

- Update from Executive Director
- ORTA Merchandise—Coming Soon!
- Chapters are meeting!



Kara Mendenhall,
ORTA 2021 President

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Hello to all ORTA members!

It is with great relief that I watched the calendar change to autumn this week. The heat, and especially the humidity of the recent past, seemed to literally drain energy from me. Even though the cooler temperatures have been accompanied by rain, it is a welcome relief from the swelter. The yellow soybean fields seem to be the only fall color evident so far, but leaves have begun to fall!

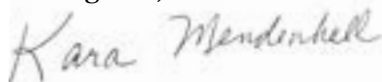
I am still working part-time as a sub in some local schools. I had the occasion to speak to a young man recently when he came into the class where I was assigned and stated that his whole family had been sick with COVID-19. He was not wearing a mask and when I stated that he should probably protect himself even at home from the virus, he stated that, "Only old people are getting sick, young people don't get the virus," and, "Masks kill people." Even the other young students in the class disputed his remarks. The fact remains that so much dis-information is out there, that folks are at risk because of their ignorance of the facts. The human ramifications of the politicization of this pandemic are staggering!

At the other end of the spectrum, the Fairfield County chapter cancelled its September luncheon and its involvement in the county fair as well as its Salvation Army bell ringing participation out of an abundance of caution for members who are susceptible to getting the virus after full vaccination. Talk about a generational divide! I see the impact of the ignorance each time I sub with multitudes of students out with the virus or quarantined in case they have it.

Even with the concern of the virus, ORTA meetings have been taking place with small groups and the word is getting out about what the forensic audit showed about the less-than-transparent STRS. I have been talking to current teachers to help them understand the importance of their involvement in our organization--and we now have a membership for active teachers! We hope to garner support among those actively contributing to STRS because unless members are aware and expecting corrective action, STRS will roll on without any changes to their current practices. This is where our voices are the most needed--to expect change for those who are providing all the funding that allows STRS to operate. The stronger we are able to be as voices for change, the more pressure STRS will feel to make good on their promises to us. Thanks to all who have written or called legislators requesting action. It makes a difference!

I have stepped off my soapbox now, and just want to wish you health as we head into fall.

Best Regards,



Kara Mendenhall, ORTA 2021 President



Dr. Robin Rayfield, ORTA
Executive Director

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STRS News

The STRS Board of Trustees met on September 16, 2021. ORTA provided a live stream to the meeting on our Facebook page. Items of note that were included during the meeting included:

STRS healthcare programs remain strong. The claims are low, even in the non-Medicare groups. With low claims the STRS staff are recommending a \$300 premium rebate for STRS members that take insurance from STRS.

STRS staff provided an update on Defined Contribution and Combined Contribution benefit plans. These plans are much smaller than the Defined Benefit plans representing about 14% of all STRS members. STRS's legal department provided updated policy wording that will bring STRS into compliance with new regulations regarding public meetings and attendance via technology.

Trustees will be allowed to attend meetings via phone, or computers for some of the meetings each year. Several (9) people spoke during the public participation section of the meeting. As usual, each of the speakers were critical of STRS's management of our pension system. My comments are included in this newsletter, as well. The meeting was adjourned before lunch, STRS staff began the annual investment seminar at about 10:30 am. This is an educational session that includes the investment staff and external consultants providing the trustees with an 'outlook' of what we can expect over the next year and longer range.

Interesting to note was that September was Dr. Rudy Fichtenbaum's first meeting as a trustee. He did not disappoint the retirees in attendance. Dr. Rudy commented something to the effect that 'STRS was not a greatly successful enterprise'. Board chair and OEA representative McFee was critical of Dr. Fichtenbaum's assessment of STRS's performance. Rudy commented that benefits to retirees and actives have been reduced below what was promised and that STRS staff has no viable plan to address the status of the plan. Many in the crowd were encouraged by his comments.

ORTA Presents at CORAS Superintendent Meeting

On September 15, 2021, I was fortunate to present information on the Forensic Audit and other informational items regarding STRS to a meeting of the Coalition of Rural and Appalachian Schools superintendent group. I was even more fortunate to have with me as co-presenter STRS Board Member Wade Steen. I presented the basics of what the forensic audit uncovered at STRS, but Wade really engaged the crowd. Mr. Steen used straightforward plain language to offer some of the issues STRS faces. The leaders of 50 school districts present (plus those on the zoom feed) were engaged. Wade was able to field several questions during our presentation. Check out the ORTA website to view all documents related to the Forensic Audit.

ORTA Comments during Public Participation at STRS Meeting (Speaking to STRS Board)

"Greetings STRS Board Members. My name is Robin Rayfield. I serve as the executive director of the Ohio Retired Teachers Association representing thousands of STRS beneficiaries. I am a STRS retiree having retired in 2011 with over 30 years of service.

Last month, Mr. Neville presented a lengthy response to the Siedle report. The 53-page document provided by STRS management was presented 'for discussion'. Unfortunately, there was no discussion by the board of the Siedle report or the Neville response. Certainly, I never expected STRS to receive a report that is so unflattering and say 'Wow! We've been doing this wrong for decades! We need to change immediately'. I would have expected that board members would have 'discussed' both reports. As it is, I question if any of the board members read either of the reports.

When a person only receives information from one source, their perceptions are often slanted. For example, if I only watched Fox News, or I only watched CNN, my view of the world would be slanted. I think the same is true of the way you folks receive information about STRS. If you only get information from the STRS management, then it's very hard to see any other perspective. Likewise, if retirees only receive information from Facebook or ORTA, then it is difficult to see any other perspective.

My challenge is for each board member to stop and challenge themselves. I do this often. What if Siedle is wrong? What if he doesn't know what he is talking about? I ask you all to ask What if we have been having the wool pulled over our eyes for all this time? What if we are paying more fees that are reported?

Remember this... All ORTA wants is what we were promised, not more just what we were promised. All actives want is a retirement that is worth what they are paying in. Who gets rich at STRS?

Management people make large salaries working at STRS. They make more than every teacher and more than most superintendents. STRS investment staff are dependent upon bonuses to make their money. The pressure to reduce fees and inflate performance is real. External consultants receive large contracts and are indebted to STRS for money received in consultant fees and for money that they get paid from hedge fund managers.

Wall St. money managers receive crazy money from fees charged to STRS. Everyone gets rich at STRS EXCEPT for the people that put the money in!"

ORTA Survey of Retiree Satisfaction

Next month ORTA will conduct a survey of retirees to determine the satisfaction level of retirees. We have developed a short survey that will take the participant less than 5 minutes to complete. We often hear how well satisfied STRS retirees are with the STRS system. However, I have never met anyone that was surveyed in the last 5 years. ORTA will share the results with STRS and our members. Look for an email to participate within the next two weeks.

Best,



Dr. Robin Rayfield, ORTA Executive Director



WE'RE GOING LIVE!

Join us for a special virtual **LIVE** broadcast on October 13th! Featuring guest speaker Edward "Ted" Siedle! Ted will be talking about the forensic audit findings, and what they mean to our members and all STRS retirees.

We will be streaming via Facebook Live, and hopefully, on our YouTube channel as well. If you don't follow us on Facebook, or subscribe to our YouTube channel, start TODAY! We'll see you in the comments section!



TRUMBULL CO. SCHOLARSHIPS

Trumbull RTA awarded four scholarships to local students. **Vicki Janik** is the scholarship chair with a committee of **Donna Pate**, **Anita Shaw**, **Dotti Fogel** and **Dianne Szuch**. Scholarship recipients are **Madison James** of Warren Harding, **Matthew Biery** of LaBrae, **Rosemary Nolder** of Mineral Ridge and **Marissa Stear**. **Sue Datish** is TRTA president who extended her leadership through Covic-19 and started group meetings in time for the annual scholarship meeting.



Pictured (Top): Schoalrship Chair Vicki Janik, TRTA President Sue Datish, and scholarship winners Madison James, Matthew Biery, & Rosemary Nolder

BUTLER CO. SCHOLARSHIPS



Pictured (Top): President Deloris Hudson, Beverly Worley, Matt Madison, Dianne Aiken, Dylan and Marianne Tackett

Butler Co. RTA awarded three scholarships to local students in the spring.

Matthew Aude plans to attend Olivet Nazarene University. He is interested in teaching third through six grade. **Madison Lane** plans to attend Indiana University. She is interested in teaching history/social studies on the high school level. **Dylan Robinson** plans to attend Miami University in Oxford. He is interested in teaching language arts or social studies at the junior high level.

Congratulations to all the lucky recipients!

PICKAWAY CO. SCHOLARSHIP AND “TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS” SUPPLY DRIVE

Westfall Schools District received **1,523** items collected from the **Pickaway Co. Retired Teachers Association** for their 2021 “Tools for Schools Drive”. Thank you to secretaries Paula, Janet, Carole, Tish and all support staff who help teachers get supplies to those students in need!

PCRTA also awarded a \$500 student grant to **Adeline Green**, a OSU senior majoring in World Language Education and Spanish with a minor in Multicultural Literature.



Pictured (Top): 1523 items packed and ready to be delivered to Westfall Schools!
Pictured left: Chairman Carol Ann Bowling with Grant Recipient and Westfall graduate Adeline Green

LATEST IN LOGAN CO.

Logan County Retired Teachers met in August at the Bellefontaine First United Methodist Church for dinner, program and a meeting.

The program was presented by **Kelsey Haus** about our regional Agency on Aging. Ms Haus informed the members of the services her agency has available for them. After providing this information she answered questions from the group. At the end of her talk Ms Haus provided each member with a very nice reusable shopping bag with lots of information inside to keep.

President Emerson Brown held a meeting after the program. Our regional ORTA representative, **B J Woodruff** talked to the group. Emerson provided a Columbus Dispatch editorial about STRS which member Pat Ortli read to the group. Emerson announced that the next meeting is on October 21st at noon at the Friendly Senior Citizens Center in Bellefontaine, Ohio.

For more information and photos from this meeting, please see the Facebook page for **Logan County Retired Teachers**.



Pictured Above: Ms Kelsey Haus from Agency on Aging talks to the group about the services available

COMING SOON—ORTA MERCH!



Keep visiting www.orta.org to soon shop new ORTA shirts (and more)! Prices will vary, shipping TBD. Wear your ORTA shirt with pride, and show off the **ONLY** organization bold enough to fight for our retired educators.

FOLLOW ALONG WITH THE STRS FORENSIC AUDIT

Edward “Ted” Siedle’s work is underway! Mr. Siedle has written an award winning book on how these investigations work, and explains step-by-step the procedure and process of the investigations.

Mr. Siedle has graciously provided copies of his book to the ORTA office, and we want our members to read alongside while the work is being done.

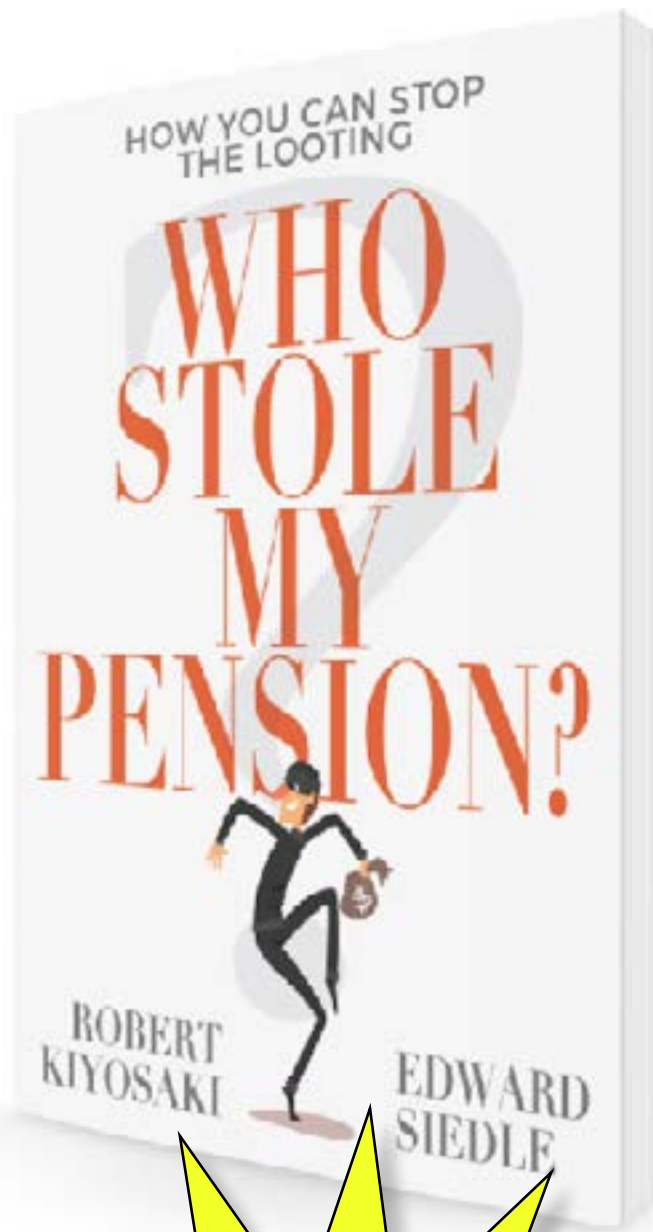
This book will help us understand the results of the audit upon completion, and will be a resource for questions you may have about the audit process.

Call our office today to find out more details on getting a copy TODAY!

614.431.7002



Above: Edward “Ted” Siedle, author of “Who Stole My Pension?”





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- Easy Issue Life Policy
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OHIO RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION



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Full Name: _____

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\$30 Annual Renewal Enclosed

Current E-Mail: _____

Year of Retirement: _____

Need to renew your dues? Just fill out this form and send in your payment to:

**250 East Wilson Bridge Road
Ste. 150
c/o Mia McLean, Membership
Worthington, OH 43085**



****Remember, the date we process your payment is your new due date for the following year (i.e. 05/30/21, new due date is 05/30/22). If you pay your ORTA dues to your local chapter, your payment is applied upon receipt to our office.**

Thank you!



IN MEMORIAM

Portage Co.

Harvey Warner, PCRTA Life Member
and ORTA Lifetime Member

Judith I. Giovinazzo, PCRTA Life Member
and ORTA Lifetime Member

Stark Co.

Carol A. Hedrick, SCRTA Life Member
and ORTA Lifetime Member

Jean Parker Mears, SCRTA Life Member
and ORTA Lifetime Member

***Deceased Member submission Policy
update: If you submit member(s)
passing, please forward any obituary
or funeral arrangements for our records.**

“When our time on Earth has been complete, Our spirit moves on, more mysteries to seek. Celebrate what this person meant to you, Cherish the memories when this life you review.”

—B.J. Woodruff



IMPORTANT CONTACTS

ORTA (Ohio Retired Teachers Association)

250 E. Wilson Bridge Road | Suite 150

Worthington, OH 43085

614-431-7002 | www.orta.org

STRS

(State Teachers Retirement System of Ohio)

275 E. Broad Street | Columbus, OH 43215

(888) 227-7877 | www.strsoh.org

AMBA Benefits

(Association Member Benefits Advisors)

6034 W. Courtyard Drive | Suite 300

Austin, Texas 78730

(800) 258-7041 | www.myambabenefits.info/orta



MEMBERSHIP CARDS ARE NOW AVAILABLE!

If you're a paying dues member and would like to receive a membership card, please contact our office.

Please note, 2021 Membership cards are only sent upon request and if you are current on your membership status.

Call today to verify your membership standing to receive a 2021 Member ID.

