

**The Heart of TRTA**    **Cover-5****Membership Update**    **6****Congressional News**    **8****Member Benefits**    **9-10****TRTA Awards Program**    **11****63rd TRTA Annual Convention  
News and Registration**    **12-14**

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Applications Available**    **16**

# *The* VOICE

THE OFFICIAL NEWS BULLETIN OF THE TEXAS RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

## THE HEART OF TRTA: LOCAL UNITS

**By Tim Lee**  
**Executive Director**



2015 has been a remarkable year for the Texas Retired Teachers Association (TRTA). We faced many challenges and met them with remarkable determination and resolve. Our 80,000 members banded together to secure \$768 million for the TRS-Care retiree health insurance fund, ensuring its continued existence with no increase in premiums for the next two years.

Additionally, our membership has been incredibly active in fighting premium increases to Medicare Part B and working to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP). TRTA's success is directly linked to the passion, dedication and consistent activity of our members!

TRTA's membership includes both at-large members and local unit members. At-large members are people who are members of the state organization only. Local unit members are people who belong to one of TRTA's 254 local units, in addition to being a member of the state organization. More than half of TRTA's membership belongs to a local unit!

Local units play a vital role within TRTA. These groups meet, often monthly, to discuss everything from legislative strategy, to voting, to volunteerism opportunities within their communities. Members gather for fellowship and use the meetings to communicate with their legislators. Local unit meetings provide the perfect opportunity to be an activist within your community.

Local units truly are the heart of TRTA. In this article we feature several units and some special ideas and activities that may inspire you as you plan your own meetings for the year. Each local unit is unique in choosing its educational, informative, legislative and charitable activities, but there is also a common thread.

**CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE**

## THE HEART OF TRTA: LOCAL UNITS

That similarity is the ability to rally together our powerful, grassroots team of retired school personnel to fight for better retirement security for all 350,000-plus TRS annuitants. TRTA's local units are in every corner of Texas, working for you every single day!

**If you are not a member of a local unit and want to get involved** at the grassroots level to advocate for your retirement security and also want to enjoy the fellowship of retired school personnel who live in your area, **please consider joining a local unit!** The local unit experience is one you will value always, as it helps you expand your knowledge about issues that impact your livelihood and develop strong relationships with fellow advocates and influential legislators.

You can find the unit nearest you and locate contact information by using TRTA's Local Unit Interactive Map, found on [www.trta.org](http://www.trta.org), TRTA Near You, Find a Local Unit.

The **Brenham Area Retired School Personnel (BARSP)**, located in District 6, enjoys good fellowship and good food during their monthly meetings. The group gathers on the second Tuesday of school months and always features a timely program. "We get to fellowship with other former teachers and see those that we might not see anywhere else," says local unit President Nancy Oertli.

In October, BARSP met with **local Texas legislators Senator Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) and Representative Leighton Schubert (R-Caldwell) for an update on the most recent session** of the Texas Legislature. BARSP presented personally signed proclamations of gratitude to Kolkhorst and Schubert for their work in passing bills to help



Brenham Area Retired School Personnel members honor Senator Lois Kolkhorst and Representative Leighton Schubert

retired educators, including HB 2 which provided funding for TRS-Care.

**For Veteran's Day, the members of BARSP filled and wrapped care packages for the veterans in local nursing homes in honor of their service to the United States.** "Last year's Veteran's Day speaker inspired us so much, we are making care packages to put his words into our actions," says President Oertli. Some of the other unique activities happening in the unit include providing goodie bags to the local nursing home folks on Valentine's Day.

The BARSP local unit has annual dues of \$10, and includes retiree members from Washington, Austin and Burleson counties. The group will meet January 12 to hear from Dr. Walter Jackson, Superintendent of Brenham ISD, who will provide an update on local public schools. To learn more, contact BARSP President Nancy Oertli by emailing her at [noertli@gmail.com](mailto:noertli@gmail.com).

The very successful **Lamar-Delta Retired Teachers and School Employees Association (LDRTSEA)** has 549 members, the largest membership of any organization in its community, and meets on the fourth Monday of each month. Located in TRTA District 8, the unit originally was named the Paris-

Lamar County Retired Teachers Association, and was organized on January 12, 1970 when 21 charter members met at the First Federal Savings and Loan Association building in Paris, Texas.

Local unit President Sandy Lassiter feels that it is "vital for TRTA members to join a local unit in order to stay connected to their profession and their fellow co-workers, to stay informed of all current issues that affect retiree benefits, and to stay ready to respond to the legislative call to action by our director Tim Lee."

According to Sandy, LDRTSEA has a very active executive board that is responsible for retention and recruitment of members. **"Two weeks prior to our monthly meetings, the board takes care of all business so that our meetings can be devoted to relevant issues affecting our membership."**

LDRTSEA kicked off its first meeting of the year this fall with special guest speaker Ronnie Jung, former Executive Director of TRS and current TRTA Pensions Consultant. Jung serves as a vital member of the TRTA legislative team in Austin. **Local legislators Representatives Gary VanDeaver (R-New Boston) and Larry Phillips (R-Sherman), as well as Senator Bob Hall (R-Edgewood), were honored for their support** during the 84th Legislative Session by LDRTSEA this fall as well.

One of President Lassiter's favorite memories being a part of LDRTSEA was the 2015 TRTA Day at the Capitol event in Austin. Several local unit members made the 300-mile trip. "To put icing on the cake," says Lassiter, "Lamar-Delta was interviewed by the local Austin TV station KVUE, an ABC affiliate, and the interview was aired on the nightly news!"

LDRTSEA is planning many other special events for the near future, including "The History of the Alamo Building" and holiday festivities such as favorite holiday treat-tasting.

The LDRTSEA local unit annual dues are \$5, plus \$5 to help pay for scholarships. LDRTSEA meets at Paris Junior College Student Center Ballroom, beginning with a luncheon at 11:00 a.m. (cost is \$6.50 per person) and followed by the meeting program at 11:40 a.m. To learn more, contact local unit President Sandy Lassiter at [slassiter725@gmail.com](mailto:slassiter725@gmail.com) or visit the local unit webpage at [www.localunits.org/lamar](http://www.localunits.org/lamar).

The **Jackson County Retired School Personnel (JCRSP)** motto is "Learn More to Do More," a concept its members abide by to assist retired school personnel and future retirees in their area, TRTA District 3. "When a TRTA member joins a local unit, many great things will happen! One of the most important things is learning what is going on in the Legislature and in our area. Our Legislative Committee does an excellent job of keeping members informed of laws being passed or needing to be passed, dates to remember and what we as members of our local unit can do to ensure the future of retired teachers," says President Carrie Baker.

With 110 members, the organization stays busy and motivated. **Carrie says "one of the greatest things about being a member of a local unit is getting to be with many of your old co-workers, friends and new friends each month at our regular meetings."** JCRSP meets on the third Monday of each month, except for December and April and during the summer months. The annual dues are \$5.

Earlier this fall, JCRSP successfully hosted the District 3 TRTA Fall Convention at the Brackenridge Recreation Complex in Edna. More than 100 TRTA members representing 13 local units attended the event.

Patricia Macias, TRTA State Second Vice-President, and Ray Spivey, TRS Director of Government Relations, were the keynote speakers. After a delicious meal, entertainment was provided by Jack Motley, a local musician.

JCRSP also sponsored a Scholarship Holiday Tour of Homes on December 6 showcasing six area homes. All of the proceeds from ticket sales benefitted the unit's scholarship fund. **On February 15, Texas Senator Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brenham) will be the guest speaker.** This meeting will be held at the St. James Lutheran Church in Ganado.

President Baker's favorite personal memory is when JCRSP **took baskets filled with goodies to the area schools for Teacher Appreciation Week. "Our members contributed so many baked goods and bought so many items that the baskets were overflowing.** We put the extra items in plastic bags so the baskets could be refilled. Having been a teacher, I know how special it is to have treats in the workroom to enjoy during the day."

For more information about JCRSP, please contact President Carrie Baker at [cbaker6263@att.net](mailto:cbaker6263@att.net) or search for Jackson County Retired School Personnel on Facebook.

**Johnson-Somervell Counties Retired School Employees Association (JSCRSEA)**, located in TRTA District 11, began its 2016 fall season with a bang by treating its membership, area superintendents and yearbook advertisers to a barbecue lunch.



Brazoria County Retired Teachers Association delivers books for the Children's Book Project

"I think it is very important for retirees to join local TRTA units," says JSCRSEA President Patsy Helmcamp. **"I think numbers make a difference when we are attempting to pass legislation for our benefit, and we can continue to enrich our learning experiences through the information offered by both our local and state organizations."**

Some of Patsy's best memories with JSCRSEA include being the unit's Head Hostess for many years and creating the unit's scrapbooks. "I love scrapping and love to share my books with others!"

In October, JSCRSEA members learned about the history and events of J.N. Long Cultural Arts Complex. The unit's theme, "Sights and Sounds of Johnson-Somervell Counties," will continue throughout the year with programs, entertainment and decorations.

Future meetings will feature performances from two local theaters, a presentation by the cultural arts complex and horticultural park, a book review by a local author, a discussion of pertinent legal issues that affect retirees by an attorney,

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4**

## THE HEART OF TRTA: LOCAL UNITS

and a legislative update by Executive Director, Tim Lee.

Soon, JSCRSEA will be tallying its volunteer hours and collecting books to distribute among local schools. **“Our group not only collects books for The Children's Book Project to be donated to our local elementary campuses, but also buys new children's books to be donated to our local Head Start Program,” says Helmcamp.**

Through the money earned from yearbook advertising, JSCRSEA



Members of the Corpus Christi Area Retired Teachers Association volunteer at a local school

will award a college scholarship to a graduating high school senior and provide 10 \$200 grants to active teachers for classroom supplies.

JSCRSEA holds meetings on the second Wednesday of each month at 10:00 a.m. at the St. Mark United Methodist Church in Cleburne, Texas. The annual local unit dues are \$10.

You can find JSCRSEA on Facebook by searching for Johnson-Somervell Counties Retired School Employees Association or visit its website [www.localunits.org/johnsonsomervell/](http://www.localunits.org/johnsonsomervell/). Please contact President Patsy Helmcamp at [pahelmcamp@gmail.com](mailto:pahelmcamp@gmail.com) for more information about the unit.

The **Brazoria County RTA** meets on the first Friday of the month

September through May at the Bethel Presbyterian Church in historic East Columbia, Texas for lunch and a program at 11:15 a.m. The unit's 220 members includes persons who taught or worked in Angleton, West Columbia, Brazoria, Sweeny, Damon and Danbury, all towns in TRTA District 4.

“I think it is important for TRTA members to join a local unit because they can keep in contact with fellow teachers and friends that they may not see in any other setting,” says

Paula Raeke, a member of the Brazoria local unit. **Paula has had many warm memories being a part of the unit, and fondly recalls being recognized every March on her birthday with the singing voices of every member.**

Brazoria County RTA makes a significant

contribution to the Children's Book Project. The group has provided **more than 4,000 library books for elementary students in the five neighboring towns for each** of the past few years. Unable to purchase that many books, the unit has an innovative method for procuring them.

Each month, the unit hosts two work sessions to clean and repair free, discarded books from the public library system. Many have not been read much and appear like new. If a book is too damaged to pass on, it is recycled. Brazoria RTA has a team of volunteers that participates in this effort, and often the members come home with several boxes of books for ages Pre-K through 6th grade. The team disperses the books to the area elementary schools on a rotating basis.

**The Children's Book Project brings much joy to the students who receive books of their own, but also to the retired teachers who make this possible.**

The annual dues for Brazoria RTA are \$10, however, brand new members have their first-year local unit dues waived. You may contact the chapter president, Norma Taylor, by emailing her at [normagailtaylor@gmail.com](mailto:normagailtaylor@gmail.com).

The **Corpus Christi Area Retired Teachers Association (CCARTA)** has been following the theme of “Lasso Our Legacy and Jazz It Up” by hosting a year full of opportunities for all members to become actively involved in their local unit in District 2.

Under the leadership of Kathy Wemer, the unit's Second Vice-President, the program committee has planned a variety of excellent programs. **CCARTA members can expect to hear from Dr. Sue Nelson, the Superintendent of Tulo-so-Midway ISD, Tracie Rodriguez, the Principal of Collegiate High School and Harold Branch Academy of CCISD, and State Representative Todd Hunter (R-Corpus Christi).**

Additionally, the unit participates in two local community service projects, the Rainbow Room at Child Protective Services and the collection of prescription eyeglasses given to the Lion's Club. The members also support the Theo Wagner Scholarship Fund, which awards an annual \$1,000 scholarship to a worthy graduating high school senior.

“I have found that if TRTA members join a local unit near them, **the member makes new friends by sharing a common bond with retired educators,** sees opportunities to be a part of their community, continues to grow in knowledge of the benefits of TRTA, and develops a relationship with their state Representatives,” says Beverly Tackett, local unit President.

President Tackett loves that the members of CCARTA “continue to

show their compassion for education and community by volunteering at Book Fairs and Teen Book Fest, serving at Loaves and Fishes, engaging in fine art programs, granting a scholarship to a graduating senior, serving at various church activities, and donating to the Rainbow Room."

CCARTA hosts its meetings at the Hamlin Middle School library on the third Saturday of September, October, January, February and April, and on the second Saturday of the months November, December and March. Following hospitality at 9:30 a.m., the meetings begin at 10:00 a.m. Each meeting ends with door prizes and donations going to Theo Wagner Scholarship Fund, Texas Retired Teachers Foundation, Children's Book Project and Rainbow Room. CCARTA's Ninth Annual Celebration Luncheon concludes the year on the third Saturday in May.

CCARTA's local dues are \$10. For more information, contact Beverly Tackett at [btackett@stx.rr.com](mailto:btackett@stx.rr.com). Also, visit CCARTA's local website, [www.localunits.org/CorpusChristi/](http://www.localunits.org/CorpusChristi/). CCARTA welcomes all visitors!

The **San Marcos Association of Retired Teachers (SMART)** started the year off with a very informative legislative presentation by District 13 Legislative Chairman, Dr. Carole Ann Buchanan, at Mamacita's in San Marcos. **Being so close to Austin, many SMART members are able to travel to the Capitol during the legislative session.**

Longtime SMART member Ruth Spear says that "work done at the local level is vital to achieving the goals of the state, district, and local units. This requires members who are willing to work to accomplish these goals and members who are willing to support financially the efforts of the local organizations." When the state organization and local units work together, much is accomplished.

Like many local units, says Ruth, SMART **members give goodies to active teachers in the local schools. The group also adds a note explaining "current issues about which busy teachers may not be aware," including how they can get involved and possible actions they can take to help out.**

One of Ruth's favorite personal memories being a member of TRTA and SMART is **"the outstanding effort we used in the 'Walk to the Wall' program that raised money for the TRTA building in Austin, our state organization's home."**

In November, SMART hosted a special Veteran's Day program and potluck luncheon. On December 10, at 11:30 a.m., members met for a Holiday Scholarship Luncheon, featuring music by the Wonderland Private School Preschoolers. **Future meetings will include a program about senior fitness, a visit from Texas State Representative Jason Isaac (R-Dripping Springs) and writer Terri Clamons, author of "Big Lessons for Young Hearts."**

If you are a TRTA member who lives in or near Hays County, SMART invites you to join its local unit. SMART meets on the second Thursday of the month, September through May. Local unit annual dues are \$10.

Please visit SMART's website at [www.localunits.org/SMART/](http://www.localunits.org/SMART/) to view the officers, all meeting dates, times and locations or contact Virginia Williams, President by emailing her at [ldvawill@hotmail.com](mailto:ldvawill@hotmail.com).



San Marcos Association of Retired Teachers welcomes members and friends to their event

These are just a few of the exciting stories occurring within local units, and all local units are accepting new members year-round! Joining a local unit can provide you with the opportunity to not only hear from experts, but also a chance to **meet your State Senator and Representative face-to-face and let them hear directly from you.** The relationships that our members develop with lawmakers solidify the work that is done on your behalf by the state lobbying team.

While everything TRTA does at the state level to promote better benefits for retired school personnel has an impact, **nothing works better than your voice and your involvement.** We encourage you to seek out a local unit in your area, stop by for a visit, and speak with the President or Membership Chairman about ways you can get involved. Don't forget to check out TRTA's Local Unit Interactive Map, found on [www.trta.org](http://www.trta.org), TRTA Near You, Find a Local Unit.

TRTA has the best members of any grassroots advocacy organization in the state! Thank you for everything that you do to ensure that our organization thrives against all odds. We wish you a joyous holiday season with your family and friends, and look forward to accomplishing many more goals in 2016 with you! 📷

## ★ MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

The year 2015 is coming to a close quickly, and as I look back at what our TRTA organization has achieved, I am excited about the direction we are headed. Several new programs have been implemented to improve communication between you and the state office, and between you and your officers.

One thing I haven't been as pleased with is our membership! Yes, our local members worked just as hard as they always do; but many of our retiree peers do not seem to realize the value of working to ensure that those who have followed in our footsteps have the same privileges we enjoy today.

I often ask myself "why is that?" What are we not doing that we should be doing, or what are we doing that we shouldn't be doing? One thing keeps coming to my mind: are we, as TRTA members, telling our neighbors just how much we actually contribute to our local communities? I am guessing we don't!

How many of our local units share the number of CVS hours we give locally each year? Have you found your county in the TRS Great Value for All Texans booklet and shared the amount of money that comes back to the county each year? How many of us have reminded those in our community that we, and our monthly annuities, help provide them with jobs?

Without our financial contributions that help support our grocery stores, gas stations, school fundraisers and sporting events, many of our local communities could not survive. Maybe we should begin to brag about what we contribute to our communities! Let's approach those retirees we know who should be a part of TRTA, tell them what we contribute to our communities, and ask them to join us in helping preserve our benefits so that we can continue to share!

How about an end-of-the-year challenge? Name five people you know who should be supporting our TRTA mission. Now, focus on just one! Recruit that person! Remember, if each member of TRTA recruited just one new member, we could surpass that 100,000 membership mark! I believe WE CAN DO IT!

Nancy Byler

2014-2016 TRTA First Vice-President/Membership Committee Chairman



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**CONROE**


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281-205-3525

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**CHANGE LIVES EVERY DAY!**

Because of your generosity,  
TRTF has given more than \$207,000 to educators of  
the past, present and future!

This includes more than \$80,000 for retirees in critical financial need!

It is not too late to make your end-of-the-year, tax-deductible charitable  
donation and help our Foundation provide assistance to educators in need!

You can help us change lives today, tomorrow and every day!

Please help us reach our goal of \$100,000 by donating today!

Visit [www.trtf.org/donate](http://www.trtf.org/donate) or call 1.800.880.1650 to donate.  
You may also mail your donation using the card found on page 16.

Members of TRTA spent hours on the phone this fall, contacting their congressional members about the Medicare Part B premium increase that was proposed over the summer.

TRTA reported in the *Inside Line* that Medicare Part B premiums are set to increase next year for retirees whose premiums are not automatically deducted from their Social Security benefit payments. The premium increase affects approximately 30 percent of Medicare Part B recipients, including retired educators who are impacted by the Government Pension Offset (GPO) or the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP), but who do not receive enough Social Security income to have their Medicare Part B premiums automatically deducted.

Also included in the premium increase are retirees who receive no Social Security income due to GPO and WEP, those who will be enrolling in Medicare Part B next year for the first time, and those who have higher incomes and are charged higher premiums. The other 70 percent of Social Security recipients with Medicare Part B are held harmless from this premium hike because there is no increase projected for Social Security this year.

## CONGRESSIONAL NEWS UPDATE

### Medicare Part B Premium Increase, Brady to Head Ways and Means

Congress originally proposed a premium increase of 52 percent for Medicare Part B participants who are not held harmless. This meant the standard monthly premium of \$104.90 would have risen to \$159.30 for many of our Texas retired public educators.

TRTA members rallied together on this issue, arguing that the premium increase was unfair and required immediate congressional intervention!

Congress worked on a compromise that passed both the Senate and the House, which reduced the premium increase to 17 percent. Most retirees affected by this increase will pay \$123 per month for Part B instead of the proposed \$159.30 per month.

TRTA members acted and Congress responded. TRTA members are the most dedicated, organized, and active advocates in Texas and in Washington, D.C.! Please let your fellow TRS retirees know that TRTA is getting results, and that we will make a difference when we rally together!

TRTA members can also share the good news that U.S. Representative Kevin Brady (R–The Woodlands), a longtime friend of public education retirees, has been appointed to lead the House Ways and Means Committee. Congressman Brady has been fighting to eliminate the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) for several years. His most recent effort is through the bill HR 711, the Equal Treatment of Public Servants Act.

As leader of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee, Congressman Brady will be very influential in determining what Social Security bills will be passed out of committee and sent to the House floor for a vote.

TRTA is very excited to know that our friend and advocate for equal benefits for all Social Security participants is fighting for Texas public education retirees every day! Stay tuned to the *Inside Line* for up-to-the-minute updates about these congressional issues by visiting [trta.org/theinsideline](http://trta.org/theinsideline). ✪

# TRTA Adds Three New Member Benefits

The Texas Retired Teachers Association (TRTA) is pleased to announce the addition of three new benefits available to our members! The TRTA Board of Directors approved the additional benefits during their October 2015 meeting, and are very excited to share them with you. For a complete listing of TRTA's member benefits, see page 10 or visit the association website at [www.trta.org](http://www.trta.org), click on the Membership Tab, and then click on Member Benefits.



TRTA now offers American Hearing Benefits in addition to Hearing Aid Express for all of your hearing aid needs. American Hearing Benefits provides approximately 146 credentialed provider locations in the state of Texas for public education retirees and their families. The hearing aids are manufactured by parent company Starkey Hearing Technologies, the only remaining major, American-owned and operated hearing aid manufacturer. Starkey is the world leader in the manufacturing of custom hearing aids. Benefits in this program include exclusive discounts, free annual hearing consultations, a free supply of batteries, a 60-day trial period, and a free warranty (including loss and damage). Financing is available. Learn about the other features by visiting [www.myambabenefits.info/trta](http://www.myambabenefits.info/trta).

## ROAD SCHOLAR

*Adventures in Lifelong Learning*

Road Scholar is the not-for-profit world leader in educational travel. First-time travelers will receive a \$200 discount for international and foreign travel, and a \$75 discount for domestic and state travel. Learn more about travel locations and costs by visiting [www.myambabenefits.info/trta](http://www.myambabenefits.info/trta).



TRTA is pleased to offer Veterinary Pet Insurance (VPI), a Nationwide Insurance Company, as a benefit to its members and their beloved furry friends. Members can enjoy a 5 percent discount on their pet insurance premiums. Coverage is available for dogs and cats, as well as exotic pets including birds. To learn more, please visit [www.petinsurance.com/amba](http://www.petinsurance.com/amba).

**Congratulations to our quarterly Diamond Plus prize drawing winners!**

**Kathleen Beetar of Pearland, TX**  
**Maricela Acosta of Brownsville, TX**  
**Denise Munoz of Mission, TX**  
**Donna C. Deupree of Tucson, AZ**

**Learn more about our premier membership program at [www.trtdiamondplus.org](http://www.trtdiamondplus.org)!**

## Interested in running for TRTA State Office?

Complete the form below and mail to the TRTA office by January 15, 2016 to have your application considered. Also, attach a color photo of yourself which will be included in the first quarter 2016 issue of *The VOICE*. Mail to TRTA, 313 E. 12th Street, Suite 200, Austin, TX 78701.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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I am filing for: ☐ TRTA President ☐ TRTA 1st Vice-President ☐ TRTA 2nd Vice-President ☐ TRTA Secretary/Treasurer

☐ I understand that a candidate for this office shall have been a participating member of TRTA and of a Local Unit for at least three (3) years, and shall have served as an elected officer of a District or Local Unit, but need not have served as a statewide officer.

My credentials are: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Ombudsmen: Resolving Long-Term Care Issues One Texan at a Time

—Jeff Carmack, Managing Editor, Texas DADS

For older residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities, having an advocate who is of similar age and from a similar background can be a boon. The State Long-term Ombudsman Program, operated by the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services, can provide such a boon.

The ombudsman program is a statewide advocacy service for residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities comprising a cadre of well-trained volunteers, said program director Patty Ducayet.

Residents of long-term care facilities depend on staff for their caregiving, which can cause them to be reluctant to complain to those caregivers. Ombudsmen provide an independent outside ear to listen.

Ombudsmen are a good fit in this role for a couple of reasons, Ducayet said. Many residents of long-term care facilities don't have family nearby, and even if they do, family members are not always effective advocates. But thanks to their training and experience, ombudsmen can often be effective in speaking up for a resident.

Vickie Davison is a volunteer long-term care ombudsman in Houston. After finishing nursing school, she realized that was not where her passion led. "I realized that I didn't want to be a nurse, but that I really like seniors." Someone mentioned the ombudsman program, and she decided to give it a try.

"Nursing school gave me insight into what these folks need—they need a voice. And that's the ombudsman's role," Davison said.

A large part of an ombudsman's job is to listen to resident complaints and, with permission, take those issues to facility management in hopes of reaching a mutually beneficial resolution.

Ombudsmen can help fill the gaps left by often overworked staff. "Staff – even when they're doing their job well – often don't have time to engage with residents. They take care of one resident, and then they have to care for the next," Davison said.

Ombudsmen, on the other hand, have time for that all-important human connection. "When I'm in a room, I make sure to shake hands and acknowledge that every human being needs attention."

Age is no barrier to being an effective volunteer ombudsman, Ducayet said, "We have volunteers in their 80s and 90s who have dedicated years to the program." Additionally, older ombudsmen can bring a depth of experience and wisdom to the job. Older volunteers "bring to the table life experience and wisdom that is valuable in problem solving, which is a big part of what an ombudsman does," Ducayet said.

Volunteering is also good for younger people, too. Ombudsman experience can help volunteers learn conflict resolution techniques and how to negotiate with diplomacy, Ducayet said. It can also provide insight into the realities of aging and long-term care.

## How to Get Involved

Becoming a volunteer ombudsman is simple. Call 512.438.2545 and speak to the volunteer coordinator. Volunteers, who must be at least 18 years old, get 36 hours of training, which includes on-the-job training and a three-month internship. Volunteers are screened for criminal records and potential conflicts of interest.

Davison says one of the great paybacks of her role is "helping to put smiles on faces."

"Volunteers make a valuable connection with residents," Ducayet said. "They help people, they solve problems, and they make a real difference. That's a pretty huge reward."



## Protect Elder Rights

Make life better for residents of long-term care facilities.

To volunteer, call 800-252-2412.



## TRTA Awards Program

All awards—both at the district and local unit levels—are self-nominated. TRTA Awards Program packets and templates will be emailed in January to district and local unit presidents. All awards must be prepared by districts and local units.

# Hearts of Texas: TRTA Proud! TRTA to Host 63rd Annual Convention in April

TRTA members are ready for all that Houston has to offer as TRTA hosts its 63rd Annual Convention April 10-12, 2016! This year's convention theme, "Hearts of Texas: TRTA Proud," will demonstrate the strength and dedication of TRTA's 254 local units and their homegrown, grassroots advocacy. What better place to bolster TRTA's network than in District 4, a region with over 20 local units?

The convention will be hosted at the Westin Galleria on 5060 West Alabama, however, reservations at that hotel are now full. Reservations at the overflow hotel, the Westin Oaks (5011 Westheimer at Post Oak, Houston, TX 77056), are also full. As of press time, TRTA is working on a second overflow hotel, but details are not yet final. Please visit our website ([www.trta.org](http://www.trta.org)) or call TRTA at 1.800.880.1650 for the latest updates on convention hotel reservations, including waiting lists.

Both the Westin Galleria and Westin Oaks are connected to the Galleria Mall, allowing for great shopping and dining opportunities, and even a group Stroll in the Mall on Sunday, April 10! Please note that the time of the stroll has been changed to 7:15 p.m. Dinner is on your own Sunday evening, with a variety of restaurants to choose from inside the mall including Daily Grill, Chili's, Del Frisco's Steakhouse, La Madeleine and more!

TRTA has released a tentative schedule of events to help you plan your travel. Last year, TRTA held a truncated convention due to the Texas Legislature being in session. In 2016, TRTA will return to the regular three-day convention format.

Most attendees will arrive for registration on day one of the convention on Sunday, April 10. There will be a Welcome Reception in the evening, which is free to all guests. This is a great opportunity to "shop, snack and sip," so you can enjoy refreshments and visit the exhibits. A cash bar will be available. Diamond Plus participants should bring their red badge holders from last year's convention and wear their pins. Members interested in joining the program should stop by the Diamond Plus booth in the exhibit hall.

Opening Ceremonies will start the day on Monday, April 11. This year's keynote speaker is Suzie Humphreys, a motivational and inspirational humorist. If you attended the TRTA Convention in 2009, you may remember her wistful, funny stories, as well as her message of honesty and plainspoken values.

From administrative secretary to Television Talk Show Host, to 20 years in Radio, she has "hobnobbed" with movie stars and politicians, interviewed the great and the near-

great. She literally "halted" nine yellow Caterpillars for Clint Eastwood, shot rifles with John Wayne, danced the polka with Lawrence Welk and rode a runaway stallion in a buffalo round-up in Licking

## Convention Schedule

### SUNDAY, APRIL 10, 2016

11:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
Delegate Certification and Registration

11:00 a.m. – 7:30 p.m.  
Exhibits

11:00 a.m. – Noon  
TRTA Board of Directors Meeting

2:00 – 3:30 p.m.  
District Presidents Meeting

3:30 – 5:00 p.m.  
Foundation Trustees Meeting

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.  
Facilitators Meeting

5:30 – 7:00 p.m.  
Welcome Reception

7:15 p.m.  
Sunday Stroll in the Mall

### MONDAY, APRIL 11, 2016

8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
Delegate Certification and Registration

8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
Exhibits

8:30 – 10:00 a.m.  
Opening Ceremonies

10:15 – 11:00 a.m.  
Caucus Meetings for District 1–10

11:15 a.m. – Noon  
Caucus Meetings for District 11–20

12:15 – 1:15 p.m.  
Foundation Luncheon

1:30 – 5:00 p.m.  
1st, 2nd and 3rd Training/Informational Sessions

5:30 – 6:30 p.m.  
Social Hour

6:30 – 8:30 p.m.  
Awards Dinner

### TUESDAY, APRIL 12, 2016

7:00 – 8:00 a.m.  
Stilwell Breakfast

7:00 – 8:00 a.m.  
Delegate Certification and Registration

9:00 a.m. – Noon  
House of Delegates

12:15 – 1:15 p.m.  
Legislative Luncheon

1:30 p.m. – TBD  
House of Delegates

TBD  
TRTA Board of Directors



CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

# Delegate Information for Districts and Local Units

Names of all convention delegates are due in the TRTA office by March 1, 2016. Information and forms will be mailed to District and Local Unit Presidents in December.

**Local Unit Delegates:** Two (2) delegates for the first one hundred (100) TRTA members or fraction thereof; and, one (1) delegate for each additional 100 TRTA members in a Local Unit or fraction thereof.

**Automatic Delegates:** Members of the TRTA Board of Directors; Chairmen of the TRTA Standing Committees; District Presidents, First Vice-Presidents, and Second Vice-Presidents; and Past Presidents of TRTA.

## Hearts of Texas: TRTA Proud! TRTA to Host 63rd Annual Convention in April

Springs, Missouri. Look for Suzie after opening ceremonies ends, as she will be selling her books "If All Else Fails...Laugh!" and "Laugh, Live and Learn."

Monday continues with district caucus meetings and a full afternoon of training and informational sessions for district and local officers, chairmen and convention attendees. The Texas Retired Teachers Foundation (TRTF) will host a luncheon at 12:15 p.m. on April 11, when members will be able to present gifts in honor or in memory of a loved one, friend or colleague. At 5:30 p.m., attendees can enjoy a Social Hour before the evening's Awards Dinner. The E.L. Galyean Service Award recipient will be announced at that time.



Keynote speaker Suzie Humphreys

On Tuesday, April 12, the Stilwell Retirement Residence will host a breakfast at 7:00 a.m. Association business begins promptly at 9:00 a.m. during the First Meeting of the House of Delegates. Delegates will be electing association leaders for 2016-2018 during this meeting. A Legislative Luncheon will be held at 12:15 p.m., featuring a panel of legislators as well as TRTA Executive Director Tim Lee. The Second House of Delegates will begin at 1:30 p.m. and end when association business has concluded.

Ticket prices for all events have been determined, and can be found on the registration form on page 14. Please note that scheduled breaks will include beverages only. Convention goodie bags will include some snacks, and you are welcome to bring additional snacks of your choice as well.

District 4 is proud to host the 63rd Annual TRTA Convention in Houston, a dynamic city with museums, sporting events, theatrical productions and even NASA! There is always something to do in this Southern-hospitality-meets-urban-chic city! See you in '16! ★

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I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).			

# CONVENTION REGISTRATION FORM

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE: MARCH 18, 2016**



## REGISTRANT INFORMATION

Last and First Name		TRTA ID	
Address			
City		State	Zip
Phone	Email for Confirmation		
In case of on-site emergency contact		Cell Phone	

## CONVENTION INFORMATION

Every convention attendee must register online or by mail. One registrant per form. Please check all boxes that apply. Attendees must pay the \$40 registration fee or \$45 on-site registration (late) fee. Refund requests must be received by April 1, 2016. Refunds will be processed after Convention by April 30, 2016. A \$10 service charge will apply. Register online at [www.trta.org](http://www.trta.org) or mail completed form and payment to TRTA, Attention: Convention, 313 E. 12th Street, Suite 200, Austin, TX 78701.

## SPECIAL EVENTS

<input type="checkbox"/> Registration (Deadline March 18, 2016) \$40 per person	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Snack and Shop Reception (Sunday, April 10, 2016 • 5:30–7 p.m.) Complimentary	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Foundation Luncheon (Monday, April 11, 2016 • 12:15 p.m.) \$40 per person	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Awards Dinner (Monday, April 11, 2016 • 6:30 p.m.) \$55 per person	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Stilwell Retirement Breakfast (Tuesday, April 12, 2016 • 7 a.m.) \$30 per person	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Legislative Luncheon (Tuesday, April 12, 2016 • 12:15 p.m.) \$40 per person	\$ _____

## PAYMENT INFORMATION

A confirmation letter will be emailed/mailed prior to convention.

- ☐ Check or money order enclosed payable to TRTA
- ☐ Please charge my credit card

▼ Credit Card Number

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▼ Signature

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**TOTAL REMITTANCE**

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

# OUTLOOK



## LEADING POSITIVE CHANGE FOR TEXAS EDUCATION

### 2015 DONATIONS

TRTF Raises Nearly \$40,000 So Far!

15

### SCHOLARSHIPS & GRANTS

Applications now available!

16

### DONATE TODAY!

Donation card on the back of *The VOICE*

16

## YOUR DONATIONS HELP US CHANGE LIVES EVERY DAY!

The Texas Retired Teachers Foundation (TRTF) believes that education and educators change lives, every day! The Foundation is able to do just that, thanks to the overwhelming generosity of the members of the Texas Retired Teachers Association (TRTA).

Our members—retired teachers, principals, superintendents, school bus drivers, administrative personnel, cafeteria employees and more—spent decades nurturing the hearts and minds of millions of Texas school children.

Through the Texas Retired Teachers Foundation (TRTF), our members extend their generosity through donations to causes that have genuine, tangible impacts on the lives of retirees, current classroom teachers and students pursuing degrees in education.

Our members continue to change lives in measurable ways every

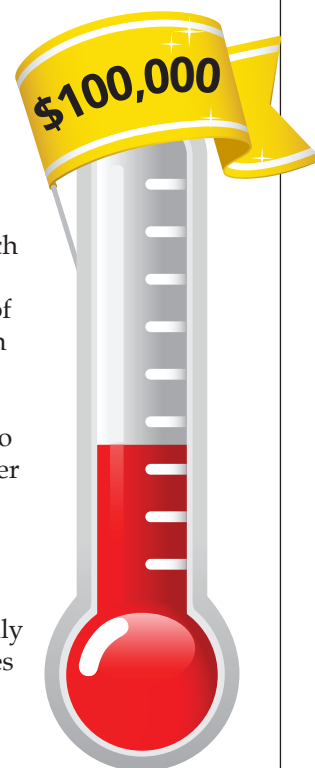
day by supporting TRTF's charitable programs: "A Helping Hand," Classroom Assistance Grants and Student Scholarships. Since 2008, the donations of our members have enabled TRTF to give over \$207,000 to change the lives of educators of the past, present and future!

***TRTA members have donated \$37,000 to the Foundation's programs since November 1! TRTF hopes to raise \$100,000 before the close of 2015.***

"A Helping Hand" assists TRS retirees with financial grants, allowing them to resolve emergencies that otherwise could have left them homeless or unable to buy food. Classroom Assistance Grants change not only the lives of teachers, but the many students

they influence on a daily basis. Our scholarship program provides assistance to students in college who want to become teachers. Your donations also support our Legacy Campaign, which promotes a positive image of public education in Texas and has allowed us to give \$20,000 to the Texas Teacher of the Year program.

Your generosity has unequivocally changed the lives of hundreds of educators of the past, present, and future!



CONTINUED ON THE BACK



# The VOICE

Send address changes to:  
Texas Retired Teachers Association  
313 E. 12th Street, Suite 200 | Austin, TX 78701-1957  
800.880.1650 | [www.trta.org](http://www.trta.org)

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

November was Foundation Month, a time designated by the TRTA Board of Directors to honor the Foundation through local unit programs and an annual appeal. In the third quarter issue of *The VOICE*, TRTA generously allowed TRTF to use several pages to promote its annual request for donations.

TRTA members have donated \$37,000 to the Foundation's programs since November 1! TRTF hopes to raise \$100,000 before the close of 2015.

If you want to donate to a valuable cause that has a direct impact on education in Texas, please consider making your year-end tax-deductible donation to the Foundation.

You may donate using the card found on the back of *The VOICE*, or pay by phone using a credit card by calling 1.800.880.1650. Online donations can be made through the Foundation's website at [www.trtf.org/donate](http://www.trtf.org/donate).

If you are unable to donate but still want to help promote the causes supported by the Foundation, please consider sharing the Foundation's "Making a Difference" video series that features real stories of teachers, students, and retirees whose lives you've changed for the better thanks to your generosity and goodwill. The videos were released through Tim Lee's *Inside Line* email newsletter and can also be viewed on [www.youtube.com/thetratv](http://www.youtube.com/thetratv). Please share them with your local unit members, active teachers in your area, and your community.

Thank you for considering TRTF during this charitable giving season!

**TRTF Student Scholarship and Classroom Assistance Grant applications are now available! Visit [trtf.org/scholarships-grants](http://trtf.org/scholarships-grants) or send an email to [help@trtf.org](mailto:help@trtf.org) to learn more!**  
Applications are due March 17, 2016.



## TEXAS RETIRED TEACHERS FOUNDATION

# OUTLOOK

LEADING POSITIVE CHANGE FOR TEXAS EDUCATION

## TEXAS RETIRED TEACHERS FOUNDATION

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Donations are tax deductible. Enclose a check, completed donation card and send to:  
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