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Annual Meeting another huge success; retirees provide leadership at AEA Delegate Assembly

Swag Bags full of goodies, door prizes, and the chance to win fabulous prizes in a free drawing greeted over a hundred AEA-Retired members and guests who had the pleasure of attending the 27th Annual Meeting on April 24th at the Wigwam Resort in Litchfield Park. With a theme of "Stretching Your Retirement Dollars", participants were treated to presentations that not only educated them about the importance of protecting their pensions from attacks, but also helped them to learn new ways to maximize their dues dollars.

AEA-Retired President Julie Horwin kicked off the morning session by extolling the importance of increasing our power through building membership, and encouraging all members to be recruiters. Nick Ponder, Arizona State Retirement System Lobbyist, followed with a detailed summary of all legislation affecting ASRS that transpired during the past legislative session. His report included both bills that passed, as well as those that were defeated, and provided a glimpse into future possible legislation that could affect the fund. Ponder also summarized key legislation and budget decisions affecting public education.

Afternoon speakers included Antonio Galindo, NEA Member Benefits, who presented important information on how members can save hundreds of dollars each year on insurance premiums, travel, purchases (both large & small), on-line classes, mortgages or refinance, and much more. Tory Anderson, Arizona Alliance for Retired Americans Executive Director, spoke on "Common Sense Economics" that emphasized the role of unions in building and maintaining the middle class. Rounding out the afternoon presentations was AEA President Andrew Morrill, who praised AEA-Retired members for all that they have done and continue to do to advocate for quality public education for all students. Morrill spoke of the many challenges facing

public education in Arizona and asked for retirees to stay engaged and active.

AEA-Retired member **Frank Sacco** was honored with this year's Les Reynold's Distinguished Senior Service Award for his many years of outstanding leadership and service to AEA-Retired and his community.

Retired delegates to the Annual Meeting and the AEA Delegate Assembly, that was held immediately following, elected **Suzan Austin**, who ran unopposed, to a second term as Vice President of AEA-Retired. Also elected as Representatives-at-Large to three-year terms on the AEA-Retired Board were: **Anna Cicero, Nancy Putman, Steve Ramos, Larry Wittig, and Juan Zuniga**. They joined the other elected officers and representatives on the Board on June 1st to begin their terms.

Attendees at the Annual Meeting participated in a fun drawing to raise money for the NEA Fund for Children, the political action arm of NEA. Participants donated over \$3689 during the one-day conference as they used their free tickets to enter drawings for numerous prizes. Retired delegates who attended the AEA Delegate Assembly also contributed generously to the AEA Fund, raising more than \$5,500. Both the NEA & AEA Funds are non-partisan and are used to help elect friends of public education at the state and national levels.

AEA-Retired Delegates comprised the largest delegation at the AEA Delegated Assembly and were instrumental in helping to introduce and pass several new business items and resolutions statements. Next year's Annual Meeting and AEA Delegate Assembly will take place May 6-7, 2016 (location to be determined). Mark your calendars, watch for information in future issues of *The Conduit*, and plan to join us for this exciting event.

(See page 6 for photos of this year's event)



AEA Retired

Calendar

June 28-29—NEA Retired Annual Meeting (Orlando, FL)

July 1-6 —NEA Representative Assembly (Orlando, FL)

September 8 —AEA-Retired Board Meeting (AEA Headquarters)

September 9— AEA-Retired Committee Day (AEA Headquarters)

ASRS UPDATE BY STEVE RAMOS



Message from ASRS: We're the Good Guys

Good news for the Arizona State Retirement System. Six of seven pieces of legislation initiated by ASRS, in the recent legislative session, were passed and signed into law. Legislation that would have negatively impacted ASRS, failed to advance beyond committee. The ASRS has over \$34 billion in plan assets, a funded status of about 77%, and is running between a 4% and 6% return on investments this fiscal year.

Continued troubles with the Public Safety Personnel Retirement System, has caused the League of Arizona Cities and Towns to call for major changes to that system. The league wants a new statewide retirement system for PSPRS employees hired after July 1, 2016. The plan comes on the heels of reforms being pushed by the Professional Firefighters of Arizona, some involving changes to the Arizona Constitution. Sen. Debbie Lesko, R-Peoria, has been running a pension-reform work session at the Capitol. The Arizona Republic reports that Lesko hoped to have a plan in place for the 2016 Legislature to consider in January.

Arizona State University continues to lobby for a way to remove university employees from ASRS and that continues to concern AEA Retired. In an email response to a citizen inquiry, shared with AEA Retired, ASU Vice President of Human Resources, Kevin Salcido, confirmed that ASU wants out of ASRS because it costs too much. Apparently

budget cuts have made the cost of providing good retirement security for employees too expensive. Governor Ducey, at a recent Board of Regents meeting, offered to help ASU President Michael Crow get out from under ASRS regulation. ASRS calculates the liability costs at \$66 million for removing new ASU employees and \$179 million if Uof A and NAU join the movement.

AEA has asked new staffer Chris Maza to join AEA Retired President Julie Horwin as part of the Arizona Retirement Security Coalition. The ARSC is working to educate the public and the legislature on the university issue and other retirement reform issues before the next legislative session. AEA Retired will be taking a lead role in this task by asking member volunteers to attend a training session this fall. This training is designed to create teams of retired educators ready to offer short retirement security presentations to public employee and citizen groups.

Retired members at the Delegate Assembly in April introduced and passed New Business Item 2015-01 with the following language: **“AEA will oppose any attempts to diminish the retirement security of state employee groups such as Arizona State University by withdrawing them from the Arizona State Retirement System defined benefit plan without fully funding the existing liability to the fund.”**

ASRS awards new dental contract to Assurant

Jean Stephenson, AEA-Retired's representative on the ASRS Insurance Advisory Committee, reports that after reviewing the bids from four different providers, the committee recommended Assurant Employee Benefits.

Official notification of the award of the dental RFP to Assurant Employee Benefits was made Wednesday, June 3, through the state's Procurement website (the only official notification place). The full ASRS Board of Trustees, on May 29, 2015, did approve the Evaluation Committee's and the Operations and Audit Committee's recommendation. No provider's name was mentioned in the Board's motion because only the Chief Procurement Officer may award a contract. That was formally accomplished on June 3rd.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BY JULIE HORWIN



Happy Fifth Birthday to the AEA-Retired E-Newsletter.

The E-Newsletter is different than *The Conduit* in that it is entirely online and is sent to email addresses of members. It contains information just a little different than *The Conduit* –

including volunteer and paid opportunities, policy updates that may affect our retirement security and news about AEA-Retired members. To receive the E-Newsletter you simply need to find on the front page of this edition of *The Conduit*, the “ad” for \$100 cash prize for sending us your email address.

When I first retired 9 years ago, I thought that I would be able to enjoy new hobbies, my grandkids and family while others carried on the protection of public education and our pensions. Economic and political turmoil defines our national, state, and local governments today. We are seeing public pensions increasingly getting blamed as a primary cause of the declining ability of governments at all levels to adequately fund their cost of operations.

ASRS is a major driver of Arizona's economic engine. For every \$1 paid to retirees, almost \$6 in total economic activity is created in the state. Because ASRS pension funds in Arizona are better funded than those in other parts of the country, we have for the most part been spared from these allegations.

But that is changing, and efforts are underway by others to “fix” this perceived problem. Led by Michael Crow, ASU President, Gov. Doug Ducey, and Eileen Klein (past Chief of Staff for Gov. Brewer, and currently the appointed Board of Regents President), a strong push and a formal proposal has been created to remove ASRS as the default pension plan for all new hires at the 3 state universities (ASU, UofA, NAU) and to replace it with a 401K type defined contribution plan.

If they are successful, community colleges in our state have quietly stated that they will ask the legislature for similar statutory language. How this effort would affect current retirees receiving pensions if it succeeds is uncertain, but once this door is opened there is no telling where it will lead. One certainty is that the liability for all those currently on the plan will not be funded appropriately and the contribution rate to make up for the new lack of funding will go up. This move of higher-level education employees away from ASRS will be the potential toppling of the most secure, well-funded, safe teachers' pension in the United States.

Got your attention yet?

As a result of this movement, AEA-Retired is forming a cadre of retired educators who will reach out to current ASU employees to inform them of the threat to their pensions. The sole purpose of the “Understand and Secure Your Retirement” cadre is to inform and educate current higher-level employees, education students and current education employees so that they can organize to protect defined benefit plans for public education employees. A grant has been given by the National Retirement Security Coalition to support the effort.

You can help by making a small donation to the AEA Fund for Children and Public Education by sending a check for \$10 to AEA Fund for Children, care of AEA 345 E. Palm Lane, Phoenix, 85004. Be sure to include your full name and address, and note that it is a donation to the AEA Fund. Or use this link to safely and securely donate online: <https://www.secureiws.com/vote4schoolsaz/contribute>

Sometimes it seems that just as we begin to make headway on one issue, another pops up. The coming months are likely to present us with many new challenges, but nothing that is beyond our collective ability to handle. We all need to start preparing now to do whatever is required to preserve the pension and benefits that we have earned for our many years of hard work and dedication to the citizens of Arizona.

Now for some good news.

I am pleased to report that AEA-Retired is continuing to grow and currently counts over 2300 retirees as members. While this may be good for an organization like ours, it is far from what our potential membership could and should be when you consider that this represents less than 2% of the over 100,000 retirees and surviving spouses who are currently receiving pensions and eligible for membership. We all must redouble our efforts to grow AEA-Retired's membership. Our strength and effectiveness to represent retirees' interest in protecting and preserving our pensions and benefits increases as our membership grows. We all have a duty and an obligation to get this message out and encourage other retirees to join with us. All retirees need to join to be part of a unified effort to assure that our pension and benefits are there for us today and in the future. You can find an AEA-Retired Membership Form on each page of our website: <http://www.azedretired.com>. Download and print it, and give it to a retired colleague.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

By Barbara Matteson



Summer is here. Time to relax, BUT also remain vigilant.

*There is a possibility of one or more special sessions.

*The Supreme Court decision on Medicare expansion may have a devastating impact on Arizona and then the governor will have to act.

*Those who want to attack our pensions are still out there trying to impact public opinion.

So what can we do this summer??

If you can, attend one of the “Diane Douglas Listening Tour” events. She needs to hear from us. Check the schedule at: www.azed.gov/superintendent.

Thanks to all those who attended the Listening Tour in Tucson! There were approximately 20 AEA members in attendance and many spoke regarding the issues surrounding public education. Nearly 50 people of the over 150 in attendance addressed the panel. Member Darlene Rowe from Amphi did an incredible job along with TEA members Dan Ireland, Beth Slaine, and newly elected president, Jason Freed. **AEA retired members Marion Pickens, Steve Linder, Michael Gordy, Ramon Montano, Lillian Fox and Luci Messing also shared our concerns affecting students and teachers.** Our members did us proud.

*Be ready to respond to requests from AEA and NEA if help is needed to lobby or protest. Congress is working on improving ESEA and NEA is asking for help in contacting members of Congress urging them to preserve the gains and

strengthen the bill further. Go to edinsider@nea.org for more information.

*Join at least one campaign. Many local city and school board candidates are already working on petition drives. Terry Goddard’s “Anti Dark Money” campaign is in full swing. Go to www.vpaarizona.org for more information.

*Take advantage of every opportunity to educate and inform your family, friends, and neighbors with regard to the devastating effect the budget will have on the children and citizens of Arizona.

*Contact the Governor and tell him to obey the court order and fund public education.

AEA Retired members are a respected voice in the community. Use your voice and help move Arizona forward. Thank you for all you do for public education and public education employees.

AEA-Retired activist Marion Pickens accepts the “Woman on the Move Award” from the Arizona Women’s Political Caucus in Tucson.



Frank Sacco honored with Les Reynolds Award



Teacher, political activist, and association leader, Frank Sacco is the 2015 AEA-Retired Les Reynolds Distinguished Senior Service Awardee. Frank spent decades teaching while promoting quality public education and progressive ideals.

He began teaching in Wyandotte, Michigan, before heading west to Arizona, where he taught first grade in Casa Grande. In 1962 he began teaching in the Phoenix Union High School District where he served as an AEA Unit Chair at Alhambra and Trevor Brown High Schools, and then became local president. Frank served on the PUHS collective bargaining committees for many years. Always involved in the Association, Frank was one of the original founders of AEA-Retired and has been an active member for the past 26

years.

Frank served on the AEA Board of Directors in the 1970's where he provided the leadership in establishing the AEA Political Action Committee. It was the first time that AEA fielded and supported political candidates. He gave educators a voice and an avenue to make a difference.

Frank has devoted his life to political action and service to his community. He is a former member of the Democratic Party State Committee, and was Democratic Chairperson of several legislative districts. He continues to edit and publish the *Independent Voice*, a political newsletter which has been in publication for 17 years. His community activism includes service in the Saguaro Lions Club, Phoenix Public Library Committee, American Red Cross Disaster Relief Services, Phoenix Police Department Block Watch Chair and the Phoenix Townhouse Homeowners Association.

Having served in the U.S. Navy in the Central Pacific during World War II, Frank now serves on the Board of Directors for the Veterans Caucus. As a member of "the greatest generation", this remarkable member will celebrate his 90th birthday this year. Congratulations to Frank Sacco, the 2015 Les Reynolds Distinguished Senior Service Award winner.


Volunteer to serve on AEA-Retired committee; attend Committee Day, Wednesday, September 9, at AEA HQ



Do you want to have a voice in setting the direction of your Association? Would you like to be an active participant in the activities of a vibrant, growing organization? Volunteer to serve on an AEA-Retired committee and be an integral part in helping to move the Association forward. Committee meetings are normally held following the AEA-Retired Board meetings which take place the second Tuesday of each month from September through May. Most committees do not meet every month, and may only meet once or twice a year, or as needed.

The first meeting for all committees will be during AEA-Retired's Committee Day scheduled for Wednesday, September 9, from 10 AM to 3 PM at AEA Headquarters, 345 E. Palm Lane, Phoenix. Lunch will be provided.

Committees that are in need of participants are: Membership Outreach, Public Relations, Political Action, and Chapter Chair Development. To add your name to a committee, or to volunteer for any Association activities, contact President Julie Horwin at jhorwin@mindspring.com or call 602-574-1473.



Stretching Your Retirement Dollars...
because money doesn't grow on trees!

Annual Meeting
April 24, 2015

aea Retired
Your Retirement Local



AEA-Retired President Julie Horwin



Nick Ponder
ASRS Government Relations



Keeping the Promise of
Quality Public Education

aea
Arizona
Education
Association

2015

Delegate Assembly



News and Notes for Seniors

“Summertime, and the livin’ is easy.....”

So goes that beautiful song. Just in case you were looking for something new and exciting to renew, reinvigorate and regroup, here are a few suggestions.

Roads Scholar

A non-profit travel organization. Since 1975 educators, active and retired, have taken advantage of inexpensive, global travel. It’s a chance to learn and participate with fellow educators, creating unique experiences. A trip is being planned to Cuba soon. To learn more visit www.roadsscholar.org or call 800-454-5768.

Crooked Trails

An educational, non-profit travel organization helping travelers broaden their understanding of world cultures through educational outreach and sustainable travel programs. Visit info@crookedtrails.org or call 206-383-9828.

Cottonwood, Arizona


Situated in the Verde Valley between Jerome & Sedona, Cottonwood has been experiencing a rebirth of vitality. Main Street now is the home for good restaurants, wine tasting, olive oil stores, boutiques and antiques. There are many hotels, motels and bed and breakfasts in the city and surrounding areas. Plenty of hiking in and around Cottonwood, on Mingus Mountain and Sycamore Canyon. And, of course, the train leaves Clarkdale, only 2 miles away, for a lovely view of the valley flush with wildlife and beautiful fauna. Fantastic Family Fourth of July. Second Saturday of the Month Art Walk. Visit www.oldtown.org.

Osher Lifelong Learning Courses in partnership with ASU

Osher offers non-credit courses for ages 50 and wiser. No tests, no grades or educational requirements. \$15 per semester membership fee entitles a member to enroll in classes. Most courses are \$35, most lectures \$10. For more information email: lifelonglearning@asu.edu or for registration and information questions call 602-543-6440.




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The Commitment Continues

The Conduit



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The Conduit
Linda Somo & Jan Nichols Co-Editors

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AEA-Retired Chapter News

Chapters are an attempt to bring AEA-Retired closer to members. All AEA-Retired members are eligible to join a chapter where they worked or currently live. Meetings usually include an information program, business meeting, lunch or dinner, and time for socializing with friends and colleagues. Anyone interested in forming a new chapter should contact Chapter Coordinators **Susan Sommer**, ssommer114@aol.com or **Suzan Austin** at (480) 947-2089 suzanaustin@cox.net.

Glendale/West Valley Chapter- All members are welcome at our meetings. We meet at the Iron Works Restaurant, 17233 N. 45th Avenue, Phoenix. Future meetings are scheduled Thursday, October 1st, and Thursday, December 3rd, at 4:30 PM. For more information call **Susie Sommer** at 623-931-6209 or e-mail ssommer114@aol.com.

Mesa / East Valley Chapter: Chapter members met on Wed., May 13. Guest speaker was AEA President Andrew Morrill, speaking about the role of AEA-Retired in AEA. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Sept. 16th, at 10:45 at the Mesa Public Schools Bldg., 63 E. Main Street in Mesa. Contact **Janie Hydrick** at Hydrick@aol.com or (480) 628-1845 for more information.

Greater Tucson Area Chapter: Meetings are the third Tues. of Sept.—May, starting at 10:00 AM at the TEA office. Go to <http://www.azedretired.com/TUCSON/index.html> for more information, or contact new Chapter Chair **Marilyn Calhoun** at 520-744-0399 or marilyn13148@q.com.

Phoenix Chapter: Usually meets at the Beatitudes in Phoenix. For more information contact new Chapter Chair **Michelle Smith** at 602-463-1624 or mms79972@msn.com.

Yavapai Chapter: The Yavapai Chapter met at IHOP in Prescott Valley on April 29th, and arranged to have the AEA-Retired Pre-Retirement Workshop presented by Steve Ramos & Linda Somo. Four future retirees attended. Contact **Ted Coleman** at theodorecoleman76@gmail.com for information about future meetings.

Scottsdale/Paradise Valley Chapter: Met on May 18 for lunch at Denny's 3315 N. Scottsdale Rd. AEA-Retired President Julie Horwin was the guest speaker. Meetings for next year are scheduled for Sept. 14th, Nov. 16th, Jan. 18th, March 21st, and May 16th. For information contact **Suzan Austin** at (480) 947-2089 or visit <http://www.azedretired.com/SCOTTSDALE/index.html>. Everyone is welcome.

Southeast Arizona Chapter: For information on the next meeting date & location, please contact **Sally Rosen** at 520-459-0430 or azcatsally@aol.com.

Northern Arizona/ Rez Chapter: Contact **Maryanne Goodluck** at magoodluck55@yahoo.com for information and future meeting dates.

Kyrene Chapter: Met on May 27th. Guest speaker was Margaret Bowerman, retired Kyrene teacher now working for the Department of Education, who spoke about the implementation of the AZ Merit Test. The next meeting will be September 23rd at 4:30 PM at Mimi's Restaurant, 2800 W. Chandler Blvd., Chandler. Contact **Ellie Feldner** at teachgift@gmail.com, or **Ellen Shamah** at 480-345-7664 or eshamah@cox.net for more information.