



FALL 2022

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

SEPTEMBER 14: "WELCOMING NEW RETIREES TO IRTA"

9:00 AM – Breakfast at Oakwood Country Club

Speakers: Jim Bachman, John Flaherty, Doug Strand & Mike Schmidt
Introduction by Joe Vermeire

Greeters: Virginia Shaffer, Nancy Licko, Virginia Payton & Bobbie Lastrapes

OCTOBER 12: "Flying ... Rules of the Sky – QC Airport Update"

Speaker: Ms. Ashleigh Davis, PR & Marketing Director
Introduction by Scott Turnipseed

Greeters: Elaine Hofman & Janet DeDecker
Servers: Gloria Wisley & Diann Moore

NOVEMBER 9: "Veterans Program – Annual Memorial Service and Honor Flights Collection"

Speaker: To Be Announced
Introduction by John Flaherty
Greeters: Debbie Mueller & Andy Jones
Servers: Julie Schutt & Teri Stickler

ATTENTION MEMBERS:

Please help
build our
membership
and try to attend
the Breakfast
for Retirees.

**THANK
YOU!!**

Newsletter	Articles Due	Mailing Date
Winter	11/14/22	11/22/22

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – JOE VERMEIRE

Fall 2022 Issue and exciting times lay ahead for Blackhawk Unit 21 IRTA members! We are looking forward to our September 14th New Retirees Breakfast at the Oakwood Country Club. A delicious breakfast (with Sticky Buns!), friendly faces and an informative program await your attendance. Grab a friend and please make your reservations by using the registration form found in this newsletter. Sticky Buns! The Breakfast Meeting will feature IRTA Executive Director, Jim Bachman, traveling from Springfield, to bring us the latest news. And of course, Sticky Buns! We need your participation to make this a successful and safe event. And you'll like the Sticky Buns as much as I do! Promise!

Vice-President Scott Turnipseed has again put together fun and educational programming for our monthly QC Botanical Center meetings. October 12th will find us "Flying...Rules of the Sky – QC Airport Update." November 9th is our "Veterans Program and Memorial Service." And of course, December 14th will be our "Holiday Program" with MHS' Band Director Zach Morton and some of his instrumental music proteges. Which reminds me of last June's fantastic program when we were blessed with RIHS's Chamber Singers and Choral Director Scott Voigt. Standing Ovation!!! They were soooo good! We look forward to seeing many of you returning to IRTA and friends. Yes, IRTA goals are as vital and necessary as ever and we value your involvement, membership and having fun.

Involvement and membership are very important. At the August monthly Board Meeting, I was informed that there are 984 state educator pension annuitants in Rock Island County and 66% of them are Blackhawk Unit 21 IRTA members! Wow...Terrific!!! 653 retired Rock Island County educators understand the importance of membership in an organization that continuously fights to protect their pension and benefits. And don't be naïve; constant vigilance is necessary. We can't all be down in Springfield looking through thousands of bills and checking politicians seeking to balance budgets. IRTA is there and our involvement and membership support those efforts. \$15 membership dues for Blackhawk Unit 21 are a small cost, but a good investment, to stay informed. And, our numbers help local politicians see our voting power. Please continue that support and let's get that membership up to 984!

God's Blessings, Joe

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



Dear Retired Educators and Administrators,

I hope your summer was wonderful! Our RIROE team looks forward to serving you with your educator licensure and other available services. Please reach out to us if we may be of assistance and support to you.

As a friendly reminder: If your educator license has expired as of June 30, 2022, then you may renew and register your license within your Educator Licensure Information Systems (ELIS) account. There is no fee to do so. For assistance with the renewal of your educator licensure, please contact our Licensure Specialist, Brandi Schwanke, at brandi.schwanke@riroe.com or by phone at 309-736-1111.

Thank you for your ongoing support for our office and our team! It is deeply appreciated.

Tammy Muerhoff

NEW STATE EDUCATION LAWS OF INTEREST

Post-Retirement Work Limits - Public Act 102-709 (House Bill 5472) expands the number of days during the just-completed 2021-2022 school year that retired TRS members could have taught school full-time without that service negatively affecting the payment of their pensions. The former 120 days limit was increased to 140 days. The current alternative 600 hours limit was increased to 700 hours. In the 2022-2023 school year, the limits revert back to 120 days and 600 hours. The new law is effective immediately.

The following new laws are designed to help ease the current classroom teacher shortage in Illinois by simplifying the path to a teacher's license or a position in the classroom. These laws affect TRS because changes to licensure requirements may boost the number of active TRS members.

Teaching License Reinstatement – Public Act 102-0710 (House Bill 4246) reduces the fine inactive educators must pay to reinstate a lapsed teaching license from the State Board of Education to \$50. The old penalty was \$500. The new law is effective immediately.

Substitute Teaching Licenses – Public Act 102-0711 (House Bill 4798) – will allow currently-enrolled college education majors to obtain a substitute teaching license. To be eligible, students must have completed 90 or more credit hours. Under current law, candidates for substitute teaching licenses must hold a bachelor's degree or higher. The new law is effective on January 1, 2023.

IRTA FOUNDATION – MICHAEL DALY

As of August 10th, our bank statement has a balance of \$2,316.03. The "Birdies For Charity" pledges and bonus check will be distributed to us by October 31, 2022. We had 37 members participate in making pledges and payments to the John Deere Classic for our Foundation (Blackhawk 1747). Eighty-five percent of the pledges for non-profit organizations have been paid according to the JDC database. September 9th is their deadline for final payments. This year, we are guaranteed a 5% bonus on amounts up to our prior year pledge total. Additional bonus dollars will be based on tournament revenues, special events, direct donations, and a matching grant from the John Deere Foundation. Our annual Blackhawk IRTA contest on the "Guess the Number of Birdies" went to one member who chose to give the \$50.00 check back to the IRTA Foundation. The member also chose to remain anonymous. The total number of Birdies made in 2022 was 2,041. That was 136 more than the event in 2021. The final accounting with the actual amount will appear in the Winter newsletter.

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE – LYNNE BRANDENBURG

The Nomination Committee has met and is happy to share the slate of Blackhawk Unit 21 officers for the 2023 calendar year. This list will be presented for a membership vote at the October meeting:

President – Joe Vermeire
Vice President – Scott Turnipseed
Secretary/Website – Nancy Licko
Treasurer – Nancy McManus

IRTA SEPTEMBER BREAKFAST – MICHAEL SCHMIDT

Do you remember the 2021 breakfast at Oakwood? If you don't remember, it means that you weren't there! All of us retired IRTA colleagues want to see you again and this year's breakfast is a great chance to do so. It's a wonderful opportunity to see and be seen, a great meal, and beautiful atmosphere. So, why not join us retirees at the Oakwood Country Club on Wednesday, September 14th? That's the club where Ed McMahon used to hang out drinking while the PGA golf pros did all the work. (That's before Deere Run was built.)

Featured at this year's September Breakfast will be the IRTA's Executive Director, Jim Bachman coming from Springfield to bring us up to date on the actions taken by this year's legislature, which are many. Also scheduled to attend and coming from his home in Coal Valley is the IRTA immediate State Past President, John Flaherty who will gladly share his observations about our organization. Our own Doug Strand will also bring us up to date on TRS issues as he is one of the two retirees who've been elected statewide as a TRS Trustee.

If you have any retired educator friends who do not yet belong to the IRTA, invite* them along for a free breakfast so that they can learn the value of an IRTA membership. Although we will be sending letters of invitation to the 2022 retirees, should you know any of those educators from districts in Rock Island County invite* them, too. (It's free for them.) We are also inviting the retirees from 2020 and 2021 who have not yet joined the IRTA. (It's free for them, too.) If you know any of them, you might as well invite* them also. (As a current Blackhawk Unit member your cost for the breakfast is only \$20.00.) Just fill out the form below, mail it in with a check, and look forward to breakfast in what has become our favorite country club location. You'll enjoy the same plated breakfast as last year. AND, even though inflation has been skyrocketing over this past year the cost has NOT increased! (Nor have the Blackhawk Unit dues.)

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE IRTA SEPTEMBER BREAKFAST

DATE: Wednesday, September 14, 2022

PLACE: Oakwood Country Club, Coal Valley, Illinois

TIME: 9:00 AM

PROGRAM: Welcoming New Retirees to IRTA

RESERVATION PAYMENT IS DUE BY TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2022

Please complete the form below and send it with check payable to BLACKHAWK UNIT – IRTA to: Virginia Payton, 8815 – 19th Street W., Rock Island, Illinois 61201. If you have any questions, call Virginia Payton at 309-787-5932 or Mike Schmidt at 309-762-4650.

NUMBER of Breakfast Reservations: _____	@ \$20.00 = _____
ANNUAL 2023 BLACKHAWK UNIT DUES	@ \$15.00 = _____
(No dues are needed for Local Life Members)	
AMOUNT (Check ONLY enclosed)	TOTAL = _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

PHONE: _____

* Please include the names of any GUEST retirees you are bringing.

TREASURER'S REPORT – NANCY McMANUS

As of August 10, 2022 IRTA's Blackhawk Unit 21 has 653 members. Since publishing The Wise Owl newsletter in May, Herbert Thompson and Karin Kahler passed in July 2022.

Beginning with the September Breakfast, 2023 dues for IRTA Blackhawk Unit 21 will be collected. **To be included in the 2023 Directory, local Blackhawk Unit 21 Dues (\$15.00) must be paid by December 31, 2022.** Dues can be paid at the General Meetings in September, October, November or December, or may be mailed to the Treasurer at:

**Nancy McManus
3620 – 33rd Avenue
Rock Island IL 61201**

Make checks payable to **Blackhawk Unit 21 – IRTA**. Please include the following information with your checks:

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

NOTE: If you will be 90 or older in 2022 or 2023, please notify Nancy McManus at 1-309-794-0490. At age 90, both State and Local Memberships are credited as LIFE and no further dues will be collected, **BUT** the State IRTA office must be notified with birthdate verification.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AT UNITYPOINT-TRINITY

As the new Department Manager of the Volunteer and Retail Services at UnityPoint Health-Trinity (hospitals), Tulisa Bollinger is trying to connect with community partners to expand their volunteer pool. A few retired teachers now serve as volunteers, but Tulisa is hoping to connect with others. She was a presenter at our June 8th Blackhawk Unit 21 General Meeting.

UnityPoint Health-Trinity has many areas that need coverage across their three Quad City campuses, including in the gift shops, surgical waiting area, lobby, as a runner throughout the hospital, and at fundraising events. There are a lot of shifts to fill, so volunteers can cover one hospital or multiple ones. To see a listing of these opportunities, or to apply on-line, you can simply go to: www.unitypoint.org/quadcities/volunteers-and-friends and review the section entitled, "Ways to Volunteer."

Please be sure to specify areas of interest, as well as preferred campus(es) so their teams can help find a position that works best for you. If you would rather talk to one of their amazing Volunteer Coordinators, you can call 309-779-2343 and someone would be happy to assist you.

All of the retired teachers that currently volunteer at the hospital fully embrace the FOCUS values that are expected of the teams, so adding more of these passionate individuals to the pool would be phenomenal! If you wish more information, you can also contact Tulisa Bollinger, 309-779-5205.

TRS MEMBER PRE-RETIREMENT MEETING – Fall 2022

September 14, 2022 – 4:30 pm – Moline High School Cafeteria

TRS and the RIROE will host an In-Person meeting at 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, September 14th for members that are designed to explain the retirement process and to provide members with information about disability, death and insurance benefits. The Blackhawk Unit #21 of the Illinois Retired Teachers Association will be on hand to give invaluable information on its organization and benefits.

The presentations will have information for both Tier 1 and Tier 2 members. As a reminder, Tier 1 members first contributed before Jan. 1, 2011 and Tier 2 members first contributed on or after Jan. 1, 2011.

In mid- to late August, the virtual schedule and in-person meeting locations will be available on the TRS website and an email alert will be sent to members who are close to retirement with both meeting schedules. You will need to register for a virtual meeting. No registration is required for in-person meetings.

TRAIL MEDICARE ADVANTAGE ENROLLEMENT PERIOD – Fall 2022



The TRAIL Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug (MAPD) Open Enrollment Period for the 2023 plan year will be held this fall from **mid-October through mid-November**. Most TRIP members who are eligible for Medicare Parts A and B are required to enroll in one of the TRAIL MAPD plans offered in her/his county of residence in order to keep TRIP insurance coverage. In the fall, CMS will send out information about the **TRAIL** Program.

If you are already enrolled in TRAIL, you have two options:

- You can make a change to your TRAIL insurance coverage or add a dependent. The fall Open Enrollment Period is the time when you can make that change.
- You can do nothing and maintain your current TRAIL coverage. Your insurance coverage will automatically continue as it is in 2023.

Visit the Total Retiree Advantage Illinois (TRAIL) Program page on the MyBenefits website at [MyBenefits.illinois.gov](https://mybenefits.illinois.gov) for more information.

TRAIL Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug (MAPD) Initial Enrollment for Medicare Eligible Members

The State of Illinois requires all retirees, annuitants and survivors to enroll into a healthcare program called Total Retiree Advantage Illinois (TRAIL) effective the date the member becomes eligible to enroll in Medicare, either due to age or disability. This program provides Medicare-eligible members and their covered Medicare-eligible dependents comprehensive medical and prescription drug coverage through TRAIL Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug (commonly referred to as “MAPD”) plans. TRAIL MAPD plans are Medicare-approved plans that combine the different parts of Medicare into one plan. Since these plans are a type of Medicare, members must continue to pay federal Medicare premiums to the Social Security Administration even after enrolling into a TRAIL MAPD Plan.

For members who are newly-eligible for Medicare, you have two opportunities for the TRAIL MAPD enrollment:

1. **Initial Enrollment (IE):** Members can enroll within 60-days of the 65th birthday (of the youngest enrollee). Initial enrollment is a one-time offering. For more details, read the Medicare Checklist online at: trsil.org/Medicare-Checklist
2. **Annual Enrollment (AE):** Members can enroll within a 30-day window mid-October through mid-November each fall.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE – JOHN FLAHERTY

Elections are happening in November. Our IRTA Political Action Committee (PAC) meets on August 17th. Our IRTA PAC Board meets on August 18th and officially approves the recommendations from the PAC Committee. Those results will be sent out so that you have the IRTA Endorsed Candidate list before voting begins. To be endorsed, the candidates must submit an application for endorsement. The IRTA PAC Committee will assess each candidate using the returned applications, voting record (if the candidate has held office), opinions from local units, and input from Executive Director Jim Bachman, lobbyist Andrew Bodewes, and Legislative Coordinator Courtney Hayes.

You will see many ads on television, in newspapers, and in your mailboxes. Take time before you vote to get to know the candidates in your area.

On the federal level there is a bill to repeal the WEP/GPO provisions that affect our Social Security. IF this bill is called for a vote in the House, it would change the Social Security offsets for people who do not yet collect Social Security. The effective date of the bill would be December 2021. There are enough sponsors but past history has shown us that legislators are willing to sign onto a bill but do not want it called for a vote.

Thank you for belonging to the Blackhawk Unit and our state IRTA!

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: 708-450-1104 / 708-450-1000 Email: repwelch@emanuelchriswelch.com</p>	<p>US Senator Tammy Duckworth 104 Cannon House Office 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. 36) M103-D Capital Building, Springfield, IL 62706 1523 47th Avenue - Suite 2, Moline, IL 61265 Phone: 217-782-5957 / 309-736-7084 Email: Senatorneilanderson@gmail.com</p>	<p>US Representative Cheri Bustos (Dist. 17) 1009 Longworth House Office, Washington DC 20515 2401 4th Avenue, Rock Island IL 61201 Phone: 202-225-5905 / 309-786-3406</p>
<p>State Senator Brian Stewart (Dist. 45) 105-C Capitol Building, Springfield, IL 62706 50 W. Douglas St., Suite 1001, Freeport IL 61032 Phone: 217-782-0180 / 815-284-0045 Email: Senatorbrianstewart@gmail.com</p>	<p>State Representative Mike Halpin (Dist. 72) 242 A-W Stratton Office Bldg., Springfield, IL 62706 1504 3rd Avenue, Rock Island, IL 61201 Phone: 217-782-5970 / 309-558-3612 Email: RepHalpin@gmail.com</p>
<p>State Representative Tony McCombie (Dist. 71) 205 A-N Stratton Office Bldg., Springfield, IL 62706 9317B Illinois Rt. 84, Savanna, IL 61704 Phone: 217-782-3992 / 815-632-7384 Email: McCombie@ilhousegop.gov</p>	



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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

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