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The VOICE

THE OFFICIAL NEWS BULLETIN OF THE TEXAS RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

TEXAS RETIRED TEACHERS FOUNDATION: SPECIAL REPORT **A CHANCE TO GIVE**

The Texas Retired Teachers Foundation (TRTF) knows that educators matter! We are focused on how we can make public education in our great state better in every way. As educators, we know the work we do changes lives, and every day is an opportunity to impact the future!

While TRTF enjoys sharing stories about those whom your donations have helped, we also want to share with you how our organization is focused on the future and how your generosity continues to shape education even if you are no longer in the classroom each day.

This year, TRTF embarks on two new journeys while staying on a path to help educators of the past, present and future.



Beginning Teacher Scholarships: Helping New Educators Get a Head Start!

In years past, TRTF has given funds to students pursuing degrees in education. After considerable discussion, TRTF is replacing its Student Scholarship program – which gave funds to high school seniors and college students – to create a new program that rewards students who have completed college and will enter the classroom as professional educators for the first time. The Beginning Teacher Scholarship will reimburse applicants for certification tests, and provide funds to help the applicant purchase materials for his or her classroom during his or her first year of teaching.

TRTF will award ten \$750 scholarships for the 2017-2018 school year to applicants who are relatives of an active member of TRTA, have earned or are earning a degree in education at a Texas university or college, and have pursued or are pursuing their teaching certification exam, all in anticipation of beginning their teaching career during the fall of 2017 or spring of 2018. The names of our first 10 recipients will be announced at the 2017 TRTA Convention during the Foundation breakfast in March.

We need your help promoting this program to upcoming and recent college graduates! Let's help our grandchildren who are continuing the public education legacy by providing them with much-needed financial support. Email us (help@trtf.org), visit our website (www.trtf.org), or call 1.800.880.1650 to receive an application. The deadline to submit applications is March 16, 2017.

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THE TEXAS RETIRED TEACHERS FOUNDATION: SPECIAL REPORT

A CHANCE TO GIVE

Funding our Most Needed Program, Now and in the Future

You may have read in the second quarter issue of *The VOICE* about our efforts to continue providing emergency assistance to Texas public education retirees with critical needs. TRTF started “A Helping Hand” in 2010, and has given over \$90,000 to 93 retirees since that time!

Our recipients are people you may know, but may not hear about. A couple of months ago, TRTF helped a member of TRTA pay for her Medicare premium. Access to affordable health care is vital to retirees, and without this payment, this member would not have been able to continue to receive medical care.



Your donations also helped a retiree purchase hearing aids this year, which she has needed for two and half years!

Another retiree who is paralyzed and confined to a wheelchair struggles to pay for daily medical services. She was able to receive assistance with her automobile insurance and mortgage payments. Now that she is caught up on bills, she receives the daily treatment she needs!

There are many public education retirees in Texas—especially those who earn \$1000 or less per month (105,000 retirees statewide)—who are in need of emergency financial assistance. Perhaps their home was damaged after a recent flood, or high summer utility bills prevent them from affording food.

You may know someone who could use a helping hand right now! Please reach out to the Foundation, as our organization may be able to provide more than financial assistance, but also relief, comfort and the ability for a retiree to get back on his or her feet.

When you donate to “A Helping Hand,” you are helping a fellow retiree resolve a problem that could have left them without a place to live or unable see their doctor. Your generosity unequivocally impacts their future well-being. Applications for assistance are accepted year-round and confidentiality is protected. For more information, call 1.800.880.1650.

This year, TRTA celebrates the 25th

anniversary of the “CPI Catch-Up,” a significant legislative change that enabled Texas public education retirees to receive permanent benefit increases to make up for losses due to the high inflation rates of the 1980s. By 1999, retiree benefits had been fully adjusted for inflation and were ahead of inflation by 10 percent. By 2001, adjusted benefits exceeded inflation by 15 percent!

The total value to all current and future retirees for the initiative equaled \$14.8 billion. All current and future retirees on average receive an extra \$300 per month as a result, impacting the future retirement income of hundreds of thousands of dedicated public education employees.

How does all of this impact the future of “A Helping Hand?” Today, TRS retirees live on an average fixed income of \$1900, and approximately 80 percent do not receive Social Security benefits. The path for significant benefit increases going forward is very difficult. As TRTF looks to the future, we know many more retirees will need assistance as the purchasing power of fixed annuities is eaten away by inflation.

As a result, TRTF has established the Lehr-Pritchard Endowment Fund. The fund will continue the work of two of the Foundation’s most iconic, important figures, Mike Lehr and Tom Pritchard.

Help Us Impact the Future!

See our annual appeal and donation card on pages 11 and 12, or call us at 1.800.880.1650 to donate over the phone!

Be sure you are signed up for Tim Lee’s *Inside Line* e-newsletter (www.trta.org) so you will not miss our Foundation Month video series! TRTF will begin releasing the videos in late October and throughout November. Feel free to share them with fellow retirees, family members, friends, and members of the community.



Lehr served as the Executive Director of TRTA from 1994 to 2003, spearheading the “CPI Catch-Up” strategy. He also served on TRTF’s Board of Trustees until 2015. Pritchard was TRTA’s President from 2002 to 2004. Subsequently, he became the President of TRTF and served in this position until 2015.

The endowment fund will solidify and expand the “A Helping Hand” program, which Lehr and Pritchard fostered to success. The goal is to reach \$2 million in donations by December 31, 2019. Donations will be invested and the earnings will be used to fund “A Helping Hand” indefinitely.

TRTF graciously asks for your financial support as we pursue this essential mission to help retirees in need. Please consider making a tax-deductible gift to the Lehr-Pritchard Endowment Fund today.

Impacting Classrooms Every Day

Today’s classroom teachers use a variety of tools to educate children, but due to lack of sufficient funding, many find new technology items out of reach. TRTF’s Classroom Assistance Grant program helps teachers improve the learning environment for students by giving \$500 towards projects, learning platforms, software, and much more. Since 2008, TRTF has provided \$56,000 in grants to active educators all across Texas.

Donna Magjarevich, a dyslexia teacher at Selman Intermediate in Sealy, says that “the state of Texas mandates that a school district have a dyslexia program...but it does not allot any funding for this service.” In 2016, she won a \$500 grant from TRTF, using the money to purchase Really Great Reading Phonics. The program provides a set of tools to diagnose, group, and teach students with weaknesses in their foundational reading skills.

Donna feels the program is ideal for students growing up in a technological

age, and is excited that her school’s dyslexia program will be updated for the first time in 20 years. Her students will not only improve their reading accuracy and rate, but also their use of electronic mediums to communicate.

Joel Yelton, an Industrial Technology teacher at Cypress Ridge High School in Houston, also won a grant. Mr. Yelton and his students will use the \$500 to purchase materials to build a tiny house. Mr. Yelton is no stranger to taking on ambitious projects, such as building custom cars, and finds that combining “theories and concepts with real world applications” gives relevancy to his students’ education.

“Harder, more complex projects give my students a real sense of purpose,” says Joel. With 65 percent of students at Cypress Ridge qualifying for free and reduced lunch, he acknowledges that many experience financial distress. “I believe that my job is to give them the most I can with whatever materials I have.” He also wants the lessons they learn to be twofold, especially when it concerns the value of time and money: “there are people out there who are willing to help, but inevitably we make our own way.”

Laura Vrana teaches first grade at Jefferson Avenue Elementary in Seguin. Like most schools that receive grants from TRTF, Jefferson is a Title I school. Laura says “the school is always looking for new ways to encourage and provide opportunities to enhance academic achievement among these disadvantaged children. A strong academic foundation goes hand-in-hand with a strong social and emotional one.”

The Jefferson Garden Club is one result of this philosophy, and Ms. Vrana has seen how participation in the club teaches responsibility, organizational skills and persistence. The students learn about nutrition, where food comes from and how to care for their environment, all important facets of their well-being now and in the future. The club exceeds 90 students in grades one through five. Laura was able to purchase fruit trees, rose bushes, seeds

and soil for this year’s spring garden.

TRTF will continue to support current classroom teachers by providing fifteen \$500 grants for innovative projects and learning platforms in the coming year. Your donations help students develop real-world skills, and provides them with a caring, creative community to explore their future!

November is Foundation Month!

Through TRTA, our members advocate for their own benefits and also for the secure future of active teachers and those who will become educators. Through TRTF, our members extend their generosity to causes that have tangible impacts on the lives of retirees, classroom teachers and first-year educators.

You impact the future every day by supporting “A Helping Hand,” Classroom Assistance Grants and Beginning Teacher Scholarships. Since 2008, our members have given over \$244,000 to impact the lives of educators of the past, present, and future!

We appreciate all that you do to help TRTF impact the future every day! Since 2008, you have helped 93 retirees get back on their feet, 10 residents of West recover from a devastating disaster, 97 teachers implement projects benefitting their students, and 106 future educators pursue their passion. Donations also support our Legacy Campaign, which promotes a positive image of public education.

The TRTA Board of Directors has designated November as Foundation Month, a time to share positive news about how you and your fellow retirees are helping us impact the future every day! TRTF is also using this time to conduct its annual fundraising campaign. Please see our annual appeal letter on page 11 of *The VOICE*, and learn how you can donate to TRTF. ★

★ PRESIDENT'S LINE

Your 2016-17 TRTA Team is in place! District presidents have been trained and are ready to lead, state committee members met and have started working with your district and local unit chairmen, and your officers are looking forward to our Fall District Convention visits with our members! Each of us is looking forward to a busy, productive year for you!



We all know the coming months will be difficult for Texas public school retirees as we work for the continuation of affordable health care and to preserve our current benefits. If each one of us will agree to use our individual skills and talents for the benefit of all retirees by communicating within our team and by being open, honest, and respectful, we will attain our goals! 1 SPIRIT + 1 TEAM = 1 TRTA CHAMPIONSHIP!

Now is the time to get to know who will be representing you in Austin in the coming legislative session. If you don't know them personally, find time to stop by their district office BEFORE the session begins. Let them put a face with a name, so when you do call or write during session they will remember you. Presenting a friendly face now can pay off for us in 2017!

As always, our membership numbers are important! Past experience has shown us our representatives always want to know how many retirees are their constituents. We ended last year with a count of 80,453 members. Introduce prospective members to our member benefits which can be found in *The VOICE*. Many have found that using just one of these a year has paid their state TRTA dues. What if each one of us recruited just one new member? Think of the kind of impression we could make by saying "we now have 170,000+ TRTA members!" I challenge you to recruit at least one new member for this coming year!

Wishing you a happy, healthy and productive year,



Nancy Byler
TRTA President

TRTA UPCOMING DEADLINES

Proposed Bylaws Amendments: Due November 1

Article XV, Section 1 of the TRTA bylaws states that "proposed amendments to be considered by the Organizational Affairs Committee shall be made through a Local Unit or a TRTA District and shall be submitted to the TRTA office by November 1, 2016." Download the bylaws amendment form at www.trta.org. Please attach a copy of the District or Local Unit meeting minutes during which the proposed bylaws amendment was passed.

Reports for the Children's Book Project, Volunteer Hours, Health Care, Retirement Events, Scholarship and Grants: Due February 15 and March 1

Local unit reports are due to the District Committee Chairman by February 15, 2017. District reports are due to the State Committee Representative by March 1, 2017.

Delegate Information: Due February 27

Names of all convention delegates are due in the TRTA office by February 27, 2017. 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, Second Vice-Presidents, Secretaries and Treasurers or alternates appointed by the District Presidents when the elected officers cannot attend; and Past Presidents of TRTA.

2016-2018 TRTA BOARD

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Changes to TRS–Care Adopted by TRS Board of Trustees; Cost Increases in Store for TRS–Care

As TRTA reported in the second quarter issue of *The VOICE*, The Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS) Board of Trustees met in June to discuss approving several changes to the TRS–Care retiree health insurance program. Those changes were accepted and are going into effect this month, September 2016. It is the first time in 12 years that TRS has introduced a cost increase for participants of TRS–Care.

These changes include: increased deductibles; increased out-of-pocket maximum costs; new convenience fees for local pharmacy prescription drug fills; and new rules on Medicare D. The plan changes are projected to cost TRS–Care participants more than \$43 million.

TRTA learned in May that TRS–Care is facing an imminent negative balance of approximately \$18 million by August 2017. At the time, TRS Executive Director Brian Guthrie could not say that the balance would increase or decrease in the coming months. TRTA then learned in June that the negative balance has changed to a small surplus of approximately \$13 million. While this may seem like good news, \$13 million covers only two to three days of claims. TRS determined that it must have more money in its end of year cash flow for claims due to the rapid fluctuations and unpredictability of medical costs. This increasing financial pressure caused the TRS Board to take immediate action.

In May, Director Guthrie stressed that the only opportunity to help prevent a negative fund balance is now, as waiting until 2017 to enact any changes is not enough time to have an effect. He also stressed that there is no guarantee of receiving supplemental funding from the Legislature during the 85th Legislative Session. Mitigating the shortfall using methods that are within the purview of the Board of Trustees—actions not requiring legislative approval—had to be considered sooner rather than later.

As our members know, the program faces a much bigger shortfall for the coming legislative session than it faced in 2015. Last session, the Texas Legislature approved

supplemental funding in the amount of \$768 million for TRS–Care, intending to prevent massive premium increases for retirees living on fixed incomes. While much needed and appreciated, the funding was a temporary fix. TRS–Care is now projected to have a shortfall between \$1.5 and \$2 billion for the 2017–18 fiscal year!

TRS–Care Changes and How They Affect Your Pocketbook Among the changes, TRS is introducing Humana as a new Medicare Advantage provider. This change will go into effect January 1, 2017. Humana will be in attendance at several TRTA district fall conventions and will host seminars this fall to discuss information with plan participants, such as providers available through their network. Stay tuned to the *Inside Line* for dates and times of these seminars!

For those who do not have the Medicare Advantage Plan, Aetna will remain as the traditional Medicare provider.

Express Scripts will continue to manage pharmacy benefits. The TRS staff recommended that there be no increase in retiree premium contributions.

Changes in Medical Deductibles and Out-of-Pocket Costs (Expected Cost to Retirees, \$21.9 million) TRS is increasing medical deductibles and maximum out-of-pocket limits within grandfathering limits, as well as increasing pharmacy copays within grandfathering limits. View all cost changes online at www.trta.org/trs-care.

Changes in Medicare D and Pharmacy Co-Pays (Projected Savings and Cost to Retirees, \$17.8 million) Effective January 1, 2017, the prescription drug plan for Medicare eligible members will be the Medicare Part D plan, with those who do not have either Part A or Part B remaining in the traditional plan. There will be no change to the current pharmacy co-pays on the Medicare Part D plan. A \$10 convenience fee after the first fill for maintenance drugs dispensed at a retail pharmacy will be instated in order to create an incentive for members to utilize mail



order for their prescriptions.

When Will These Changes Take Place?

The changes adopted by the TRS Board of Trustees go into effect on September 1, 2016 (excepting the change to Humana for Medicare Advantage, which will take place on January 1, 2017).

What can TRTA members do to protect their vital health care benefits? Encourage others to join our fight and support TRTA. Our membership exceeds 80,000, but there are more than 250,000 people in TRS–Care! If all 250,000 participants united with TRTA, we would stand a much better chance at funding this program adequately now and in the future.

It takes hard work and a consistent effort to tell our story. It takes dedicated members willing to call and email their elected officials and let them know our TRS–Care program is in dire circumstances.

TRTA members must recognize that the battle for health care funding will be very difficult. We have many friends in the Legislature, but many are saying that fewer dollars will be available. TRTA is a successful advocacy organization because we find ways to work with all of our elected officials.

The fight for more funding for the TRS–Care plan is already underway. The Legislature must take a comprehensive look at how they fund this vital retiree health care program.

The decisions made this summer may be viewed as a modest reduction in benefits for retirees; however, if the Legislature does not act to deal with this health care crisis, TRS–Care plan design and premium increases may make the plan unrecognizable compared to how we know it today. ★

Revitalizing Local Units by Bridging the Gap with Active Educators

By Brock Gregg, Administrative Coordinator



TRTA has said many times over the years that our 250-plus local units are the heart of our great organization, doing the grassroots advocacy work necessary to make the voices of thousands of public education retirees a unified force in the Texas Legislature and beyond.

As we all continue building this voice, we must show active educators that we care about more than just retirement issues. They are vital to building the future of both our state and local organizations!

That being said, the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS) serves as a great unifier – whether you are retired or still actively employed, you are participating by making contributions and are helping to build the promise that the TRS system will be there for all retirees and pre-retirees when needed. This is a great message and a good way to start a conversation with folks who may not even know they are contributing, much less what the promise entails for them!

Our job as members is to remind actives that we are focused on maintaining that promise through issue advocacy in the Legislature, voting for public officials who will keep the promise, and remaining vigilant about potential changes and communicating them to all who will listen.

Active educators are our allies! We work to protect their future retirement benefits, and we need their support as well. We need them to join together with us and participate in the fight to keep the promise!

Many of our members already reach out to active educators through volunteering at schools, providing support to teachers as the school year begins, giving books to students,

and so much more. Our members are sincere in their efforts because they have all been there! This demonstration of support means a lot to active educators, and makes our organization meaningful to them. Hopefully, they think of us when they begin to focus their energies on retirement and will join our organization and become future leaders for TRTA.

Below are some additional ideas on how you can help your local unit bridge the gap and provide encouragement to our active educator allies!

Civic participation and political involvement

We all know how important it is to vote in all elections, and we should also share information we learn about political candidates with active educators, such as where a candidate stands on various educational, health care and retirement security issues. Above all, though active educators lead very busy lives, we must stress to them the importance and the power of their vote!

TRTA is a part of the Texas Educators Vote coalition with multiple active educator organizations. Please consider becoming a local coalition representative and volunteer along with likeminded pre-retirees on each campus to encourage teachers to register to vote, be informed voters and vote at every opportunity! If you are interested in becoming a coalition volunteer or campus representative, please email Brock Gregg at brock@trta.org.

Work with the coalition to get educators to sign a pledge to vote and to pass a school board resolution (available through the coalition website) to encourage an attitude of civic engagement. Texas Educators Vote has a website (www.texaseducatorsvote.com) and Facebook page with more information.

Your local unit can also build partnerships with local civic groups, such as the League of Women Voters, PTA/PTO, school bond election campaigns, and active educator organizations representing teachers and administrators. Consider participating in active educator meetings, and invite their leaders and members to attend TRTA meetings so that information can be shared about how we can work together. Being present is key to building trust! It does not require a huge commitment of time and is very rewarding.

Reaching out to active teachers in the schools

Active educators deserve our respect and sincere support of their service to the public and to school children. There are many ways TRTA members can show that we care.

Our members serve on school district committees, deliver goodies to schools, and even distribute copies of *The VOICE*. Consider working these activities into your current governance structure using your legislative, community volunteer service, and retirement education committees, as well as through the Children's Book Project and local unit scholarship programs. You can also offer opportunities to active teachers through the

Texas Retired Teachers Foundation (TRTF) by sharing applications for classroom assistance grants and the new beginning teacher scholarships. Some other simple but highly effective ideas include volunteering for school UIL activities and science fairs.

TRTA is developing a great new resource that will be available to all members. This volunteer portal will connect schools with retired educators for the purpose of volunteering. Active educators may post volunteer opportunities, request specific education needs and review volunteer hours. Retired educators may join posted events, record their volunteer hours and provide feedback on their volunteer experience.

Please stay tuned to learn more about this wonderful, free volunteer portal that will help TRTA assist more active teachers statewide! Contact Brock Gregg to sign up your local unit to connect with volunteer opportunities in your school district.

Social media networking!

Collect personal contact information for pre-retirees, especially email addresses. Active educators may appreciate receiving free TRTA resources such as the *Inside Line* and *Before the Bell* e-newsletters. Offer to put educators on these lists to receive frequent legislative and education updates. Send their names and email addresses along with their school district to brock@trta.org, and TRTA will sign them up! Encourage them to like our TRTA and *Before the Bell* Facebook pages for daily updates.

You can also send support emails and newsletters from your local unit about any upcoming events or meetings that they may be interested in attending. Some local units, for example, host meal events honoring local teachers and often receive many new members this way.

Consider sending actives in your area an email when TRTA releases a new video on our YouTube channel, TRTATV, or when Tim Lee sends out an *Inside Line* with an urgent action alert requesting that members contact their

legislators. Remind active educators that retirement issues being reviewed by the Texas Legislature impact their future financial security as well!

If you haven't already done so, create a local unit Facebook page. Many of today's teachers use Facebook to read news, get ideas for their classroom, and participate in groups to discuss curriculum and lesson planning. Since many already use Facebook as a source of information, your local unit page can serve as another source with information about the Legislature, voting, and retirement.

While these are just a few of many ideas for connecting your local unit with active teachers, they are all vital activities for growing your membership and creating a path for the future. Power in the public



sphere depends upon the size of the voice (voters), the commitment to core principles (the TRS promise), and the resources we are willing to expend toward our core principles (what we are willing to do as individuals and a unified group to keep that commitment). We must work hard, together, to protect what we all believe in!

Please feel free to contact me at brock@trta.org with any questions, as well as any ideas your unit would like to share. 📧

District Presidents Leadership Training Conference Held in Austin

TRTA's district presidents met in Austin July 11–15 for their annual District Presidents Leadership Training Conference (DPLTC). The 20 district presidents arrived from all across the state to receive comprehensive training from the TRTA Board of Directors about their manifold roles and responsibilities as leaders in the organization.

The conference served as an opportunity for all continuing and incoming district presidents to become acquainted with one another. One of the primary focuses of the conference was to prepare presidents for the challenges to come in 2017 during the 85th Legislative Session, particularly for TRS–Care.

As many of our members know, the Legislature has formed an interim study group to assess the health care program between now and the beginning of the 85th Legislative Session. A report is expected from that committee this fall. District presidents serve as vital connections between the state office and the organization's 254 local units, helping to rally the organization's membership to participate in meetings of the study group and contact their legislators before and during session.

Along with new initiatives, district presidents gleaned and learned how to disseminate information from state level committees to their district and local unit counterparts. Facilitating the work of the health care, retirement education, community and volunteer service, informative and protective services, member benefits, organizational affairs, and local unit support committees is a key role for a TRTA district president.

The presidents also elected their District Presidents Council, three representatives who serve on the TRTA Board of Directors. Council Chairman is June Cooper of District 17, Vice–Chairman is Ella Gauthier of District 4 and Recorder is Lynn Granzin of District 15.

The presidents returned home excited to face the challenges of the coming year. TRTA is grateful for the active participation of our district leaders and looks forward to working with them to make our association vocal, cohesive, and stronger than ever! 📧

TRTA 64th Annual Convention Planning Underway!

Convention Schedule

MONDAY, MARCH 27, 2017

10:00 a.m.

TRTA Officers Meeting

11:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Registration/Delegate Certification/Exhibits

12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Foundation Board of Trustees Meeting

12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

Facilitators Meeting

2:30 – 3:30 p.m.

TRTA Board of Directors Meeting

3:45 – 4:30 p.m.

District Presidents Meeting

4:45 – 5:45 p.m.

District Caucus Meetings

6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Welcome and Awards Dinner

TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 2017

8:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Registration/Delegate Certification/Exhibits

8:00 – 9:15 a.m.

Foundation Breakfast

9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Training/Informational Sessions

9:30 – 10:30 a.m.

Breakout – Session I

10:45 – 11:45 a.m.

Breakout – Session II

12:00 – 1:30 p.m.

Legislative Luncheon

2:00 p.m. – TBD

House of Delegates

TBD

TRTA Board of Directors Meeting

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29, 2017

Day at the Capitol

8:00 – 9:00 a.m.

Legislative Visits

9:30 a.m.

House Gallery

10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Photo opportunities with legislators

10:30 a.m.

Senate Gallery

11:30 a.m.

Rally on the Capitol Steps or East Lawn (TBD)

12:00 p.m.

Additional Legislative Visits

12:00 – 2:30 p.m.

Ice Cream Social on the East Lawn

TRTA members are sure to have an enlightening, educational and motivating experience in 2017, when they attend the 64th Annual TRTA Convention in Austin, Texas!

The convention will be held March 27–28, 2017 at the Austin Hilton on 500 E. 4th Street. The hotel is now taking reservations. The group rates for a single or double (\$199), triple (\$219) and quad (\$239) per night are good through March 1, 2017, but rooms are filling quickly! Please note the group rate is available only March 27–29.

Call 1.844.291.8931 or 512.482.8000 and be sure to use reservation code “TRT” for the group rate! For online reservations, please visit the TRTA home page (www.trta.org).

There is no better time to be in Austin! The Texas Legislature will be in regular session, discussing such vital issues as the TRS–Care health insurance program and ways to protect the longevity of benefits for our public education retirees and pre-retirees.

TRTA has released a tentative schedule of events to help you plan your travel. Convention activities will begin later in the day on Monday, March 27, allowing members to travel in the morning and still arrive in time for registration. Unlike years past, there will be no banquet, and instead members may attend a welcome dinner on the first night.

Day two (March 28) begins with a Foundation Breakfast. Previously, TRTF held a luncheon. Though the format will be somewhat different, members will still be able to present gifts to the Foundation in honor or in memory of a loved one, friend or colleague.

Training sessions and the House of Delegates fill the second day. A legislative luncheon will be held at 12:00 p.m. At the conclusion of the House of Delegates, attendees will be able to choose from a wide variety of restaurants within walking distance of the hotel in wonderfully diverse downtown Austin for dinner.

The convention will be truncated, allowing for a full day of legislative grassroots advocacy on Wednesday, March 29! “Day at the Capitol” is open to all convention attendees and any member who wants to come to Austin for this purpose only.

The Day at the Capitol allows public education retirees to visit with their legislators, be honored by both the Texas Senate and House and enjoy a rousing speech by TRTA officers and elected officials on the Capitol grounds. All attendees at this event are encouraged to wear red!

We hope you will join us in Austin in March for convention, Day at the Capitol, or both! Look for the registration form for all events in the fourth quarter issue of *The VOICE*. ★

November is Foundation Month!

The Texas Retired Teachers Foundation (TRTF) helps educators of the past, present and future through “A Helping Hand,” Classroom Assistance Grants and Beginning Teacher Scholarships.

Designate your fall local unit meeting to increase awareness of the Foundation’s programs.

Contact us at 1.800.880.1650 or visit www.trtf.org to learn more.

Have You Scheduled Your Benefits Checkup Yet?



Many members are glad they've taken the opportunity to meet with their local benefits representative to learn about their endorsed member benefits. The Texas Retired Teachers Association (TRTA) has partnered with Association Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA) to make benefits available to members. Benefit representatives are available as a courtesy to answer all of your questions.

Your Member Benefits Include:

- > Dental & Vision Coverage
- > Cancer Insurance
- > Medicare Supplement Plans
- > Long Term Care
- > Life Insurance
- > Emergency Transportation Plan
- > Hearing Benefits
- > Apple Electronics Discounts
- > Travel Discounts
- > Pet Insurance

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**ASSOCIATION MEMBER
BENEFITS ADVISORS**



TRTA Members **WANTED!**

Due to the overwhelming requests for information about benefit programs, Association Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA) is seeking TRTA members to join us as benefit ambassadors. Benefit ambassadors conduct seminars on long term care and hold informational meetings with other members in their area. If you have an interest in this position, please call Jason Perez, Ambassador Program Representative, at: **1-877-557-6477**

Help the Texas Retired Texas Teachers Foundation reach their goal of \$100,000! Donate today!



This is our annual appeal. Using The VOICE for our appeal saves thousands of dollars in postage, meaning thousands more can be dedicated to our charitable programs. You may use the card found on the back of The VOICE and the enclosed postage paid envelope to send in your tax deductible donation.

Since 2008, the generosity of TRTA members has helped 93 retirees get back on their feet, 10 residents of West recover from a devastating disaster, 97 classroom teachers implement innovative projects and learning methods for their students, and 106 future educators pursue their passion for teaching.

Over \$244,000 has been given to educators of the past, present and future around the state!

Your donation can mean so many things, but changing a life for the better is the ultimate result.

Your donation means that a retiree living on an income of less than \$800 per month is able to receive much-needed hearing aids, dental work, food, pay for their Medicare premium and so much more!

Your donation means that a classroom teacher will teach her students how to do CPR, how to grow food, build a house and even how to write and publish their own dual-language books!

Your donation means that another student who grew to love education because of the positive influence of a teacher will become an educator themselves.

Together, our charitable programs ("A Helping Hand," classroom assistance grants, and beginning teacher scholarships), along with our educational program (the Legacy Campaign) and endowment fund, keep the compassion and dedication to education alive!

Please consider making a donation of \$30 to help us reach our goal!

You have helped us change many lives in the past. Now help us impact the future today, tomorrow, and every day! Please make your tax deductible donation to TRTF today!

Thank you for helping us impact the future and change lives every day!

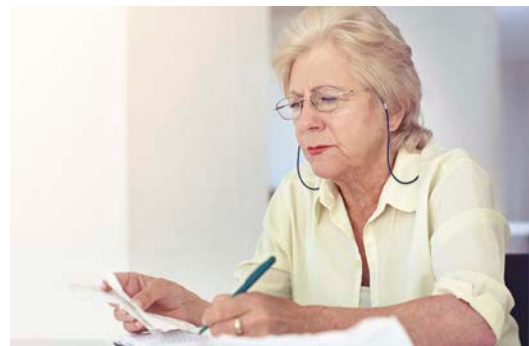
With your donation, we can provide financial assistance to 35+ retirees in need, award scholarships to new educators who are carrying on the Texas education legacy, award classroom grants to educators with innovative projects that motivate the students in our Texas public classrooms, and change lives while promoting a positive image of public education.



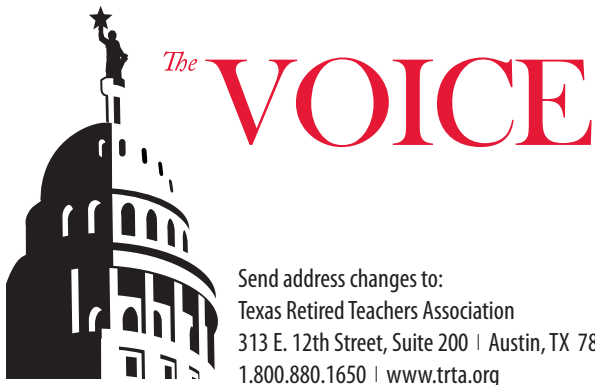
Beginning Teacher Scholarships



Legacy Campaign



A Helping Hand



Send address changes to:
Texas Retired Teachers Association
313 E. 12th Street, Suite 200 | Austin, TX 78701-1957
1.800.880.1650 | www.trta.org

TRS' NEW WEBSITE coming Sept. 26, 2016 to a screen near you!

www.trs.texas.gov



**Help the Texas Retired Texas Teachers Foundation
reach their goal of \$100,000!
Donate today!**



Yes, I want to help! ☐ \$100 ☐ \$75 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$30 ☐ Other \$ _____

☐ Check # _____ Date _____ Amount \$ _____

☐ Please charge my: ☐ American Express ☐ Discover ☐ Master Card ☐ Visa Expiration _____

Credit Card # _____ Signature _____

Thank you for your support.

TRTF is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Please enclose your tax-deductible donation with this card in the envelope provided.
Your generosity is greatly appreciated. 313 E. 12th Street, Suite 220 • Austin, TX 78701