawk Unit 21 and a 7% Bonus of \$174.00 which was added to the checking account of the Foundation. The number of birdies made during the event was 1,929 and Colleen DeMay guessed 1,926 which made her the winner of our contest for \$50.00. This was announced at the General Meeting on November 8 at the Botanical Center in Rock Island. She was unable to attend but received her check in the mail. Our present balance is \$5,212.78 with another transaction of sending a check to the "Honor Flight Program" for \$261.00 which was collected during the meeting.

The Annual Meeting of the Executive Board will be on January 10, 2024 following the IRTA Unit 21 Board Meeting. In attendance will be Michael Daly, Executive Director; Nancy McManus, Treasurer; Joe Vermeire, Past President; Annie Robinson, Past President; Janet Lockhart-Johnson, President; Nancy Licko, Vice President; and Lynn Keck/Regina Nelson, Co-Secretaries.

Decisions will be made which non-profit organization or secondary school will receive 2024 awards and the amount of the grant. If you wish to suggest a new agency or charity, please contact Michael Daly by phone: (309) 721-6005 or by email: [mjd7104@yahoo.com](mailto:mjd7104@yahoo.com). I will send them a Donation Request Form to fill out for consideration that must be received back to me by December 18, 2023.

## **MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE – NANCY MCMANUS**

As of November 14, 2023, the Blackhawk IRTA Unit has 643 members. Since the August newsletter was published, we have welcomed nine new members: MOLINE – Mike Golding, Lorri Larsen, Elizabeth Moseley, and Kristen Young; UTHS – Brad Burklund, Carla Golding, and Doug Greer – UTHS; and BLOOMINGTON – Mary Pat Brady and Cindy Woods. We thank them for joining our efforts to protect the benefits of retired Illinois educators. During the same time five members have died: Fred Houlton, Earl Wear, M. Claire McKinzie, Paul Parker and Marvel Lewis.

Blackhawk Unit Dues for 2024 are now being collected. At present 461 members have already completed their renewals for 2024. To guarantee inclusion in the 2024 Directory, local Blackhawk Unit Dues (\$15.00) must be paid by December 31, 2023. Dues should be mailed to the Treasurer at:

**Nancy McManus  
3620 – 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue  
Rock Island, Illinois 61201**

Make checks payable to **Blackhawk Unit 21 – IRTA**. Please verify that your name, address and phone number are correctly listed in the 2023 Directory and include the following information with your check:

**Name(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

**NOTE:** If you will be 90 or older in 2023 or 2024, contact Nancy McManus at (309) 794-0490 with your name and date of birth. At age 90, both local and State IRTA Membership dues will be listed as LIFE and no further dues will be due, HOWEVER, your birthdate must be filed with the state IRTA office.

## **NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE – LYNNE BRANDENBURG**

At the October General Meeting a slate of officers for 2024 was presented to the members with no nominations received from the floor. At the November General Meeting the slate of officers was voted on by acclamation – President: Janet Lockhart-Johnson, Vice President: Nancy Licko, Treasurer: Nancy McManus, and Co-Secretaries: Lynn Keck/Regina Nelson. At the December General Meeting they will be properly installed to take office on January 1, 2024. Congratulations to all!

## NECROLOGY COMMITTEE

*November is a time for us to reflect.*

During the November 8, 2023 meeting of the Blackhawk Unit of the IRTA Kathy Killam and Kathie Bekel recognized 19 members (active or inactive) who died during the period of November 2022 – October 2023. In the ceremony a tribute poem, written by David Collins, was read and candles were lit for each of those listed below. A larger candle was lit in the memory of those teachers who were not Blackhawk members but had given many years to the education profession. Joan Beck provided the musical accompaniment.

**“To the lesson plan of life there is an end, and in the past year 19 of our colleagues in this organization have left us. Just as we have been enriched by their presence, we are diminished in their absence. It is only right that we reflect on how that special person so many called TEACHER, brightened the lives of young people.”**

(From **TEACHER** written by David Collins)

### IN MEMORIAM

Mary Bartman	Nov. 2022	Steve Pyevich	July 2023
Patti McNaught	Nov. 2022	Marguerite Pierce	July 2023
Fred McGlaughlin	Nov. 2022	Craig Whitlock	July 2023
Bev Coder	Dec. 2022	Steve Uzelac	Sept. 2023
Willie Newenham	Jan. 2023	Fred Houlton	Sept. 2023
Gordon Cornelius	Jan. 2023	Earl Wear	Sept. 2023
Beulah Venable	Jan. 2023	Larry Nahrgang	Oct. 2023
Dorothy Ward	May 2023	M. Claire McKinzie	Oct. 2023
Harvey Erikson	May 2023	Paul Parker	Oct. 2023
Ben McAdams	July 2023		

### DIRECTORY COMMITTEE - MIKE DALY

#### Attention Snowbirds!

Many retirees are planning winter getaways. As we organize the 2024 Directory for January publication, here's a reminder for those of you who leave without sending us your winter address. If the Post Office cannot deliver your Directory to its labeled address, the Directory is discarded. For you to receive a replacement, we must pay a postage notice and have another Directory printed for you. There are options to avoid this issue:

- if you prefer to have the Directory mailed to your winter address, please send us that address, or
- if you prefer to have it held until you return to your home address, please tell us the date you plan to return, and we will mail it then.

Contact: Nancy McManus by email - [nancymcmanus12@mediacombb.net](mailto:nancymcmanus12@mediacombb.net), or call (309) 794-0490; or email Mike Daly at [mjd7104@yahoo.com](mailto:mjd7104@yahoo.com), or call (309) 721-6005. Thanks to those who follow these suggestions – we appreciate the money and time you save us.

NOTE: Only **one Directory** will be mailed to husband-and-wife members unless we are notified of the desire for two copies.





## **PRESIDENT-ELECT MESSAGE – JANET LOCKHART-JOHNSON**

I am Janet Lockhart-Johnson the new president of the Blackhawk Retired Teachers Unit 21. I consider it a privilege and an honor to take office. Many of you don't know me so thought I would share my bio.

I retired from Rock Island/Milan District #41 after 42 years of service. I taught sixth graders Language Arts at Longfellow School, twenty years in the same classroom. I am a lifelong resident of Rock Island and a graduate of Rock Island High School. I received my Bachelor of Arts Degree from Tougaloo College, Tougaloo, MS and a Master of Science Degree in Educational Leadership from Western Illinois University.

I was married to the late Julious Johnson for 44 years, who also was a retiree from District #41. We have 2 sons; Justin is an engineer and Joshua is a teacher. Both are married. Justin's wife Lori is a special education teacher at Rock Island Academy. Joshua's wife Tiffany is a physical therapist. They have 4 children.

Past President, Annie Robinson convinced me to take the presidency because of my past experiences. I have been president or chair of several organizations and clubs. Just to name a few Friends of Trinity, Rock Island Human Rights Commission, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc., Quad Cities Negro Heritage Society, and Alpha Delta Kappa, an honorary organization for women educators.

I strongly believe in service and using my talents to help others in any way I can. My motto is "If I can help somebody as I travel through then my living shall not be in vain."

## **INCOMING IRTA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – JESSICA HOSELTON**



Dear IRTA Members:

The Illinois Retired Teachers Executive Committee is honored to introduce Jessica Hoselton as your new Executive Director. Ms. Hoselton was chosen amongst many qualified candidates that applied for the position.

Jessica founded Bold New Strategies, LLC in 2018. The firm provides legislative and association management services to statewide associations. In addition to providing legislative representation to several associations, Ms. Hoselton also serves as the Executive Director for those associations.

Jessica received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Southern Illinois University and a Master of Arts degree in Public Policy and Administration from Purdue University.

We look forward to many years of her leadership at the IRTA!

Sincerely,  
IRTA Executive Committee

## LEGISLATIVE REPORT – JOHN FLAHERTY

There is nothing happening in Springfield as I write this. The veto session is over and our legislators are back home.

This summer they had hearings about what the fix should be for Tier II workers. Anyone who was first hired after January 1, 2011 is a Tier II. They cannot get full benefits until age 67. They cannot use any sick days towards their retirement credit. Their calculation is based on the average of the eight best consecutive years in their last ten years. They will not get a 3% compounded yearly raise but will instead get ½ of the yearly inflation rate. Since Tier II passed, Illinois has seen far fewer out-of-state educators looking to get certified in Illinois.

No legislation is currently proposed to fix Tier II, but solutions will be discussed when the new session begins in January. They will not move Tier II people to a Tier I type structure (like we have), but some changes may be made. The IRTA will support anything that improves Tier II.

Our pensions are still safe. We have over 60 billion dollars in TRS. We are not hearing any talk about pension problems at the present.

Our IRTA will monitor all legislative bills that are filed and keep a close watch on anything that could impair our pensions or our benefits.

For now, just enjoy the holidays and thank you for belonging to our IRTA!

**Thank you for belonging to our IRTA!**

John Flaherty  
Past President, Illinois Retired Teachers Association

<b>Governor: JB Pritzker</b> 207 State House, Springfield IL 62706 Phone: 217-782-6380 Email: Governor@illinois.gov	<b>US Senator Dick Durbin</b> 711 Hart Senate Bldg., Washington D.C. 20510 1504 3rd Avenue, Suite 227, Rock Island, IL 61201 Phone: 202-224-2152 / 309-786-5173
<b>Representative Emanuel Chris Welch</b> (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	<b>US Senator Tammy Duckworth</b> 104 Cannon House Bldg., Washington DC 20515 1701 E. Woodfield Rd., Ste. 704, Schaumburg, IL 60173 Phone: 202-225-3711 / 847-413-1957
<b>State Senator Neil Anderson</b> (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	<b>US Representative Eric Sorensen</b> (Dist. 17) 1205 Longworth House Bldg., Washington DC 20515 2401 4th Avenue, Rock Island IL 61201 Phone: 202-225-5905 / 309-786-3406
<b>State Senator Mike Halpin</b> (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	<b>State Representative Gregg Johnson</b> (Dist. 72) 258-W Stratton Bldg., Springfield, IL 62706  Phone: 217-782-5970 / Email: support@repgreggjohnson.com
<b>State Representative Daniel Swanson</b> (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	<b>State Representative Norine Hammond</b> (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: rep Hammond@macomb.com



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### Wise Owl News

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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](mailto:wiseowlnewsletter@gmail.com)

*Thank you*

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