

DUPAGE CONNECTION

Newsletter of the Illinois Retired Teachers Association



President's Message

Sandra Brennan

Hello All DIRTA Member,

I hope you are enjoying the great Fall weather we are having...just being outdoors and seeing the advancement of color change makes such an impression on us.

Your Board has had a challenging year in deciding a direction for the DuPage Unit going forward. The fact that we need to grow our Unit and also provide continuing leadership has presented the Board with some hard decisions. At this point the Board has decided to hire an independent consultant to help us with our future path. Nathan Mihelich, IRTA Director of Marketing, will be at our November 8 meeting to provide information for this new endeavor. It is a new challenge for us; please read the letter from Nathan which is included in this newsletter.

Last week Caryn Graham, Chuck Hlavaty, and I attended the IRTA State Convention in Springfield. It was quite the event. The Keynote Speaker was Tom Morris who spoke on "The Art of Change"...quite appropriate as our DuPage Unit is about to embark on a major restructuring. He was quite energetic as he made the point that if we value growth and learning, in the process we may have to forego comfort and security.



As we move to a new format, remember we are promoting our Unit and improving along the way. We want to see our Unit thrive and grow amidst so much change.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2023 IRTA CONVENTION

October 16 President Bill Funkhouser welcomed 182 delegates from the 53 units who sent them to the convention.

The keynote speaker was Thomas Morris, an American philosopher and former professor of philosophy at University of Notre Dame, Indiana. Professor Morris's presentation was amusing and thought provoking, dealing with an issue which we in the organization are facing, moving out of our comfort zone and embracing change to keep our institution viable for future retired teachers. A salient point he made was that we must value growth and learning more than comfort and security, and we should avoid rushing to judgment, regarding new ideas. "We are not here to only be transformative but are here to be transformed."

Mike Schmidt of the Membership Committee, and new IRTA president, reported that our membership now is 40510. We are not losing members as so many other organizations are. Local unit membership people will now be getting a new monthly membership report similar to the old Member Management.

Larry Pfeiffer and Doug Strand reported on the state of TRS. In 2022 the state paid out \$7 billion+ for our pensions. By 2026 Tier II will overtake Tier I in the workplace. The state is underfunded by \$81 billion. Investment returns over 40 years averaged +9.3%. Governor Spritzer's extra funding is inching up.

At the banquet Doris Heaton, IRTA secretary was honored for her long years of service as were the former presidents. Specially honored was Jim Bachman for his 19 years as Executive Director who led our organization through the troubled times of the lawsuit to save our COLA.

We also had the opportunity to honor a member of our local unit as unit honoree. The distinction went to Jane Munsie for her years of service to DIRT.A.



Finally, the new IRTA Executive Director, Jessica Hoselton, was introduced. She was chosen from many qualified candidates who applied for the position.

PLAN TO ATTEND THE DIRT.A MEMBER LUNCHEON

Wednesday, November 8, 2023 at NOON

**Steven's Family Restaurant, Woodridge, IL
2393 63rd St., Woodridge, IL**

Please make your reservation no later than Friday, November 3rd

SOUP OR SALAD

Lightly Breaded Walleye with choice of potato and vegetables

Chicken Quesadillas: mushrooms, spinach, green pepper, onion, tomato, cilantro, green onions

PRICE: \$20 CASH FOR LUNCH, TAX, AND TIP

Bring a friend, *RSVP* by Friday, November 3rd.

To *RSVP*: Call Jan Reese 630-529-6834

Margaret Rossini 630-430-1136

Rob Schrader 630-355-1954

OUR NOVEMBER PROGRAM

Nathan Mihelich, IRTA Director of Membership & Marketing, will be our guest speaker. He will talk about the future of DIRT.A.

A New Dawn for DuPage Retired Teachers Association with Strategic Restructuring Nathan Mihelich

The DuPage Illinois Retired Teachers Association (DIRT.A), a notable local unit of the Illinois Retired Teachers Association (IRTA), has inaugurated a new era of leadership. the organization has opted for an innovative approach toward sustainability and longevity by choosing to restructure its management style.

Historically, DIRT.A has been driven by the unyielding spirit and invaluable contributions of its volunteers, managing everything from coordinating meetings to managing their membership database. However, years of declining volunteerism and a decrease in membership have catalyzed a shift in operational strategy.

In a unanimous decision, the Board has chosen to hand the reins of management to a professional coordinator, Ms. Dalcia Castillo, who will now oversee the critical monthly tasks that have traditionally been undertaken by volunteers. Ms. Castillo will be charged with coordinating meetings, managing the database, updating the website, working with the State office on recruiting new members, and sending a monthly e-newsletter. The pivotal change comes with an aspiration of reducing the burden on volunteers and reviving the spirit and functionality of the association.

Upon hearing of her appointment to the position, Ms. Castillo shared, “It’s a privilege to be stepping into a role that is so vital to the sustenance and growth of DIRTA. I am fully committed to upholding the rich legacy of this association while navigating through these new waters with innovative strategies to rekindle our member engagement and strengthen the local unit.”

Amidst the anticipation of a brighter future, DIRTA members have expressed optimism regarding this strategic change. Sandra Brennan, a retired teacher and current DIRTA president, remarked, “I believe that this fresh approach will infuse new energy into our association, ensuring it continues to be a source for retired teachers to find camaraderie and support.”

This pivotal change in DIRTA’s management structure does not just signal a fresh chapter for the association but is also a reflective testament to the evolving landscape of nonprofit organizations. “DIRTA leads the way in demonstrating adaptability, showing that nimble adjustments in strategy are key to sustaining and growing organizations in the face of changing dynamics and challenges.” Illinois Retired Teacher Association Area 3 Representative Marge Sucansky said.

With Ms. Castillo at the helm and a supportive community of retired educators the DuPage Area Retired Teacher Association embarks on a revitalized journey towards a future laden with possibilities, robust membership engagement and a reinvigorated spirit of community among retired educators in the region.

Sandra Brennan, Dalcia Castillo, Chuck Hlavaty



IRTAPAC The IRTAPAC is a way to protect our benefits. It provides financial support to legislators who support us and thus prevents impairment of our benefits. Many of you may make a yearly contribution to the PAC; however, if you opt for the deduct of \$1 per month from your pension check, that allows the PAC committee to know exactly what to expect as far as funds are concerned. It is a more reliable measure of what funds can be disbursed for lobbying and protection of your benefits. Currently, only a small percentage of DIRTA members are on PAC Deduct. Look for the form on the website: www.irtaonline.org and sign up for deduct of PAC donations. If you need a hard copy of the application, please contact Marge Sucansky, Area 3 Representative at sucansky@comcast.net or 630-887-6407. If you would like to be a member of the PAC committee to help screen candidates for donations, please contact Marge Sucansky at 630-887-6407

DIRTA EXECUTIVE BOARD CONTACT INFORMATION

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FIRST CLASS

JOIN US ON NOVEMBER 8TH—RESERVE BY FRIDAY NOVEMBER 3

**Steven's Family Restaurant
2393 63rd St., Woodridge**



**Watch for The Good Dog News on the 1st and 15th of each month in your inbox
Watch for an invitation to the last Coffee With Jim on December 14, 9:30 a.m.**