

MID-JEFFERSON COUNTY RETIRED SCHOOL PERSONNEL JANUARY 2021 NEWSLETTER

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Loretta Morman
Audit

December Guest Speaker

Nick Lampson

Co-Chief Operating Officer, Riceland Healthcare



Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 12, 1:30 pm

Guest Speaker: Sherry Ulmer, Beaumont Public Health Director

Where: via Zoom by invitation only; begin arriving at 1:15. Click the link below to join:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84897128429>

Meeting ID: 848 9712 8429

Class Is in Session!

... A message from **MJCRSP President Charles Jehlen**

The start of a new year always brings hope for a better life. I believe you'll agree, 2021 has nowhere to go but up. A global event of unprecedented magnitude continues to affect our daily lives. As veteran educators, we have seen many cycles of change in curriculum revisions and administrative initiatives. When told of new campus initiatives at the start of a school year, I often sat in the back table of the opening meeting and said, "This too shall pass." That's one reason why I tried to lead my faculty meetings from the back of the room.

While some changes aren't going away anytime soon, other parts of the retired life remain constant. Our adjustments to the paradigm shifts say a lot about our personalities and plans. We are showing our friends and family how to achieve our life goals while promoting personal and group health. Every month our state and local organizations share coping ideas and methods. These practical tips are part of your membership package, much like a friend would share advice and experience over coffee. I encourage you to explore the TRTA website and take advantage of the retirement and personal planning and guidance offered.

I often told new teachers to take advantage of their mentors' experiences. As a newbie, I am trying to follow my own advice. Our January guest speaker will give us new tips on living a healthy lifestyle. I hope you can join us live on Zoom to ask questions. If you can't make it, email your queries to me and I'll see they are answered. Stay warm and safe!



December Highlights

VOLUNTEER REPORTS DUE!

Local unit volunteer hours must be reported to the TRTA state office in January. It is important that all retirees report their volunteer hours before January 12, 2021. You may do so by contacting Beulah Thompson, volunteer chair, either by email (bthompson@gt.rr.com), phone (409.722.2648), or text/phone (409.713.6802). Submit your name and total hours only! Volunteer hours by retirees emphasize the contributions retirees make to their communities.

Numbers Do Count . . . in public relations with taxpayers

. . . with Legislators when the value of education retirees' volunteerism is considered during legislative negotiations!



Recently, MJCRSP Legislative Chair Richard Briggs and TRTA Executive Director Tim Lee met in Beaumont with Dade Phelan, District 21 State Representative and presumptive 2021 Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives, to discuss legislative issues that affect retirees. TRTA's state legislative priorities include preserving the pension funding plan enacted in 2019, securing a financial structure capable of providing a future cost-of-living increase for retirees, maintaining state contribution for TRS-Care retiree health insurance, and adopting TRTA recommendations regarding the Sunset Review. At the national level TRTA's focus will be on ensuring Social Security benefits are paid to retirees through reform of the WEP and GPO as well as lifting restrictions placed on retirees' income through substitute teaching and bus driving.



DECEMBER MEETING: Row One: Charlie Jehlen calls the meeting to order; Lynne James reports on Scholarship ads and retirement education sessions with active teachers; Wanda Borne presents the treasurer's report, Linda Fong informs members of health concerns and deaths of retirees. **Row Two:** Helen Reynolds tells members to remain informed of COVID guidelines and that Sherry Ulmer of the Beaumont Health Department will be the guest speaker in January; Beula Thompson emphasizes the importance of reporting volunteer hours; Dana Wasser welcomes Nick Lampson to our December meeting; Richard Briggs announces his upcoming meeting with Dade Phelan and Tim Lee and refers members to the 2021 legislative priorities; Linda Briggs announces that books will be given to fourth graders at PNE in January. **Row Three:** Nick Lampson presents a very informative program about health care and health insurance; Mary Sue Carter offers tips about phishing scams in the financial sector; Becky Dungan is attentive to Lampson's advice; Donna Lumpkin delivers the minutes of the November meeting and reports that thank you cards have been sent to program presenters and those who have been supportive of our local unit throughout the years.

MJCRSP SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS WILL BE AVAILABLE TO NEDERLAND AND PORT NECHES-GROVES SENIORS ON JANUARY 5 AT WWW.MJCRSP.ORG.

HELEN'S HEALTHY LIVING TIP: With cases of COVID-19 rampant now, watch for updates from the CDC regarding symptoms and the need to seek medical attention. Updates will be announced as soon as they are available.





STATE ISSUES

★ TRS Pension Fund

ACTION ITEM: Preserve the funding plan enacted during the 86th Legislature (SB 12)

- Keep the TRS pension fund on the path to actuarial soundness
- Ensure SB 12 phase-in plan raising contribution rates to 8% for state/educators, and 1.8% for ISDs by 2022

ACTION ITEM: Secure a financial structure capable of providing a future COLA

- Average TRS monthly annuity is \$2096
- Half of all TRS annuitants receive less than \$1800 per month
- Members retiring during the last 16 years have never had a permanent increase in their annuity
- Consider additional revenue source by requiring all employers to contribute equally

★ TRS-Care

ACTION ITEM: Maintain contribution for TRS-Care retiree health insurance

- Vulnerability to COVID-19 necessitates affordable, easy access to doctors and care
- Avoid increased premiums and cuts in services or benefits
- Study and design long term funding structure
- Allow one-time re-enrollment to TRS-Care

★ Sunset Review

ACTION ITEM: Adopt TRS Sunset Staff Report and additional TRTA recommendations*

- Promote a member-focused and friendly culture at TRS
- Direct TRS to designate an FTE position as a TRS member ombudsman focused on the needs and issues of TRS members, including the impact of COVID-19
- Direct TRS to simplify and clearly define reasonable rules for return to work and part time employees
- Create appeals process for disallowed health care claims

**See TRTA Position Paper for TRS Sunset recommendations and TRTA recommendations*

FEDERAL ISSUES

★ Social Security

ACTION ITEM: Ensure earned Social Security benefits are paid to retirees

- Reform WEP and GPO current formulas that unfairly penalize Texas retired educators
- Retirees' traditional supplemental income has been impacted by pandemic (substitute teaching, bus driving)
- Prevent mandatory Social Security as a resolution to the inequity of WEP and GPO