



SPRING 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**

### MARCH 9: "TRS OFFICE REPORT – Is Our Pension Safe?"

Mr. Richard Frankenfeld, State TRS Office Representative  
Introduction by Doug Strand  
Greeters: Veronica Swift & Kathy McGrath  
Servers: Lynne Brandenburg & Kathleen Farrell

### ATTENTION MEMBERS:

The IRTA 2022 Directory was mailed in January. Please notify us if you did not receive a copy or your address has changed.

**THANK  
YOU!**

### APRIL 13: "BENEFITS OF YOUR MEMBERSHIP"

Ms. Nancy Cramer, AMBA Representative  
Introduction by Gloria Wisley  
Greeters: Janet Johnson & Carol Clay  
Servers: Alice Traylor & Joan Beck

### MAY 11: "Dr. Seuss ... Who???"

Dr. Robert White, Retired Professor from Blackhawk College  
Introduction by Sheree Rogers  
Greeters: Debra Singley & Kathy Womack  
Servers: Kathie Bekel & Nancy Luckenbill

Newsletter	Articles Due	Mailing Date
Summer	05/16/22	05/23/22
Fall	08/15/22	08/22/22
Winter	11/14/22	11/21/22

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

Spring, 2022 Issue and Blackhawk Unit 21 IRTA is on the move. December's meeting found us being entertained by the Rockridge High School's Show Choir and a visit from the North Pole's Red Suited Couple. As usual, we took January's General Meeting off with important work still being done by the Blackhawk Board, Audit/Budget Committees and Foundation Board. February's meeting had an informative session with Jack Cullen, Rock Island's Downtown Revitalization Director, explaining the exciting plans for their upcoming development. IRTA Past State President John Flaherty also brought us up-to-date on the state IRTA's January 24<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.irtaonline.org) for details).

In March, Program Director Vice President Scott Turnipseed has TRS' Director of Outreach, Rich Frankenfeld, coming to assure us that even during these tumultuous times our investments continue to be vigilantly secured. April brings Nancy Cramer, AMBA Benefits Representative, traveling from Springfield to highlight all the great benefits available to us through our membership in IRTA. Who knows...a new hearing aid might be in my future! You can find details of the above and more in this newsletter ([www.ambadentalvision.com/il-retired/educators](http://www.ambadentalvision.com/il-retired/educators)). We would love to have you come join us.

So, if you haven't already noticed, we would like to have as many members attend our monthly Membership Meetings as possible. Get vaccinated, get boosted, and bring your mask! Your retired friends and I look forward to seeing each and every one of you. What the heck! An informative educational program, great coffee, scrumptious donuts, congenial fellowship and more.... for just \$15 a year! You can't beat it!

God's Blessings, Joe

### **BLACKHAWK UNIT 21 NAMED 2021 RTA "UNIT OF DISTINCTION"**

Jim Bachman, state IRTA Executive Director, has recognized Blackhawk Unit 21 RTA as a 2021 Illinois RTA "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 local units that are the best in Illinois. Units receiving the "Unit of Distinction" Award will be recognized at the IRTA Biennial Convention, in its ACTION e-newsletter, and the state IRTA website. In addition, local units will also receive a gift of \$250.

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



Dear Retired Educators and Administrators,

As Spring is almost here, it is important to note that April 1<sup>st</sup> marks the first day in which individuals may begin to renew their Educator License if the expiration date on that license is June 30, 2022.

When logging into your Educator Licensure Information System (ELIS) account, please check that “Retired” status has been marked for the applicable years in which you have been retired. This guarantees that if any hours of professional development are required for time worked within a contract position requiring licensure during your licensure cycle, then the required professional development hours are prorated. Also, this helps ensure that fees are not assessed for Licensure Renewal since retirees are not assessed a Renewal and Registration fee.

If you have questions regarding educator licensure, please contact Brandi Schwanke, Licensure Specialist, at 309-736-1111 or by email at [brandi.schwanke@riroe.com](mailto:brandi.schwanke@riroe.com).

Thank you for your ongoing support of youth and educators in our communities.

Wishing you all the very best and good health,  
Tammy L. Muerhoff

**MEMBERSHIP – NECROLOGY COMMITTEES**

As of February 9, 2022 Blackhawk IRTA Unit 21 has 657 members. Since our November 2021 IRTA Memorial service, the following members have died: Rick Amy, Ruth Potter, Lisa Toalson, Charles White, Dick Jennings, Dorothea Duncan and Carylrae Clinge. The following individuals have joined our organization: Beth Jaeke and Paula Bryan-Strandlund – Rock Island, Stephanie Jordan – Moline and Christine Turnipseed and Ann Vermeire – Associates.

Reminder: If you will reach age 90 or older in 2022 and have not yet notified us, call Nancy McManus (309-794-0490) with your name and birth date information. At age 90, both Local and State memberships can be designated as LIFE, with no further dues collected. However, birth date confirmation must be sent to the State IRTA and TRS Offices.

## RIC RETIRED TEACHERS FOUNDATION – MICHAEL DALY

The Blackhawk Unit 21 Foundation is again supporting the John Deere Classic's (June 27 - July 3, 2022) "Birdies for Charity" fundraiser. Our Foundation will receive 100% of the donations pledged to them in this program, plus a BONUS from the "Birdies for Charity" Bonus Fund (a guaranteed 5% match). More information and pledge forms will accompany the Summer Newsletter which will be mailed on May 23, 2022. For those who annually support this event, I will be sending you the Pledge forms and additional information. Please follow the included directions. Thank you for your support and cooperation.

On January 12th the Foundation Board met and sent out seven \$200 grants to area high schools for Student Achievement and twelve \$150 grants to non-profit community organizations recommended by our membership. As of January 31, 2022 the Foundation's Checking Account balance was \$3,386.03. Also, the Foundation (which is a 501 C-3 not for profit organization) agreed to be the mailing agent for Blackhawk IRTA Unit 21's quarterly newsletter and annual Directory and added this change to the By-Laws. This will help our unit reduce mailing expenses by half.

### FINANCE COMMITTEE – TREASURER'S REPORT

The Finance Committee (Mike Daly, Joe Vermeire, Scott Turnipseed, Carlene Matern, Annie Robinson, Nancy McManus) met on January 7, 2022 to audit Blackhawk IRTA Unit 21 accounts for 2021 and to create a budget for 2022. The Audit and Budget Reports were presented to the Board on January 12, 2022 and approved. The budget was then presented to the general membership on February 9, 2022 and approved. That budget follows below. If anyone wishes a copy of the 2021 Financial Statement, contact Treasurer Nancy McManus at 309-794-0490.

<b>Blackhawk IRTA Unit 21 – 2022 Budget</b>	
Hospitality Room	\$ 2,500.00
Hospitality Food	\$ 900.00
Program	\$ 650.00
Travel/Convention	\$ 2,000.00
Directory	\$ 1,000.00
Newsletters	\$ 1,000.00
Office Expenses	\$ 300.00
Membership	\$ 300.00
Area 1 Conference	\$ 250.00
Cheer/Benevolence	\$ 100.00
IRTA Necrology	\$ 200.00
IRTA Scholarship	\$ 200.00
IRTA Foundation	\$ 300.00
RICRT Foundation	\$ 700.00
Legal Defense Fund	0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 10,400.00</b>

## **STATE IRTA FINANCE COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT**

Loryann Eis will continue to serve as the Area 1 member of the state IRTA Finance Committee. This committee consists of six members who represent each of the six areas of the state and is chaired by the elected state IRTA Treasurer. Loryann first served as the Area 1 member of the state IRTA Finance Committee from 2005-2013. In 2008 she was appointed to a four-year term as Region 8 Director. In 2014 she was elected to a three-year term as Area 1 Representative and consequently sat on the state IRTA Executive and Foundation Boards.

## **STATE IRTA MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIR APPOINTMENT**



Newly elected State IRTA President Bill Funkhouser has asked Michael Schmidt, Blackhawk IRTA Unit 21, to continue to serve as Chair of the state IRTA Membership Committee. Volunteering is in Michael's blood and explains why Blackhawk Unit 21 selected him as its 2021 Honoree at the IRTA State Convention last October.

As his Blackhawk IRTA Unit 21 President's term was winding down in 2014, new IRTA State President, Bob Pinkerton, appointed him to the State IRTA Constitution Committee. When Pinkerton's term ended, his successor David Davison asked Michael to chair the State IRTA Membership Committee, a position he's held during the presidencies of Davison, Roger Hampton, and John Flaherty. In his position, Michael will work with the six state IRTA Membership Committee Area Representatives.

## **DIRECTORY COMMITTEE – MICHAEL DALY**

The 2022 IRTA Blackhawk Unit 21 Directory was mailed on January 31, 2022. If you did not receive your copy or if you noticed any errors or omissions, please contact Mike Daly at [mjd7104@yahoo.com](mailto:mjd7104@yahoo.com) or 309-721-6005. Any Directory put on HOLD for "snowbirds" will be mailed to home addresses in May unless otherwise directed.

## **REGION 8 LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER NEEDED**

The state IRTA is looking for a Blackhawk Unit 21 member to serve on the state IRTA's Legislative Committee for Region 8 (our area). This committee reviews legislation and recommends a position to the IRTA Board of Directors. Committee members also meet with legislators to discuss IRTA issues. If you are interested in serving on the committee or have questions, you may contact John Flaherty or Joe Vermeire. Thank you for your consideration. It's political season!!!



## 2022 Excellence in Education Grants for Teachers

The Illinois Retired Teachers Association Foundation continues to work toward the future by offering \$36,500 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 \$36,500 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](http://www.irtaonline.org) for further instructions. You can download, complete, and submit the application online from the IRTA website. Please submit your application to the Foundation online. All proposals must be submitted by June 1, 2022. 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](mailto: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 2022*

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE – JOHN FLAHERTY

The Governor has given his budget address and has promised almost a billion dollars in tax cuts. That means that this is an election year and every state governor is looking for ways to get re-elected. Governor Pritzker did make clear that these are one-time tax breaks. As other states are doing, Illinois is using COVID money to replace other state funds and we all realize that we should not expect the next budget to look anything like the proposal for 2023.

The main issues in Springfield seem to be crime, COVID restrictions, taxes and the effect that inflation has on us. Both the House and Senate want to have a budget passed by the end of May so legislators can get back home to campaign. More than 9,800 bills have been introduced this session and many of them focus on issues that will help current legislators get reelected.

Be prepared for constant political ads on television, radio, and by mail. The last governor’s election was the most expensive in Illinois history. This year the focus will be on Democratic Governor Pritzker (worth about 3.7 billion dollars) versus the Republican candidate funded by Ken Griffin. Ken Griffin is listed as the richest man in Illinois and is worth somewhere between ten and twenty-two billion dollars. The campaign will be fierce and probably set a new record for election spending in Illinois.

Many of you have read that the State IRTA has filed a lawsuit over the under-funding of the Teachers’ Health Insurance Security (THIS) Fund. The 2023 budget proposes a cut of over \$47,000,000 to this fund. With matching funds and current teacher contributions, this amounts to a \$100,000,000 cut. IRTA had an actuarial study done that shows that THIS Fund could be depleted as soon as 2023. This affects only retired teachers, not those who are on the State Insurance Program. The lawsuit notes that educators are the only group within the five state pension systems who are required to pay a portion of their insurance (25% of the cost).

Thank you for belonging to the Blackhawk Unit!

John  
Past President, Illinois Retired Teachers’ Association

<p><b>Governor: JB Pritzker</b> 207 State House, Springfield IL 62706 Phone: 217-782-6380 Email: Governor@illinois.gov</p>	<p><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</p>
<p><b>Representative Emanuel Chris Welch</b> (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><b>US Senator Tammy Duckworth</b> 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><b>State Senator Neil Anderson</b> (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><b>US Representative Cheri Bustos</b> (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><b>State Senator Brian Stewart</b> (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><b>State Representative Mike Halpin</b> (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><b>State Representative Tony McCombie</b> (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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## Wise Owl News

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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](mailto:wiseowlnewsletter@gmail.com)  
*Thank you*

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