

Membership Areas Conduct Spring Conferences

The Area Spring Conferences have concluded for 2014, and as a whole they were excellent. While each conference was unique as far as program, entertainment and venue, they also reflected some common themes.

Guests at each meeting were provided with information from the ARTA staff, state board and committee members, the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System, and agents specializing in insurance products for retirees. Participants were advised to become informed and get involved in preparation for the coming legislative season, where insurance costs are again expected to be a critical issue. They were reminded of the opportunities and benefits that are available to them as members of ARTA. They were encouraged to invite eligible retirees to become



members of ARTA so that they might also enjoy these benefits.

In addition to taking care of business, participants were treated to excellent speakers, food and entertainment that showcased local talent. Planning committees, hosts and others involved in coordinating the conferences are to be commended for providing such good opportunities for members to become informed and to connect with peers.

If you were not able to attend your area event, ask your unit president for an update. You'll also want to consider attending the State Convention on September 23, 2014 (see page 3).

If you are not currently a member of ARTA, please continue reading to learn more about ARTA and the benefits of membership.

Not sure if you are a member? See page 5.

Preparing for Changes to 2015 Insurance Plans

At press time, the status of the State Employee Health Insurance Program, which includes retired school personnel, is in flux. The Legislative Task Force held a series of meetings to discuss scenarios and solutions to address the program. We do not know which recommendations will make it into their final report to the Employment Benefits Division.

We know that EBD is required to set the plan rates for 2015 by the end of June. As always, there will be changes to what is covered and what is paid. We will continue to monitor the Insurance Board and share information as it is received (see page 9).

We also know that some of the task force recommendations will require legislative changes or will not take effect until later. Again, ARTA will continue to attend relevant meetings and update our members when we know more.

Until then, please continue to educate yourselves about the State and Public School Life and Health Insurance Program. The more you understand how your insurance program operates, the better able you will be to talk to your elected representatives about your insurance needs and concerns.

Also, please continue to cultivate relationships with your elected representatives. ARTA can provide you with information and alert you when specific action is needed, but

ARTA State Convention

September 23, 2014

Benton Events Center, Benton, AR

See pages 3 and 9 for info

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Preparation, continued on page 9

Message from the *President*

Thanks for a Wonderful Year

Wow! We have just finished the Area Spring Conferences! ARTA divides the state into six areas. Each area sponsors a conference where all the counties in that area get together. Your three presidents: Toni Bradford – President Elect, Dr. Ella Walker-Rolfe – Vice President, myself, and the three ARTA staff members, Donna Morey, Mary Huie, and Tammy Gray traveled to each area for the conferences. George Hopkins or Michael Ray represented ATRS. Mary Alice and /or Matt Hughes, insurance specialists, made all of the conferences as well. We enjoyed the fellowship with each other and especially with those sponsoring the conferences. I'd like to thank all who had a part in making your area conference such a wonderful success. The leadership throughout ARTA is amazing!



I've enjoyed traveling Arkansas this past year, seeing its beauty, and of course, singing our state song, "Arkansas".

After having my bout with breast cancer this year, it's made me more thankful for each day I live. Thanks for joining in each time we sang "This is the Day That the Lord has Made".

All through my presidency I've emphasized how we should be proud to be members of Arkansas Retired Teachers Association. They encourage and recognize community service. We have a \$10,000 Death Benefit that's tax free! We even get a 3% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) increase every year! We also have representatives knowledgeable in the Legislature who are constantly working on our behalf to improve retirement benefits. A few of the many other ARTA benefits include Delta Dental Insurance, a prescription drug plan, and group travel opportunities. The good thing to know is that ARTA is for ALL retired school personnel – not just teachers.

Now that I've had more insight into the workings of ARTA, I'm prouder to be a member than ever before. If you haven't joined ARTA, now is the time! When you retire you are in the Arkansas Retired Teachers System, but you have to join Arkansas Retired Teachers Association. That membership cost is \$2.00 per month, and that can be deducted from your retirement check. If you haven't joined, you can call the ARTA office 501-375-2958, go to the ARTA website, artanow.com, or get in touch with your county retired teachers association and sign up.

I've had a wonderful year being your ARTA president. I've tried to be a good representative of ARTA and God! I've learned that Romans 8:28 is true. It says, "All things work together for good to them that love God". May God bless each and every one of you!!

As always, feel free to contact me: 870-406-0505, 1321 East Main Street, Gurdon, AR 71743.

— Pat Talley, President

ON THE MOVE?

Please let us know if you or an ARTA member you know has moved.
Call us toll free at 1-888-929-0955 or locally at 375-2958.

You can also help us stay in touch
between newsletters by sharing your email
address with us at office_arta@att.net.



Thank You!

Important Contact Information

Arkansas Retired Teachers Association

Inside Pulaski County: 501-375-2958
Toll Free (Nationwide): 1-888-929-0955
Fax: 501-376-0955
E-mail: office_arta@att.net
<http://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@artrs.gov
www.artrs.gov

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 Annuities · Dental Insurance Medicare Products

Mary Alice Hughes
AR Insurance License # 29888
1-501-988-2726
maryalice@insuranceadvantagellc.com
PO Box 646
Jacksonville, AR 72078

Matt Hughes
AR Insurance License # 29891
479-967-1339
matt@matthughesinsurance.com
2000 West Main Street
Russellville, AR 72801

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



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Toni Bradford President-Elect
Dr. Ella Walker-Rolfe Vice President
Paulette Parker Secretary
Donna Morey Executive Director
Mary Huie Office/Travel Manager
Tammy Gray Communications

Message from the *Executive Director*

ARTA Advocates

Traveling to the ARTA Area Meetings with ARTA President Talley, President-Elect Bradford, Vice-President Walker-Rolfe, and ARTA staff Mary and Tammy this last month was a joy. Each meeting was special, with local flavor and great food. We began in Pine Bluff, and then traveled to Marion, Prescott, Little Rock and Ash Flat before finishing in Fort Smith. Mr. Lloyd Black accompanied us to Ash Flat, where he shared the problems with the Public School Employee Health Insurance Plan, as he did in Little Rock.

Today is the time for each of you to contact your elected members of the Arkansas Legislature about the Public School Employee Insurance Program, especially as it pertains to retirees. Please share the message to **increase the state funding for the retired public school employee health insurance plan and to not raise the retiree rates**. Remember that no additional money was given to support the retired school employee portion of the plan in the "Special Session" that was held in October 2013. Our rates climbed over 25% beginning January 2014. It is crucial for each of you make those calls, emails or visits with your elected State Representative, State Senator and those running for those positions.

The Joint Legislative Task Force is charged with releasing its recommendations to the Employee Benefits Division of the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration in June. Then EBD will set the plan rates for 2015 by the end of June. We know there will be changes to deductibles and co-pays which will be an additional burden on all retirees. I was given the opportunity to speak and provide written testimony to the Task Force in April, but now it is vital that you do the same,

especially during this election season. Be vocal about the needs of true public servants – the employees and retired employees of Arkansas' public schools.

Early this fall ARTA will host meetings around the state to help bring knowledge and understanding of choices for the insurance program. Our endorsed insurance representatives, Mary Alice and Matt Hughes, will bring information to help all retired public school employees make the best decisions about the plans for them and their families. Please plan to attend and bring a car load of other public school retirees with you. We will also discuss other areas of the ARTA charge at those meetings so that we can have a little fun and fellowship. See page 9 for more information.

Have a wonderful summer. I look forward to seeing you at the State Convention on September 23, 2014 and at county meetings this fall. ARTA is **our** organization – please be an activist for all of our best interests.

Grace and Peace to All,

Donna



REMINDER:

Unit Reports and Grant Applications
are due by June 15, 2014

ARTA State Convention

Tuesday, September 23, 2014

Benton Event Center

Hickory Square Shopping Center

17322 I-30 in Benton

Mail your reservation before September 13, 2014 to:

ARTA, 1200 Commerce Street Suite 103
Little Rock, AR 72202

For more information:

1-888-929-0555 or 501-375-2958

Please send me _____ ticket(s) for the morning refreshments & luncheon at \$20 each. I have enclosed my check with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to have my tickets sent to me in advance.

**NO TICKETS WILL BE SOLD ON THE DAY
OF THE CONVENTION**

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

County _____ Phone _____

Email _____

Little River County RTA Sponsors Black History Month Program

In February, the Pleasant Hill Quilters presented a program entitled “The Secret Codes of the Underground Railroad” to students in the Ashdown School District.

Dressed in period costumes and singing authentic slave spirituals, these eleven women captivated audiences with accounts of how “conductors” would hang out quilts containing secret codes in their patterns to guide those who were seeking freedom in the northern U.S. and Canada. As the ladies narrated their stories and sang their spirituals, they assumed the character of historians who are preserving an important past.

According to Carolyn Henderson, teacher and district Public Relations Coordinator, the standing ovation given to the Pleasant Hill Quilters by the Ashdown High School students was a testament to the authenticity, sincerity and effect of their performance.

The two presentations of the program for the Ashdown students were sponsored by Woodmen of the World—Chapter 87 and the Little River County Retired Teachers Association.

Said Susan Simmons, president of the local RTA, “This was a big event for (us). It took a lot of effort from members and financial support to provide this program to the community and students, (but) this effort to reach out beyond our

group has increased our monthly attendance and has given us more of a presence in the community. We were delighted.”

To learn more about the Pleasant Hill Quilters, visit the website www.pleasanthilltexas.org.



Standing (l to r): Robbie Pruitt, Vernelle Richardson, LaJoyce Flanagan, Flo Stevenson, Lawanda Warren, Ether Blaylock, Mary Shurn. Seated: Vancie Gaines, Volena Allen, Alvis Dorsey and Oteria McDaniel.

RTA Serves Greene County

The Greene County Retired Teachers Association collected canned goods and monetary donations to support Mission Outreach, the 2013 recipient of its annual food drive.

Pictured are Mary Hester and Brenda Orcutt, members of the Community Services/Special Projects Committee, preparing to deliver the donations collected by members.



ATRS Investment Updates

Big River Steel

In May, the Osceola City Council approved \$1.5 billion in bonds for the Big River Steel Mill planned for Mississippi County. Since then, the state Pollution Control and Ecology Commission also approved an air permit for the project. The Arkansas Teacher Retirement System is an investor in the project, which is hoping to break ground in late June.

Blue Oak Arkansas

ATRS is also an investor in Blue Oak Resources, another planned project in Osceola. Expect to hear more about this innovative venture, which removes precious metals from electronics to sell or recycle.



George Hopkins, ATRS Director

The Importance of a Vibrant Membership

The theme of the Area Spring Conferences, as well as the theme of this issue of the INTERLINK, has been about growing the ARTA membership.

Currently, we estimate that there are more than 34,000 retired school employees who participate in the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System. This makes them eligible for membership in the Arkansas Retired Teachers Association, which is a membership organization dedicated to maintaining and improving the retirement and insurance benefits for present and future retirees from our public schools.

ARTA currently has 11,766 members. These members enjoy benefits such as representation at state and national meetings that affect retirement benefits, insurance coverage and rates, and public policy. Their efforts in these areas have resulted in benefits that all retired school employees can enjoy, such as an annual cost of living adjustment (COLA) of three percent and a tax free death benefit of \$10,000. ARTA members have also worked to defeat or rewrite harmful legislation.

ARTA members also have access to member discount programs and customized group travel, among other benefits.

As members, we want to share these benefits with as many

people as possible. In fact, membership is open to ALL retired school employees who participate in ARTRS. But membership is not automatic — it requires a basic application and a nominal membership fee of \$2 per month or an annual payment of \$28.

For your investment, you will have ample opportunities to stay engaged with former colleagues, participate in fun and informative programs, and to be recognized for your leadership, service and achievement.

As a retiree, you have earned these benefits. You may simply want to enjoy your retirement without ever attending another meeting or monitoring another initiative. In so doing, please remember that some of the benefits you enjoy are the result of ARTA members continuing to educate and advocate on your behalf. By joining ARTA, you will lend them your voice.

Imagine the conversations we could have if more than just the current third of eligible members joined in. We could offer more programming for our members and work for enhanced benefits for all retired school personnel.

ARTA is here to represent your interests as a retiree. Remember that there is power in numbers, and we should demand to be heard.

Are You a Member of ARTA?

Once a year, we send a *complimentary* copy of the INTERLINK to **all** participants in the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System who are eligible for membership in the Arkansas Retired Teachers Association (ARTA). If your copy includes the word “complimentary” on the address page, you are not currently a member, but are invited to join.

If your copy does not include the word “complimentary”, then you are currently a member of ARTA. If you are an annual member, you will receive a separate renewal notice. If you are a life or continuing member, we thank you for your support and encourage you to tell others about us.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter, and look forward to the next issue provided for our members.

We also encourage you to visit our website, artanow.com to learn more about ARTA, our members, our relationship with other retiree organizations and opportunities available to our members.

Using the Pullout Membership Poster

This issue of the INTERLINK includes a pullout poster that can be used to share basic information about ARTA membership. Feel free to remove and display it or copy and share it with others.



Find us on
Facebook

The Arkansas Retired
Teachers Association now

has a Facebook page. The purpose of the page will be to show the “social” side of ARTA members, as well as to distribute news and information more quickly than the newsletter format allows.

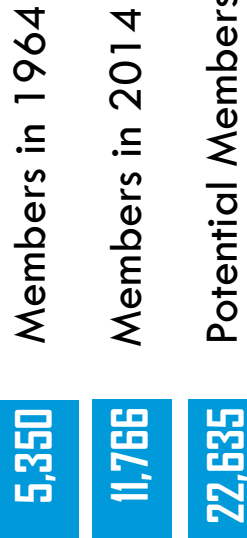
If you are a Facebook user, please like and share our posts as often as possible now so that we can share your news as well as build our audience in advance of the legislative session.

Arkansas Retired Teachers Association

Arkansas' only independent, non-profit organization dedicated to improving the professional, personal, social and economic welfare of all retired school employees.

..... 75 YEARS * 1939-2014

ARTA Membership



TRUE OR FALSE:

I am already a member of ARTA because I receive a benefit check.



**Benefits of
ARTA Membership**

Economic

FALSE. Your benefit check is administered by the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System (ATRS). ARTA is a membership organization open to all ATRS participants. ARTA works cooperatively with ATRS to protect your retirement benefits. ARTA members have been influential in securing benefits that retirees enjoy, such as the \$10,000 tax-free death benefit and a guaranteed annual cost of living adjustment.

Representation at meetings where future income and benefits are determined:

- Stability of the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System
- Health Insurance premiums and coverage
- Member discounts on other insurance products

Legislative

Representation by an active statewide legislative network in addition to ongoing advocacy on behalf of all retirees

Professional

Opportunities for leadership and recognition in a professional organization of peers

Social

Network and maintain contact with other retired educators from around the state

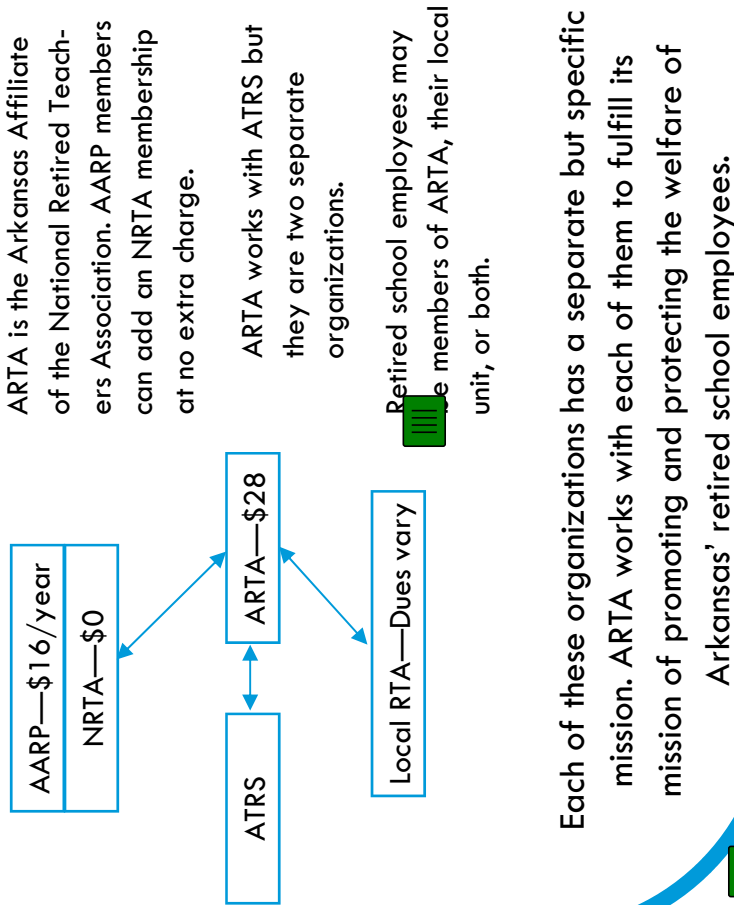
Enjoy customized travel opportunities

Personal

Get information and lend your voice to issues of interest to educators, retirees, and citizens

ARTA Membership is open to ALL retired school employees

How does ARTA membership "fit"?



Each of these organizations has a separate but specific mission. ARTA works with each of them to fulfill its mission of promoting and protecting the welfare of Arkansas' retired school employees.

Thanks to the thoughtfulness and generosity of individuals and local units, \$630.00 was mailed directly to the ARTA office during the months of February, March and April. An additional \$30 was contributed by Continuing Members (above and beyond the regular monthly dues) bringing the total to \$660.00. Your gifts to ARTA, for whatever reason, are a meaningful and substantive part of the association's budget and are greatly appreciated.

Arkansas County RTA: in memory of Mary Alice Acklin; **Boone County RTA & Support Staff:** in memory of Danny Gilbert; **Clark County RTA:** in memory of Jerry Don Childers, Emma Sue Robertson and Lila Thompson; **Cleburne County RTA:** in memory of Lonnie Rowlett; **Columbia/Lafayette Counties RTA:** in memory of Suzanne Hicks and Shirley Smart; **Cross County RTA:** in memory of Pauline Hutto; **Franklin County RTA:** in memory of Raymond Wells; **Johnson County RTA:** in memory of Elaine Owen; **Miller County RTA:** in memory of Lorene Ross Mills and

Lola Wilson; **Searcy County RTA:** in memory of Bill Williams; **South Sebastian County RTA:** in memory of H. B. Stewart and Raymond Wells; **Union County RTA:** in memory of Elizabeth Inez Taylor; **Van Buren County RTA:** in memory of Peggy Cottey; **Lura Campbell:** in memory of Cravens and Lora Mae Housley; **Patricia R. Collier:** in memory of Joan Raymond Holloway; **Mary Purselley:** in memory of Danny Gilbert; **Anonymous Donation:** in appreciation for ARTA Leadership and Matt and Mary Alice Hughes.

In Memoriam *"These immortal dead who live again in minds made better by their presence"*

ARKANSAS: Victor Owens and Wanda M. Wright; **ASHLEY:** Frankie L. Haynes, Andrew Newton and Lavon L. Vaden; **BAXTER:** Doyle N. Davenport; **BENTON:** Barbara A. Baker, Frankie Burns, Lillian E. Cable, Joyce M. Genereau and Nora L. Gratzl; **BOONE:** Inez H. Fendley and Danny W. Gilbert; **CARROLL:** Marguerite M. Nichols; **CHICOT:** Sara L. Courtney; **CLARK:** Jerry D. Childers and Ozie C. Jones; **CLEBURNE:** Annequinn L. Allison, Mack A. Burns and Lonnie W. Rowlett; **COLUMBIA:** Nancy W. Polk; **CONWAY:** Norman B. Nooner and Emily B. Oates; **CRAIGHEAD:** Ione H. Brown, Evalean Featherston, Wallace B. Hobson, Doris L. Taylor, Melvin V. Wamock and Charles B. Willhite; **CRAWFORD:** Ross S. Devers and Harry N. Padgett; **CRITTENDEN:** James L. Sanders and Demit F. Smith; **CROSS:** Lutricia A. Richardson; **DALLAS:** Betty J. Holt; **DESHA:** Evora Canada; **DREW:** Pamela A. Arrington, Barry M. Brown and Larry W. Burnett; **FAULKNER:** Ruby E. Hutto, Buford N. Monroe, Donald R. Nixon and Christine P. Pinkett; **FRANKLIN:** Raymond E. Wells; **GARLAND:** Martha T. Folsom, Peggy R. French, Bruce E. Griffin, Alfreda Logan, Kathy D. Majors and Henrietta S. Wisener; **GRANT:** Marietta W. Hutchison; **GREENE:** Jimmie D. Dodd and Sherley J. Zollner; **HEMPSTEAD:** Carolyn L. Yocom; **HOT SPRING:** Asie Pilgram and Hubert E. Willis Jr.; **JACKSON:** Mary J. Mullins; **JEFFERSON:** Adele G. Harkins, Shirley A. Harwell, Lora M. Housley, Marion C. Housley, Marsha L. Rushing and Jewell C. Whatley; **JOHNSON:** Colin J. Funderburg and Rita J. Funderburg; **LAWRENCE:** Charles B. Robins; **LEE:** Robbie C. Burkett and Earnest Harris; **LITTLE RIVER:** Wanda E. Click; **LONOKE:** Opal D. Davis, Raymell P. Riggs and John

H. Robinson; **MARION:** Debbie L. Ply; **MILLER:** Joyce A. Barnes, Stella L. Mills, Diane F. Tuberville and Lola H. Wilson; **MISSISSIPPI:** Robert E. Carthee, Ralph E. Goacher, Mary D. Gray, Lula R. Jones and Joe L. Kea; **MONROE:** Robert Butler; **NEVADA:** Sammy N. Hopson; **OUACHITA:** Eunice M. Dickson; **PHILLIPS:** Earnest Simes; **PIKE:** Carolyn S. Pedron; **POLK:** Claude R. Franks and Revena M. Pollard; **POPE:** Leonard O. Hardgrave; **PULASKI:** Eloise A. Bateman, Susan J. Daniel, Lillie M. Davis, Mary G. Delozier, Eddy M. Dunbar, Linda K. Fiddler, Melba C. Fisher, Helen J. Harbison, Kathryn C. Hardy-Harris, Sandra A. Johnson, Martha S. Nelsen, Gloria T. Odell, Betty H. Pagan, Mildred W. Peters, Carr L. Priddy, Birleather S. Reaves, Mary D. Reid, James P. Sparks, Patricia A. Sterling, Jack W. Terry and Wanda L. West; **SALINE:** Mary K. Dobson, Mary F. Landers, Florriedeen W. Lyle and Martha S. Spann; **SEARCY:** Edith B. Vaughn; **SEBASTIAN:** Charles L. Carroll, Mary H. Hesslen and Erma L. Page; **SEVIER:** Hubert T. Williams; **SHARP:** Charles Rains, James E. Shelly, Robert C. Trussell and John M. Walker; **ST. FRANCIS:** Billie J. Billingsley, David Small and Joe W. Williams; **UNION:** Clara L. Overton and Inez S. Taylor; **VAN BUREN:** Peggy A. Cottey; **WASHINGTON:** Carl E. Abbott, Emma L. Banks, Jeanette Freshwater, Ann F. McMullin and Rowlanda J. Palermo; **WHITE:** Jimmie J. Ford, Lillie R. Hill and Luther P. McEuen; **OUT-OF-STATE:** Wesley L. Boner, Everett E. Cupples, Sibly G. Dardin, Georgia Darrough, Charles O. Evans, Sandra L. Fugate, Donna S. Haisty, Lee C. Ingram, Rachel M. Jones, Ivora J. Lewis, Montine M. Mashburn, Nina L. Moncrief, Emily R. Stewart, Sarah E. Taylor, Linda J. Van Winkle, Wilma S. Viar and Peggy Wil-

ARTA Announces Workshops

In order to share the latest health insurance information, especially as it relates to non-Medicare retirees and ARTA members, we will be participating in a series of meetings around the state this summer and fall. As of press time, the following meetings have been proposed:

Wednesday, August 13	Benton
Tuesday, August 19	Hot Springs
Monday, August 25	Springdale
Tuesday, August 26	Harrison
Tuesday, August 26	Little Rock
Wednesday, August 27	Conway
Monday, September 1	West Memphis
Tuesday, September 2	Paragould
Wednesday, September 3	Pine Bluff
Tuesday, September 9	Beebe
Tuesday, September 9	Ft. Smith
Wednesday, September 10	Texarkana
Wednesday, September 17	El Dorado
Monday, September 22	Monticello

All meetings will begin at 9:30 a.m.

Locations To Be Determined.

Please note that there is no charge to attend, but registration is required. Due to the high volume of attendance anticipated, **online registration at artanow.com is preferred.**

You can check our website for updated information as it becomes available, or contact Mary Alice Hughes at 1-501-988-2726 or maryalice@insuranceadvantagellc.com.

ARTA to Celebrate 75 Years

The Arkansas Retired Teachers Association was established in 1939-1940 to improve and protect the interests of retired educators, specifically those participating in the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System, which was established in 1937. In the years since, ARTA has grown in membership and widened its interests, all the while maintaining its dedication to improving and protecting retiree benefits.

During the 2014-2015 membership year, ARTA will celebrate this anniversary and some important milestones along the way. We'll kick things off at the State Convention on September 23, 2014. Then, throughout the year, we'll feature highlights from the past and special activities to commemorate the occasion. To reserve your ticket for the convention, see page 3. To provide historical materials or information to assist us in our planning efforts, please contact the ARTA office at 501-375-2958, 1-888-929-0955 or tammy_arta@att.net.

Preparation, *continued*

we depend on our members to make direct contact with legislators. Educate them and share your experiences and concerns with them at every opportunity.

In addition to inviting legislators to address your local units, you can also invite Matt and/or Mary Alice Hughes to share the latest information on all types of insurance. Their contact information is located on page 2.

Finally, remember to encourage other retired school employees to join ARTA so they can become informed and lend their support as we work to improve the status of the State Employee Health Insurance Program for the benefit of all retirees.

Welcome *New Life Members*

ARKANSAS: Mattie London; **BENTON:** Marian Shirley Colclasure; **CHICOT:** Geraldine Smith and Joanne Thomas; **CRAIGHEAD:** Evelyn J. Lawson and Sue McQuay; **DESHA:** Sandra L. Patterson; **GARLAND:** Ernest Ray Ennis and Dr. Brenda Sellers; **HOT SPRING:** Cynthia E. White; **JEFFERSON:** Lereatha O. Hamilton; **JOHNSON:** Mignon G. Morrow; **MILLER:** Margaret D. Dixon and Annie Catherine Lloyd; **OUACHITA:** Allene Holcomb; **PHILLIPS:** Barbara M. Davidson; **POINSETT:** Patricia C. Brashears; **PULASKI:** James R. Bullard, Debra L. Butler, Vickie M. Evans, Thomas L. Ford, Clara A. Lofton, Peggy L. Nabors, Jane P. Ploszay, Paula J. Rawls, Anita D. Sawyer and Gertrude Stubblefield; **SALINE:** Debbie Browning; **SEBASTIAN:** Gloria Ann Cates, Rita Gibson and Jimmy D. Reynolds; **SHARP:** Johnny F. Carter; **UNION:** William N. Jamerson; **VAN BUREN:** Carolyn S. Cloud; **WASHINGTON:** Guy R. Boydston Sr. and Marsha L. Jones; **WHITE:** Janis C. Price; **OUT-OF-STATE:** Delores B. Smith.

We invite ARTA members to join us for trips of a lifetime!

Detailed itineraries and cost for each trip are available by calling the ARTA office at 501-375-2958 or on our website at artanow.com. If you are interested in one of our trips, call the ARTA office to place your name on the trip list. Guests are welcome but must travel with ARTA members. Whenever possible, ARTA trips are escorted by an ARTA staff member.

Early bookings ensure trips that require a minimum number of travelers are not pulled from us. All price quotes are round trip from Little Rock to Little Rock; however, arrangements can be made for other departures and arrivals. Deposits are required and are refundable until final payment deadline with trip cancellation waiver plan.

REMAINING TRAVEL FOR 2014

June 20-30, 2014 – Bus trip to Cape Cod, Massachusetts. With nearly 559 miles of unspoiled coastline, Cape Cod is a destination rich in history. Visit Hyannis Port, summer home of the Kennedys, Provincetown, Sandwich, Chatham and other towns, each with its own character and charm. Day trips to Nantucket Island and Martha's Vineyard included. This trip includes gratuities, all breakfasts and eight lunches and/or dinners. Deposit is \$300. **A few spaces are left...Call the ARTA office for information.**

September 7-20, 2014 – Magnificent Cities of Central & Eastern Europe. This tour begins in Berlin (2 nights) with a tour of the city and a side trip to Potsdam. Next you travel to the Golden City of Prague (2 nights) with a tour and time to explore the city. Leaving Prague behind you enter the musical city of Vienna (2 nights) where you will have time to see the sights and relax in the Capital of Austria on your own. Historic Budapest (2 nights) is the next destination, also known as the Queen on the Danube. Then travel to the lively Krakow (2 nights) with old world charm. On the way to Warsaw (2 nights) you will stop at Auschwitz for a guided tour. Day two will include a guided tour of the city and a farewell dinner with the group. Call the ARTA office for a detailed itinerary, current pricing and booking form. Deposit - \$250, Insurance & Cancellation Waiver - \$270.

October 3-10, 2014 – Canada/New England Cruise. SOLD OUT

November 29-December 7, 2014 – Christmas on the Danube. SOLD OUT

Hawaiian Cruisers, listed alphabetically: Sharon Allured, Carol Ann Blantiff, Larry Blantiff, Marsha Daniels, Bill Daniels, James Fullerton, Linda Fullerton, Shrea Harmon, Beth Harper, Danny Harper, Toni Hoegerl, Harold Mitchell, Barbara Fox, Louis Nalley, Margaret Nalley, Connie Odom, Doris Parish, Audrey Raines, Steve Wicks, Charlotte Wicks. Submitted by Charlotte Wicks.

NEW TRAVEL FOR 2015

January 14-26, 2015 – A Taste of the South Pacific. Highlights include: Cairns, Great Barrier Reef, Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park, Hartley's Crocodile Farm, Sydney, Sydney Opera House, Sydney Harbour Cruise and Fiji. **HURRY** - Early booking bonus of \$500.00 if booked six months before departure date. Call the ARTA office for a detailed itinerary brochure, pricing and reservations.

February, 2015 – Caribbean Cruise PENDING. Brrr...escape the winter cold. Details will be provided on the website and in later issues of the INTERLINK.

March 23-31, 2015 – Trains, Wineries & Treasures of Northern California. Experience the city of San Francisco during dinner overlooking the bay and on a highlight-packed city tour. Enjoy your journey on a splendidly restored Pullman car as you travel through picturesque Napa Valley at an unhurried pace. Enjoy the incredible beauty of one of America's most beloved national parks, Yosemite. Glide along the pristine waters of Lake Tahoe and marvel at the inspiring scenery. Early booking bonus of \$100.00 if booked six months before departure date. Call the ARTA office for a detailed itinerary brochure, pricing and reservations.

April 27-May 4, 2015 – Rhine River Cruise. Spend six nights relaxing onboard your 4-star river cruise ship, the *MS Gérard Schmitter*. Soak up the spectacular scenery of the romantic Rhine Valley. Cruise the famous canals of Amsterdam and overnight in Strasbourg exploring the old town and city on an included tour. Ride the "little train" through the vineyards of the Rhine Valley. Other highlights include: Volendam, Zaanse Schans, Cologne, Rudesheim, Lorelei Rock and Heidelberg Castle. **This trip fills quickly, so book early.** Early booking bonus of \$250.00 if booked six months before departure date. Call the ARTA office for a detailed itinerary brochure, pricing and reservations.

May 16-29, 2015 – European Tapestry. The perfect vacation for those who wish to see all major highlights of Europe. Start in Amsterdam, and enjoy a canal cruise, the only way to see the



17th-century city. In Germany, a romantic Rhine cruise to see the medieval castles, a picture stop at Heidelberg Castle, and a stop in the Black Forest, to learn all about woodcarving, have been included. Admire the Rhine Falls, the Lion Monument and Chapel Bridge in Lucerne, and the Golden Roof in Innsbruck. In Italy, a private boat ride to St. Mark's Square in Venice, and a highlight dinner at a local restaurant; guided visits to the Vatican Museums, Sistine Chapel, St. Peter's Square and Basilica, the Colosseum and the Roman Forum in Rome; a lunch with local specialties and wine in Florence; see also the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Stay two nights on the French Riviera and enjoy a highlight visit to the artist town of St. Paul de Vence with the opportunity to try the traditional pastis. Ride the high-speed TGV train to Paris, where during your sightseeing tour a visit to the second floor of the Eiffel Tower, followed by dinner with local specialties awaits. You'll see it all! Two additional days in Paris are available. Call the ARTA office for a detailed itinerary, pricing and reservations.

June 15-23, 2015 – Bus trip to Mackinac Island. Get ready for a journey through the beautiful coastal regions of upper Michigan. On the way enjoy a stop in the quaint town of Frankenmuth which is filled with unique German shops and the largest Christmas store in the world. Stay two nights on Mackinac Island, a National Historic Landmark. Climb aboard your horse-drawn carriage for an island tour with stops at Surrey Hills Museum and Arch Rock. In a guided tour of Mackinaw City, don't miss the world famous fudge. Other highlights of the trip include Green Bay, Wisconsin, home of the Green Bay Packers, Chicago, and St. Louis. Call the ARTA office for a detailed itinerary, pricing and reservations.

July 17-27, 2015 – Scotland and Ireland, featuring Northern Ireland. Visit a Scottish whisky distillery and sample the "Water of Life". Enjoy a scenic cruise on beautiful Loch Lomond. Experience the rugged natural beauty of County Donegal and Glenveagh National Park. Join in the revelry and fun during a night of traditional Irish entertainment. See also the spectacular Giant's Causeway formed by ancient volcanic eruptions. Other highlights include: Edinburgh, Inverness, Loch Ness,

Glasgow, Belfast, Titanic Experience, Derry, Ulster American Fold Park and Dublin. Early booking bonus of \$250.00 if booked six months before departure date. Call the ARTA office for a detailed itinerary brochure, pricing and reservations.

September 30-October 7, 2015 – Bus trip to Albuquerque Balloon Festival, Santa Fe, and Oklahoma City. Dazzling during the day, the spectacle of hundreds of hot air balloons is even better when they light up at dawn and dusk. See these amazing displays, plus explore early Pueblo life and the artists of Santa Fe. Founded in 1972, the Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta began with 13 balloons and has grown to more than 700 from all over the world. We will view the "mass ascension" of these specially-shaped balloons as they lift off at sunrise. Then back to Albuquerque for a thrilling ride aboard the world's longest aerial tramway. On Sandia Peak Aerial Tramway you will be transported above the deep canyons and breathtaking terrains for an incredible view of the Rio Grande Valley. Highlights include: Indian Pueblo Cultural Center; Pecos National Park, Santa Fe tour including Governor's Plaza, San Miguel Mission and Loreto Chapel. Call the ARTA office for a detailed itinerary, pricing and reservations.

November 5-13, 2015 – Tropical Costa Rica. Lush forests and stunning waterfalls, exotic wildlife and endless coastlines – Costa Rica is truly a slice of paradise. Your tour begins in the colorful capital city of San Jose. After a tour of the Doka Coffee Estates, you will arrive in the Guanacaste region known for its breathtaking beauty and fine sandy beaches, to relax for a two-night stay. You won't believe your eyes as you travel into the Monteverde Cloud Forest, home to the endangered quetzal and where trees grow to heights of 100 feet. Enjoy a guided, leisurely-paced "Hanging Bridges" walking tour and learn about the cloud forest's unique ecosystem, its mammals, birds, plants and flora. Other highlights include: Lake Arenal Cruise, on the largest and most important lake in Costa Rica; cooking demonstration; Cano Negro guided river boat trip which may include crocodiles, river otters, sloths, river turtles, exotic birds and rare butterflies; and the Zarcero National Theatre. Early booking bonus of \$100.00 if booked six months before departure date. Call the ARTA office for a detailed itinerary, pricing and reservations.



Australian Tour travelers, pictured back row L to R: Jerry & Melanie Nichols, Alexa Riley, Wanda Duke, Charlotte Houston, Jim Hardcastle, Michael Bradley, Nancy Hawking, Harryette Graham, Joe Hill, Buddy Mason, Billy Duncan, Dan & Fran Roberts, Charles Coles; Second row L to R: Eddie & Shirley Parnell, Pat Rauls, M.D. Graham, Betty Ratliff, Chayta Mills, Connie Mason, Cheryl & Les Anderson, Kay Coles; Front L to R: Becky & Steve Singleton. (Not pictured: Lloyd Black and Gail Peer). Submitted by Steve Singleton.



Arkansas Retired Teachers Association
Parkview Towers • 1200 Commerce, Ste. 103
Little Rock, AR 72202

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The Benton Event Center is located in the Hickory Square Shopping Center, which is located on the west side of I-30 between the Hwy 5 and Congo Road Exits (across the highway from Wal-Mart). See inside for more information about the State Convention to be held here in September.

Arkansas Retired Teachers Association Membership Form

Act 105 of 1985 authorizes the Teacher Retirement system to deduct your ARTA dues from your monthly benefit check, if you desire. This authorization may be canceled only by a written notice from you to ARTA. You may select one of the four ARTA membership options listed below.

ARTA CONTINUING MEMBERSHIP DUES

(1) ☐ I elect to have standard dues of \$2 per month deducted from my retirement check.

ARTA LIFE MEMBERSHIP DUES

(3) ☐ I elect to have dues of \$20 deducted from my retirement check each month for 12 months. (Total \$240)

DIRECT PAYMENT

(2) ☐ Annual Membership (\$28 check enclosed)

(4) ☐ Life Membership (One-time \$240 check enclosed)

Name

Signature

Address

City/State/Zip

County

Email

Date

Complete this form and return it to:

ARTA Membership, 1200 Commerce Street Suite 103, Little Rock, AR 72202

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