



INTERLINK

CONNECTING ARKANSAS'S PUBLIC EDUCATION RETIREES

Volume 62, No. 3.5 | Parkview Towers • 1200 Commerce Street Ste 103 • Little Rock, AR 72202 • 501-375-2958 | April 2020

PLEASE NOTE:

The ARTA staff will be covering the office on a rotation basis until further notice.

If you need to reach us, please leave a voice mail or send us an email. We will get back with you as soon as possible.

NOTICE:

The ATRS office is closed to the public until further notice.

In-person individual benefit planning sessions have been rescheduled as telephone sessions and group meetings have been cancelled or postponed.

The ATRS encourages its members to conduct business with them via their website, telephone or email.

A Message from ARTA

Dear ARTA Members,

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we feel it best to cancel all ARTA Area Spring Leadership Conferences. The health of all ARTA members and staff must be our priority during this extraordinary time.

ARTA will continue to represent its membership at ATRS Board of Trustee meetings, EBD Public School Employee Health Insurance meetings and state legislative meetings. All of these are currently being held by video conferencing.

The ARTA officers will make decisions on what is best for the organization as they gain more information and as the pandemic is curtailed. The regular issue of the INTERLINK, which will be mailed early in June, will pro-

vide updated information on future meetings and the process for area elections.

Our modern world has never dealt with a highly contagious disease that spreads so quickly and has infected so many globally. Please follow the guidance of the Center for Disease Control to practice social distancing by staying home as much as possible, at least six feet apart and in groups no larger than 10 people.

Our country, state and world will get through this crisis. We are reminded of Anne Frank who hid in a 450 square foot attic with seven other people for 761 days during the Nazi invasion. We too are survivors.

Stay well and wash your hands,

ARTA Officers and Staff

A Message from ATRS

I hope all ATRS members and their families are healthy and well in these uncertain times.

There are concerns about shortfalls in the state's budget as a result of this current health crisis. However, the assets of the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System are provided by law to ONLY be used for the retirement benefits of ATRS members. The Board of Trustees has a fiduciary duty to protect the system's assets and to insure that they are used in a lawful manner. They have always protected the system's assets through past economic downturns and will continue to protect them into the future.

Even with the crazy volatility in the current markets, the ATRS assets are valued at around \$16.5 billion and ATRS is 76% funded. The national average of public pension system funding was 72% BEFORE this public health crisis. It is way too early to start think-

ing about making further adjustments to our member's benefits or the COLA.

Your retirement benefits are protected by law and by a diligent Board of Trustees. Your retirement benefits will continue as always, even during this crisis. One of the benefits of your ATRS defined benefits is that they do not fluctuate during times of market uncertainty. They are constant and they are for life!

The ATRS staff and I are closely following the executive and legislative actions taken in Arkansas during this public health emergency. If there are any major concerns, I will let our members know. Thank you all for your service as Arkansas educators.

Stay well,

Clint

Clint Rhoden is the Executive Director of the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System

Message from the President

“Use your gifts and together we will.” ARTA’s theme for this year has never meant more to me than it does now. We all are going to have to dig down to find those gifts. They are probably some of the gifts that we have never used before. These gifts are hiding there, waiting for this time in our lives that we never knew was coming. Yet, we will all rise to the occasion and do what we can to unite us in a common goal.



We all have chosen one of the service professions. We delight in helping or serving. Now we need to serve together as one.

Let’s see how we can serve our country. We all know what to do. The strange thing is that by serving our country, we will be serving ourselves. We will get through one of the most trying times in our country’s history. We are all in this together.

One of my grandchildren is keeping a journal of what we have been experiencing through these scary times and how we all pulled together as a nation. She wants to be able to read it to her grandchildren someday. As for me, I want to remember when everyone I knew joined to combine our gifts, and TOGETHER WE DID.

Thank You,

Lura

ARTA Group Travel Update

With the current COVID-19 pandemic crisis, ARTA group travel trips are being **closely monitored daily** by our travel partner, Collette.

The following is a message from Collette:

We will get through this crisis and continue to offer some wonderful and

For every traveler out there, waiting to see if their trip will depart – we hear you. We want to reassure you that the health and wellbeing of our travelers is our top priority. Because this situation is so fluid, we are assessing our tours and the regions where they operate daily and communicating decisions immediately. Collette closely monitors the guidance provided by the World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control, US Department of State and other public and private organizations to ensure the safety and security of our travelers worldwide.

exciting trips for our ARTA members and their guests. Please don’t hesitate to email or call me with any questions you may have regarding upcoming travel.

Stay safe!

Mary Huie

ARTA Travel Manager
mary_arta@att.net
501-993-3767

Important Contact Information

Arkansas Retired Teachers Association
Inside Pulaski County: 501-375-2958
Toll Free (Nationwide): 1-888-929-0955
E-mail: office_arta@att.net
www.artanow.com

**Arkansas Teacher Retirement System
Retirement Benefits and Checks**
Inside Pulaski County: 501-682-1517
Toll Free (Nationwide): 1-800-666-2877
E-mail: info@artstr.gov
www.artstr.gov

**Arkansas Employee Benefits Division
(Health and Life Insurance)**
Inside Pulaski County: 501-682-9656
Toll Free (Nationwide): 1-877-815-1017
E-mail: AskEBD@dfa.state.ar.us
www.arbenefits.org

**Long Term Care Insurance
Cancer/Heart/Stroke
Dental & Vision Insurance
Medicare Products**

Mary Alice Hughes
Lisa Bamburg
501-988-2726
Email: info@ia-office.com
www.ia-office.com

Matt Hughes
479-967-1339
Email: info@matthughesinsurance.com
www.matthughesinsurance.com

Delta Dental Insurance
501-988-2726
www.deltadentalar.com



The INTERLINK is published by
Arkansas Retired Teachers Association
1200 Commerce St Ste 103
Little Rock, AR 72202

Lura Campbell President
Emilie Monk President-Elect
David Cauldwell Vice President
Mary Ann Hodges Secretary
Donna Morey Executive Director
Mary Huie Travel Manager
Tammy Gray Communications
Linda Powell Office Manager

COVID-19 Best Practices



Avoid close contact with others, especially those who are sick



Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds



Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands



Clean and disinfect frequently-touched objects and surfaces



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue to be discarded



Stay at home if you do not feel well

ARTA News

Reminders for Local Units

Annual Reports—ARTA annual reports are due June 15. While local units may not meet regularly at this time, you can still record important information. Specifically, please be prepared to tell us about your meetings to date, your efforts to recruit new members, and any community service projects you were able to complete. An electronic copy of the report forms is available at www.artanow.com/resources.

Membership—Active personnel will still be retiring at the end of the school year. Please take steps to identify them using personal contact, social media, school board minutes (available on district web sites), etc. If you have contact information for them, please share it with ARTA so that we can invite them to join us in retirement.

Highlights—ARTA continues to maintain its Facebook page at this time. Please continue to share photos, news and comments with us. We'd love to share positive content during this uncertain time.

Parsons-Burnett Scholarship Grants

The Parsons-Burnett Scholarship Grants will still be awarded for 2020. These are scholarships for practicing educators to further their own education.

ARTA members can help publicize the availability of the scholarships by sharing the information with active personnel via social media, email, text and telephone.

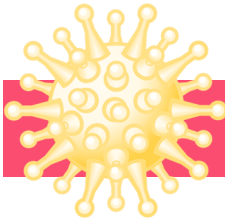
Potential applicants should be directed to the ARTA web site, www.artanow.com, for application guidelines and forms. The deadline to apply is June 15, 2020.

We are hopeful that our practice of presenting the awards to recipients at school board meetings will be possible by late summer.



Arkansas Retired Teachers Association
1200 Commerce St Ste 103 · Little Rock, AR 72202

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 225
Little Rock, AR



SPECIAL EDITION—Sanitize Before Opening

Arkansas Retired Teachers Association Membership Form

Act 105 of 1985 authorizes the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System to deduct your ARTA dues from your monthly benefit check if you desire. Such authorization may be canceled only by a written notice from you to the retirement system. Please select one of the following options, sign and return this form to ARTA for processing. (Return only if you are not currently an ARTA member or if you wish to make a change.)

ARTA CONTINUING MEMBERSHIP DUES

(1) ___ I elect to have \$2 per month deducted from my benefit checks for ARTA dues.

ARTA LIFE MEMBERSHIP DUES

(3) ___ I elect to have 12 payments of \$20 deducted from my benefit checks for a total of \$240.

DIRECT PAYMENT

(2) ___ Annual Membership (\$36 check enclosed).

(4) ___ One-time payment of \$240 enclosed.

Name _____ Signature _____

Address _____ Telephone _____

City/State/Zip _____

County _____ Social Security Number (last four digits) _____

Email _____ Date _____

Send completed form and applicable payment to:
ARTA Membership, 1200 Commerce Street Ste. 103, Little Rock, AR 72202

(Return this form only if you are not currently an ARTA member, or if you wish to make changes.)