



KEEPING ORTA MEMBERS APPRISED OF HAPPENINGS AND EVENTS

3|20

IN THIS EDITION:

- Message from our President
- Update from Executive Director
- ORTA Obituaries

## AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO OUR MEMBERS

Dear Valued ORTA Members,

As ORTA members, we consider you family. We want to extend extra care in considering that the Coronavirus (aka COVID-19) is a present danger at this time, and we want all of our members, families and friends to practice safe and healthy habits. If you are ill, or easily prone to becoming ill, please stay indoors or home from social gatherings and events. Some of our chapters have cancelled or rescheduled luncheons and meetings this month due to the outbreak. If you are one of these chapters, please contact our office and we will assist in making your members aware of any changes to your schedule.

We are making all possible efforts to reschedule any and all public ORTA functions, such as our Spring Board Meeting, planned for April 8th.

As the state of things is changing nearly hourly, we are keeping our staff in line with necessary actions (such as possible business lockdowns, etc.). If our hours or business functions change we will communicate any new details via our website, Facebook and e-mail outlets.

Again, we encourage our members to take all needed actions seriously, especially those with compromised immunity and conditions. We also encourage a “chapter check-in”— such as our chapter leaders reaching out and staying in touch with members at this time, and seeing if there are any folks who may need an extra hand in getting additional groceries, prescriptions or prepared meals.

Thank you for your patronage to ORTA, and we look forward to advocating for you fully once again when we are back to our normal operations.

Best Regards,

Alissa A. Burton, ORTA Communications and Publications  
publications@orta.org



## FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Spring Greetings to you all!

As we transition into the greener parts of the year, we are reminded that it is a time of renewal. The holidays we celebrate in March, April and even May are based on greenery (St. Patrick's Day); rebirth (Easter); and celebrating fertility and rebirth (May Day). The celebrations show our need for reminders that we have made it through the "dormant" period of the year. Even if the winter has been mild, like this one, the start of spring and the awakening of living things has a special excitement associated with it. The sounds of birds communicating with each other has a cheering effect that no other music can imitate.

2019-2020 ORTA President,  
Kara Mendenhall

Many local chapters are gearing up for their first county meetings of the year. The central ORTA office is placing the regional meetings on the calendar and

looking forward to seeing those of you who are planning, and those hoping to attend them. We look forward to hearing what has worked in your local chapters regarding increased membership, and hearing how we can help you achieve those goals.

To that end, I went to speak with the treasurer of the school district from which I retired to ask about the possibility of including an offer of the first year of ORTA free, to new retirees. The treasurer seemed very open to this idea and gave feedback about the need for information about ORTA that could accompany the offer. If this could become a standard piece of the retirement packet in districts throughout Ohio, we could reach 3000+ potential members each year. That is a very exciting prospect to me! It not only acquaints retirees with ORTA as an organization, it also allows a taste of the benefits available to them should they choose to remain members. We are working on a pamphlet and letter to be sent to all district treasurers explaining the offer.

My parents were married on March 21, the traditional beginning of spring. I always liked the imagery associated with beginning a relationship at a time when the earth is awakening once again. It has an earthly rhythm to it that feels in tune with the flow of the seasons. It is my hope that we can focus our energies for the good of our members and expand the reach of our organization. Thank you for being a part of ORTA!

May the Luck o' the Irish be with you!

Kara Mendenhall  
2020 ORTA President



## FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### News of Importance to ORTA Members

With the pandemic of COVID 19 (coronavirus) coming to the U.S. much of what ORTA is working on has been idled or at least diminished. We remain engaged in advocacy for STRS retirees, however, many of the activities we would be gearing up for have been cancelled or are postponed. I volunteer as a wrestling coach at Delta High School in northwest Ohio and, at the time of this newsletter's writing, I have been informed that the OHSAA State Wrestling Tournament will be held without the typical 17,000 fans. These are truly strange days we live in.

### STRS News

At the February STRS Board of Trustees meeting, the financial reports on investments and expenditures were discussed. The investments were holding strong and the coronavirus was mostly overseas. Fast forward a month and the picture is quite different. The stock market is in turmoil with significant volatility. I am confident that this downturn will pass and that the rebound will be strong. Until this crisis passes, we have no alternative but to carry on.

### Healthcare

I received a letter from an ORTA member that was concerned about healthcare. Not the cost of his healthcare coverage but navigating the Medicare system. This is not the first time someone has raised this concern with me. Specifically, his questions were related to the manner in which claims are processed. Apparently, some of his claims seemed to take a long time to be processed and he experienced difficulties in getting answers. In an effort to help with this concern, I have shared these concerns with the people at STRS and I look forward to their response. In the past, I have been well satisfied with the assistance I have received with the members benefits people at STRS. I am hopeful that they will be able to offer some positive response that I will share with ORTA members.

### Rally for Public Education

Prior to the declaration of a State of Emergency in Ohio related to the COVID 19 pandemic, ORTA was planning to participate in the Rally for Public Education scheduled for March 18 at the Ohio Statehouse. Although this event was cancelled, the impetus behind the rally was something that I was excited about. The thought of so many educational groups including parents, active educators, administrators, school support personnel, and concerned community members coming together to demonstrate support for public education in Ohio was uplifting. The current plan to divert public funding from its intended use (educating public school children) to providing vouchers for private school education is troubling, to me. Taking public funding from public schools does not solve problems with public schools, it makes these problems worse. On top of the concerns that I have related to the demise of public-school education the Ed. Choice program will have, I am deeply concerned about the impact this legislation would have on STRS and our pension system. Fewer students in public schools means fewer teachers in public schools. Fewer teachers in public schools reduces the contributions to the STRS pension system. This legislation will create yet another crisis for the STRS pension system. ORTA urges all its members to support more investment in public education, not taking public education funding and providing vouchers for private education.

Best Regards,  
Robin Rayfield, ORTA Executive Director



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*Thank you!*



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# IN MEMORIAM

## **Portage Co.**

***(Some members may not have had recognition at time of passing)-***

### **2019**

Leona Ann Livezey,  
ORTA and Portage Co. Member  
(December 28, 2019)  
Richard Lewis  
ORTA and Portage Co. Member  
(December 9, 2019)  
Mary Rinier  
ORTA and Portage Co. Member  
(December 22, 2019)

## **Sandusky Co.**

### **2019**

Charles “Chuck” Lenhart  
ORTA and Sandusky Co. Member  
(April 30, 2019)  
Sandra Kruse  
ORTA and Sandusky Co. Member  
(May 31, 2019)  
Mariellen Golembioski  
ORTA and Sandusky Co. Member  
(June 1, 2019)  
Faye Rawson  
ORTA and Sandusky Co. Member  
(July 13, 2019)  
Mary Trusdle  
ORTA and Sandusky Co. Member  
(November 25th, 2019)  
Brenda Oplet  
ORTA and Sandusky Co. Member  
(December 23, 2019)  
Asa “Ace” R. Sabiers  
ORTA and Sandusky Co. Member  
(December 31, 2019)

### **2020**

Barbara Husdon  
ORTA and Sandusky Co. Member  
(January 2, 2020)

***\*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***

