

# SCRТА NEWS

Summit County Retired Teachers Association

THE SUMMIT COUNTY AFFILIATE OF Ohio Retired Teachers Association March - April 2025

## SCRТА Community Service Projects: Ronald McDonald House Akron and Shelter Care



Thanks so much to the many SCRТА members who saved and donated pull tabs for the Ronald McDonald House. Those tabs are recycled for cash, which is then used to give families of children who are hospitalized a few extras at this critical time in their lives. The extras include birthday gifts, trips to the hair salon or anniversary dinners, in other words, a little normalcy when little else seems normal.

Elaine Jarvis graciously and diligently kept the names of all of you who contributed last year. We put those names in a hat and drew two (2) winners, Jeanette Scott and Mary Lou Swartz, who each got a \$25 gas or grocery gift card at the November luncheon. Congratulations to Jeanette and Mary Lou and many thanks to ALL who participated!

We continue to need your help. Please keep saving the tabs from all the beverage, soup, pet food, and other canned goods that you may use. It takes about 1000 tabs to equal a pound of aluminum, and every tab helps! ***We will have a Community Projects table at each luncheon where you can drop off the tabs you have collected. If you prefer, you can keep collecting and bring a full baggie, box or other container of tabs. Although we will no longer keep track of who is bringing tabs for an end of year drawing, there will be a basket with candy (one piece per meeting, please) to thank you for your dedication to this and our other projects.*** We will also continue to accept donations of toiletries, paper products, individually wrapped snacks, and juice boxes at luncheons for Ronald McDonald House. Watch for some new ideas regarding donations to RMH.

Another organization that we have elected to assist is the Safe Landing Youth Shelter (Shelter Care). This program provides crisis and emergency services to children aged 11-17. Safe Landing provides short term residential care, with the length of a child's stay dependent on circumstance and need. Up to 12 children can be housed at any one time. Shelter Care's winter needs include bottled water, individually wrapped snacks, hand warmers, dryer sheets, Lysol disinfectant wipes and sprays, laundry detergent, disposable silverware, and paper plates. They can always use shampoo and conditioner, body wash and deodorant and request that these items be full size. These items can be brought to SCRТА luncheon meetings, and they will be delivered to Shelter Care within a few days, if not the same day.

If you bring more than 5 donation items to the luncheon for either RMH or Shelter Care or if you bring a container of tabs, you will be given an additional ticket for the door prize drawing. Door prizes are currently gas and/or grocery gift cards. Thank you for your help and generosity in assisting these worthy causes!

*Submitted by Rozanne Emich - Community Service*

## President's Message

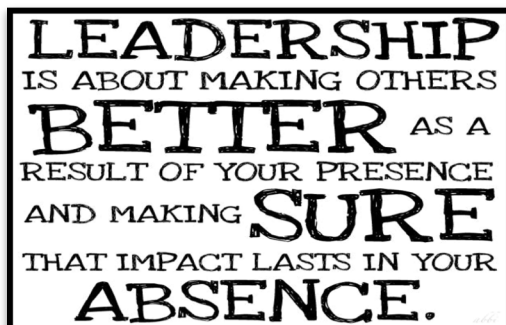


I always like to highlight those committee members who work so hard coordinating SCRTA's various projects. Special thanks to Vicky Shaw and Judi Hill for all they do with the Scholarship Committee. Good job on the Double Good Popcorn fundraiser. We have been reminded that our success has come through a very small group of persons selling the popcorn. These funds help high school students who intend to major in Education and college students who are currently majoring in Education. Let's increase our donation amounts for 2025.

Special thanks also go to Jackie Hovey, the Membership Chairperson. Our SCRTA's membership has continued to increase in the past two years under her leadership. Please check with her to see if your dues are up to date. Your dues help us achieve our goals and ensure that you will continue getting our newsletter.

Please plan to attend our next luncheon and General Meeting on **April 1, 2025**, at Guy's Party Center. Doors open at 11:30 am. Hope to see you there!

*Johnnette S. Curry, President.*



### 2025 SCRTA MANAGEMENT BOARD

**President** - Johnnette Curry

**1st VP/ Program** - Elaine Jarvis

**2nd VP/Legislative** - Bill Siegerferth

**Administrative Asst.** - Rebecca Moore

**Treasurer** - Bill Siegerferth

**Asst. Treasurer/Membership** - Jackie Hovey

**Past President** - Mary Lou Swartz

**Membership Luncheons** - Micki Lavis;

Phyllis Lewis

**Sunshine Committee** - Christine Bean;

Rozanne Emich Co-Chair

**Newsletter Editor** - Elaine Jarvis

**Web Master** - Leroy Martin

**Nominating Committee: 3 elected members** Carol Caughron; Miki Lavis; Phyllis Lewis

**2 At-Large Members: Community Service -**

Christine Bean and OPEN (At-Large Member)

**Scholarship Committee** -Vicky Shaw;

Judi Hill Co-Chair

**Bulk Mailing** - Rozanne Emich

**Travel/Excursions** - OPEN

**Teacher Grants** - Christina Haas

**Past Past President** - Paul DiMascio

“  
YOU MAKE A LIVING BY  
WHAT YOU GET. YOU MAKE A  
LIFE BY WHAT YOU GIVE.  
”

— WINSTON CHURCHILL

## Legislative and Legal Updates



Bill Siegfert

### ***Increasing Employer Contribution Rate: A Big Challenge***

STRS has put together a coalition (of which SCRTA is a member) to work toward winning legislative approval for increasing the employer contribution rate. The rate currently stands at 14% of payroll. That percentage has not increased since 1984, while over the intervening years the teacher rate has increased nine times from 8.7% to 14%. STRS does not have the authority to increase either percentage...legislative action is needed to do that.

The last effort to raise the employer contribution rate occurred in 2022. In March of that year, H.B. 601 (134th General Assembly) was introduced. The bill proposed increasing the rate  $\frac{1}{2}\%$  per year over an eight year period, bringing the new employer rate to 18% in the eighth year. Language concerning the annual COLA and retirement eligibility was also a part of H.B. 601 and most likely helped ensure that it would not receive any serious consideration. In fact, a week after its introduction, the bill was referred to the House Insurance Committee. The bill never made it out of committee.

STRS's current rate increase initiative is identical to that proposed in 2022, i.e., raising the rate to 18% over an eight year period in  $\frac{1}{2}\%$  annual increments. The increase is needed to assure that the retirement system remains financially healthy and able to maintain and responsibly improve benefits for retirees, current and future. Just as important is the need to have funding at levels that can survive the budgetary strain caused by down market periods and changing retiree vs. active teacher demographics

without the need for pension reform (benefit reductions) similar to changes made following the 2008 Great Recession.

STRS staff is having on-going discussions with legislators, but at this time there has been no public statement or announcement regarding bill sponsorship. We don't expect any serious movement in that respect until negotiations over the state budget are completed. At that point, we expect finding sponsors, particularly bi-partisan sponsors, will be a real challenge.

Once a bill is drafted and introduced, there will be other issues to overcome. Most difficult among them is the unprecedented funneling of public school tax-payer dollars to private schools by way of vouchers. Vouchers are being handed to virtually any family, regardless of a student's home public school district performance or his or her family's income. That issue alone will drive more districts to ask their property tax payers to approve more levies to replace lost voucher money.

The level of state school funding in the next budget is also critical to passing the employer contribution rate increase. The new Ohio House Speaker (a voucher champion) has proposed cutting school funding at the same time a bipartisan plan to improve state funding is moving to its third and final stage. The Ohio Supreme Court ruled in 1997 that Ohio's method of funding public schools was unconstitutional. State leadership ignored the ruling for years. Then, in 2017, a bi-partisan group began putting together what became known as The Fair School Funding Plan. The Plan was designed to be implemented in three stages with the third stage due to be decided and implemented in the current budget. The Governor has included the final stage in his budget. However, the new House Speaker, Matt Huffman, has labeled funding under the plan as "unsustainable" and a "fantasy." We obviously won't know until the budget negotiations conclude whether state funding of public education is a win for schools under the Fair School Funding model or a loss under Huffman's plan.

**Please see Legislation, page 4**

### Legislation Continued from page 3

Finally, the Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) is not warm to the idea of employer contribution increases. STRS began discussing the idea in late 2023. At the time, a news source's coverage of the story included the thoughts of the OSBA's chief executive, Kathy McFarland. McFarland commented that her organization "would oppose any increase in the employer contribution rate." We do not know if OSBA's position has changed, but we're guessing it has not.

In summary, passage of legislation authorizing an increase in the employer contribution rate will clearly be a challenge. It will be less of a challenge if the new budget includes school funding increases and/or if the Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit, challenging the constitutionality of the voucher program, prevails in Franklin County Common Pleas Court. That case was scheduled to go to trial in November of 2024, but delayed by the judge until 2025. In all likelihood, the issue will make its way to the Ohio Supreme Court regardless of its fate in Franklin County, making it unlikely that a ruling will be handed down, favorable or unfavorable to Vouchers Hurt Ohio's arguments, in time to impact STRS efforts over the short term to increase employer contribution rates.

Retirees can play an important role in persuading the legislature to vote for an STRS proposal to increase the employer contribution rate. As a member of the coalition, SCRTA will ask each member to become involved in the manner requested and suggested by those leading the campaign.

### ***The Latest on WEP, GPO***

The recent passage of the Social Security Fairness Act will result in the Social Security Administration (SSA) computing benefit adjustments for over 3 million people. The repeal is effective with the January 2024 benefit, and applies only to persons who have earned a public pension and a social security benefit. According to the SSA, computing retroactive adjustments is very complex and their early analysis is that much of the work

must be done manually and on an individual case-by-case basis. While work has begun processing adjustments, SSA is cautioning that "it could take more than one year to adjust benefits and pay all retroactive benefits." Calling the SSA for information at this time will result in long hold times. Regularly updated information can be found on line at <https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/social-security-fairness-act.html>.

SSA is cautioning beneficiaries that "bad actors" or "scam artists" may try to take advantage of the new law. The agency states that "SSA will never ask or require a person to pay either for assistance or to have their benefits started, increased or paid retroactively." They recommend that beneficiaries hang up on phone calls and not to click or respond to anyone offering to increase or expedite benefits through on line communications. More on SSA scams can be found at [www.ssa.gov/scams](http://www.ssa.gov/scams).

### ***Bill Siegfert – Legislative Chair***

#### **April 1, 2025 SCRTA General Luncheon Meeting Speaker Announced**

The Summit County Retired Teachers Association will hold its first General Membership Luncheon Meeting of this year on Tuesday, April 1, 2025, at Guys Party Center, 500 E Waterloo Road Akron, Ohio 44319 at 12 noon. **Reservations are required.** (*See the reservations insert page in this newsletter.*) Mr. Mark Grabowski, RMHC Marketing and Communications Specialist, will enlighten us regarding the mission, vision, and values of Ronald McDonald House Charities Northeast Ohio and he will share information about the many RMHC NEO programs. He will also highlight the next phase of support from SCRTA which will involve being able to give monetary donations specifically to RMHC Akron. RMHC is one of two Summit County organizations that SCRTA has been supporting as Community Service projects for a number of years.

For more information about RMHC, visit their website ([www.rmhcneo.org](http://www.rmhcneo.org)), the SCRTA website ([summitcountyrta.org](http://summitcountyrta.org)), or contact Elaine Jarvis (330-607-0226) or Rozanne Emich (330-603-7660).

## SCRTA and The House That Love Built



In the Winter 2000 issue of "Care Cables: Akron's Ronald McDonald House Newsletter to Friends" SCRTA was thanked for being one of their long-time donors of money, goods and services. RMH depended on community support to fund more than half of their operating budget. Records filed in the archives of donations from members and summaries of purchases bear out how much the association supported The House That Love Built from 1986 through at least 2003. Collections varied from year to year. Some records are lost, but the project's financial records show an average of about \$700 in donations per year over time.

The inspiration for RMH of Akron came from Children's Hospital CEO Bill Considine. He became CEO in 1979 and had seen innumerable weary parents sleeping on uncomfortable chairs or even the floors of their children's rooms. The Akron community raised over \$1.8 million and the House opened debt free January 13, 1985. In 1986 SCRTA members welcomed their new service project as a way to help children and their families.

When I organized the archives a couple of years ago, I gathered folders labeled "Ronald McDonald House" but did not read all of the contents. Pouring through the records left by past Community Service Chairpersons and Treasurers has been quite an eye opener! Among the newsletters, minutes and committee records, there are many pages listing donations to the House. Letters filed by Treasurers Cora Jerrow and Edna Robinson and committee reports filed by Betty Dyak give us a picture of the enormous number of donations from SCRTA over the years. For example, *eighteen* letters of thanks were received from 1992 – 1995 for drop-offs of donations by Cora, Betty and others.

Betty left the most thorough records including her list of the project's procedures. Members donated money in the "Smile Cups" at the luncheon tables. During the 1990s, members also collected UPC symbols from Scott

paper products (redeemable for ten cents each) and travel samples of toiletries. Prior to each shopping trip, Betty telephoned the house resident manager for the Wish List, and the two women agreed on several items to be purchased. SCRTA supplied the kitchen, bedrooms, bathrooms, housekeeping tools, and even the patio. There are no specific records from 1986 when the project began, but there are itemized lists from 1987 to 2003. Occasionally SCRTA donated money designated for something such as \$500 in 1994 for bedspreads. Many items were "repeat buys" over the years when things wore out or were lost such as dozens of bath towel sets with extra washcloths, sheet sets (replaced many times), mattress covers, pillows and cases, bathmats, sponge mops, and more than 12 dozen drinking glasses over time. They bought drapes, 5-quart pots, tea kettles, electric knives, Tupperware, kitchen towels, plastic clothes hangers, many sets of dishes, toasters, coffee mugs, food processors, electric can openers, electric blankets, hand food mixers, toilet paper, a gross of toothbrushes, dish detergent, bars of soap (100 at a time), a heavy-duty hand truck, a VCR, video tapes, and watermelons and ice cream for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Kitchen equipment for bread baking was provided as were five folding chairs, two high-back chairs, one lounge chair and two tables for the patio. Heavy-duty sweepers were donated in 1992 and 1996. It appears the 48 place settings of flatware did not have to be replaced.

Betty added notes about special sales such as "6 windshield scrapers – buy 3/get 3 free". In 2001 she proudly reported on Kaufmann's sale on washable pillows and bought 20 pillows to get 10 free for a total of \$345.84. She made two trips from the store to RMH for the delivery.

Over fifteen years, she lists up to 10 or 12 golf umbrellas several times. To discourage their loss, a stencil was made. She filed it with instructions. The stencil reads, "Please return to Ronald McDonald House".

It is obvious from the letters of thanks that the retirees became fast friends with the house manager and volunteers. This is evidenced by the invitations to anniversary celebrations and the letter of condolence from the RMH President when Miss Cora Jerrow, our long-time treasurer, died. SCRTA Community Service is no small thing.

*Submitted by Rebecca Moore - Administrative Assistant*

# Scholarship News

## Summit County Retired Teachers Association Scholarship Committee



**THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!**

The Scholarship Committee is full of gratitude to our membership for your unwavering efforts to make certain that the funds are available to present scholarships to future educators.

As noted in an email sent by our Treasurer and 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, Bill Siegfert, we earned \$1,102.50 from our Double Good Popcorn Sale last November. This does not include the additional monetary donations from members and friends who donated to the popcorn sale, but did not want to purchase popcorn.

Additionally, by our current calculations, we purchased \$3,439.25 in eligible items and groceries from the ACME Community Cash Back Program which ended on February 15, 2025. I am still awaiting a few receipts in the mail to include in our tally; before the deadline of submission. That is at least \$1,200.00 more than last year.

Most importantly, you always fill our table donation cups with funds each time we meet.

Please note that the 2025 SCRTA Scholarship Application has been emailed to the high schools in Summit County. It is also located on the SCRTA website. We are also including the application in this mailing. So, if you are aware of a high school graduate who intends to major in Education, or current college student majoring in Education have them fill out and return the application before the **April 3<sup>rd</sup> deadline.**

*Judi Hill & Vicky Shaw*  
*Scholarship Co-Chairmen*

## Membership

**"All dues shall be payable, beginning in September, for the following year with December 31 being the deadline each year." \***

We had 20 new members in 2024!

Attending our luncheons is not the only way to become involved with our association. There is always room for members to help with awarding scholarship and grants to current teachers. SCRTA supports two community organizations ... Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) and Shelter Care ... primarily by giving them toiletries, cleaning and paper products that are donated by our members at our General Luncheon meetings. We welcome help, a little or a lot!

Total membership is 327 with 213 Life Time members. **Resources are limited!**

We are grateful for our Life Time Members that have made contributions towards our Teacher Grants and Scholarships.

Your dues and contributions will help us achieve our goals, benefit current and future educators and ensure that you will continue getting our newsletter.

If there is an \* by your name on this newsletter, your dues are due!

If you have any questions about your membership status, contact me.

*Jackie Hovey*

[jheysue@gmail.com](mailto:jheysue@gmail.com)

**VOLUNTEER  
GET INVOLVED**





**TWENTY TEACHER GRANTS AWARDED!**  
**WE DID THIS TOGETHER!**  
**THANK YOU!!**

Fellow SCRTA Members,

I am sharing a smattering of the responses, which came to my email, and were shared with the members of the Teacher Grant Committee, early in January. Talk about thrilled and rewarded! What could be more heartwarming than reading these excited responses from hard-working and enthusiastic classroom teachers, who had just received notification that their grant proposals had been selected? These responses and others made a cold winter sparkle for us, and we hope that they brighten your day too.

**Teacher Grant Awardees Responses**

*"Oh my gosh. I'm so excited. Thank you so much!"*

*"Thank you so much!!!!!! I am beyond excited to start the planning!"*

*"Thank you so much!!! I'm over the moon! I look forward to updating you at the end of the school year. This is awesome news! Thank you so much for this email and I will get working on this grant and touch base with our treasurer."*

*"I am so thrilled to have my letter-writing project funded!! I can't wait to start. Thank you so much for this. It truly means the world!"*

*"Thank You for such good news that the Summit County Retired Teachers decided to fund my SHOWERING WITH KNOWLEDGE project! I know my students will enjoy this experience."*

The members of the Teacher Grant Committee, Mary Austin, Sandy Baer, Jean Dickey and I, Christina Haas, are absolutely thrilled to let you all know that

we were able to award \$300.00 grants to **twenty** teachers in various public schools across Summit County. Every penny of the \$6,000.00 that funded these grants came from YOU, individual retired teachers, who generously wanted to see a younger generation of enthusiastic teachers succeed. The successful applicants all displayed a practical desire to present a more innovative, imaginative and interactive approach to teaching their subject matter. These funded proposals will enhance both the teaching and learning experiences in 20 classrooms across Summit County.

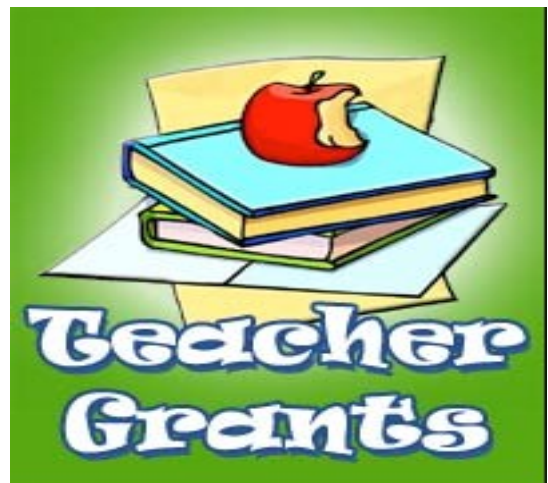
We would LOVE to be able to add another 10 grants next year. We are working on ways in which we can ensure this opportunity reaches ALL interested Summit County public school teachers in the Fall of 2025. We are accepting donations, large and small, beginning now! Please consider joining the dozens of retired teachers who financed this truly heart-warming and tax-deductible endeavor.

Donations can be accepted any time. Please send checks to our treasurer, Bill Siegferth. Make sure you write **Teacher Grants** in the memo! Cash is also gratefully accepted! Let's see how many grants we can fund by the end of August!!!

*Christina Haas*

*Teacher Grant Committee Chairperson*

[christinahaas@hotmail.com](mailto:christinahaas@hotmail.com) (330-686-2963)



**SCRTA GENERAL LUNCHEON MEETING**

**Tuesday, April 1, 2025**

**Guy's Party Center**

**500 East Waterloo Road, Akron, OH 44319**

**12 Noon**

**Price: \$23.00**

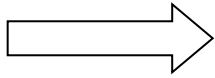
**DOOR PRIZES AND A SPECIAL PRIZE**

**Bring 5 or more items for the Community Service Project and receive an extra chance to receive a gift card.**

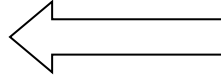
**There will be a special prize for the person who brings the most guests to this meeting.**

The meal will be a luncheon buffet and will offer an entrée, a pasta, a potato and a vegetable. A salad, rolls/butter, a beverage and dessert will be included as well as the tax and tip.

**Clip this reservation form and send it to: Micki Lavis 6106 Akron Ave NW, Canal Fulton, OH 44614  
Phone: 330-854-3054**

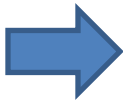


**LUNCHEON RESERVATION**



NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to **SCRTA** and send to Micki Lavis. She must receive this reservation form and your check by **Friday, March 28, 2025.**



**Our luncheon meetings are on Tuesdays!!**



**MEMBERSHIP FORM for  
SUMMIT COUNTY RETIRED TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE # \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_  
Street City Zip

SCRTA MEMBERSHIP DUES **\$20** \_\_\_\_\_ YEAR YOU RETIRED \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL DISTRICT \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

**MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO SCRTA. CHECK # \_\_\_\_\_  
BRING OR SEND THIS FORM WHEN PAYING SCRTA DUES.**

**FOR ORTA MEMBERSHIP: VISIT <https://www.orta.org/plans-pricing>**

**I would like to volunteer: Scholarship \_\_\_\_\_ Luncheon \_\_\_\_\_ Leadership \_\_\_\_\_**

**BY MAIL SEND TO: JACKIE HOVEY 1085 COOKHILL CIRCLE, AKRON, OH 44312**



Summit County Retired Teachers Association  
82 Cedar Woods Dr.  
Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44223

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
U. S. POSTAGE PAID  
AKRON, OHIO 44309  
Permit No. 418

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

*March - April*



**2025**

SCRTA Website  
[www.summitcountyrta.org](http://www.summitcountyrta.org)

Leroy Martin - Webmaster  
[lmartin561@gmail.com](mailto:lmartin561@gmail.com)



Thank you for showing so much interest in supporting our two Community Service projects ... Ronald McDonald House Akron and Shelter Care (Safe Landing for Boys and Girls).

You were very generous with your donations of pull tabs, toiletries, cleaning supplies, and food.

We always receive thank you letters from both of these organizations.

You should be very proud of yourselves for doing so much to help others!

*Christine Bean, Community Service Chairperson*



**April 1, 2025 (Tuesday) ... SCRTA General Luncheon Meeting ... 12 noon Guy's Party Center. Doors open at 11:30 am.**

**April 15, 2025 (Tuesday) ... SCRTA Management Board Meeting ... 10 am at the AEA Building.**

**June 3, 2025 (Tuesday) ... SCRTA General Luncheon Meeting ... 12 noon Guy's Party Center. Doors open at 11:30 am.**

**July 22, 2025 (Tuesday) ... SCRTA Management Board Meeting ... 10 am at the AEA Building.**

*"A Teacher's Heart Never Retires"*