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Hospitality

MID-JEFFERSON COUNTY RETIRED SCHOOL PERSONNEL JANUARY 2016 NEWSLETTER

December 8 Program: *Gail Krohn's Christmas Sing-along*



- ◆ **Next meeting:** 1:30 PM, January 12, at Ritter Senior Center, 914 Boston Avenue, Nederland.
- ◆ **Program:** Wayne Moore, CEO of Christus Health System
- ◆ **Hostesses:** Rosalie Reese (chairman), Becky Dungan, Linda Fong, Linda Briggs.

Let's do our part . . .

Happy New Year! I hope this newsletter finds you in good health and ready for a new year. As a local unit of TRTA we have a busy year ahead of us and there is not a minute to waste. The next five months (January to May of our regular meetings) will go by quickly and we need to make the most of the time we have.



Maybe we should make a "Bucket List" for 2016 (leap year, by the way) and identify priorities for our unit. My suggestion for number one on the list is to be aware of those legislators who support our position on health care and pensions. Unless we stay in contact they will not realize how much we support their efforts on our behalf.

Number two on our bucket list should be to support our local unit more effectively. I suggest we can make a better effort to boost the attendance at the monthly meetings. There is strength in numbers and the more we have in attendance, the easier we can distribute important and timely information. Richard Briggs shared a very informative legislative report at the last meeting and as he receives data from state we need to have good attendance to help spread the news. So, for 2016, "each one bring one" should be our mantra. See you on January 12th at the Booty Ritter Center.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: To keep up with meetings and activities of MJCRSP, check out the unit web site at www.localunits.org/MidJefferson. **Please help us to save the cost of a stamp and agree to receive the newsletter by email.** Contact Lynne James at lynnej@gt.rr.com or call her at 409.735.6171 and ask to be placed on the emailing list!

SPECIAL THANKS to MCT Credit Union and Hebert Library for the use of their facilities in preparing our monthly newsletters.

December meeting highlights



ROW 1: December hostesses prepare to serve holiday treats; Beulah, Candye, and Mary Beth are ready to celebrate; Loretta, Helen, and Clara are in holiday spirit! **Row 2:** Celebrating the season are Patricia and Carolyn, Wanda and Donna with their mother; Richard, Dana, and Candice. **Row 3:** Enjoying the Christmas treats are Martha, Olive, and Jolene; Lynne finally gets her picture in the newsletter; Linda Briggs is happy to present a new slate of officers; Linda Fong reminds members of holiday scams; and Richard encourages us to be informed about legislative issues.



Fourth grade students from Helena Park and Hillcrest Elementaries are shown with their respective principals, Dr. Kevin Morrison and Tina Oliver; Deanna Miller of Philpott Ford; and Sue Croom, Linda Pinner, and Patricia Allen of Mid-Jefferson County Retired School Personnel.

In conjunction with the Children's Book Project of the Texas Retired Teachers Association, Mid-Jefferson County Retired School Personnel and Philpott Ford recently donated 245 books to fourth grade students at Helena Park and Hillcrest Elementaries in Nederland ISD. Students were thrilled to get a free book that they could keep. The donation was made possible from member contributions and a very generous grant from Philpott Ford. Book donations are made to elementary campuses each year, rotating between the two school districts. The Children's Book Project is a service activity initiated by local units of the Texas Retired Teachers Association. The purpose is to put books into the hands of children who otherwise would not have books of their own. In 2014, 139,438 books were distributed to children across Texas as part of the Children's Book Project.

HELEN'S HEALTH TIP: To keep holiday treats as healthy as possible, remember these tips: small portions; healthy ingredients, such as cranberries, almonds, walnuts, pumpkin, and dates; and low fat/low sugar and fat-free/sugar-free options.

TRTA District 5 Legislative Update

December 2015

“My, What a Difference a Year Can Make”

TRS Pension Trust Fund

In 2014 the TRS Pension Trust Fund had a value of \$132.7 billion and was actuarially sound, meaning that unfunded liabilities could be paid within a 31 year period. In 2015 the TRS Pension Trust Fund has a value of \$128.5 billion. Basically this means by definition that we are no longer actuarially sound as it would take 33.3 years to cover our unfunded liabilities. Despite contributions from retirees, active personnel, school districts, and the state, we have less money than a year ago. Why? Because the stock market was down and investments had a negative return. If we were talking about individuals and their investments we would simply say, “I took a beating in the market this year!” Simply stated, the TRS Pension Fund enjoyed a 16% overall investment return in 2014 and in 2015 the overall investment return was a negative 0.3%.

As we prepare for the 85th Legislative Session that will begin a year from now, we can probably forget a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) unless we see a significant turn-around in the market. We also have to recognize that \$35 per barrel oil generates a lot less money for the state than oil that was previously priced as much as \$100 per barrel. We love the price of less expensive gasoline at the pump, but we will suffer the consequences as the state has either a smaller fund balance or no fund balance at all to work with during the next legislative session.

TRS Care Update

The \$768 million provided by the legislature in 2015 will cover the anticipated shortfall through 2017: however, the 2018 anticipated shortfall is \$700 million and the two year shortfall that runs through FY 2019 is anticipated to be a whopping \$1.7 billion. By 2020, this shortfall is anticipated to rise to \$2.9 billion. Those on the TRTA state legislative committee probably should have ridden off into the sunset after a very successful 84th Legislative Session because, folks, the state will not have enough fund balance to cover our anticipated TRS Care shortfall. The solution is probably going to be hard on every contributor to the health insurance fund. We have a TRS Care Study Group of House Members appointed by the Speaker that is working on the issue. Our input to this committee will be very important as it seeks testimony. We suggest reading Tim Lee’s *Inside Line* to stay current with these issues and others that affect TRTA members.

Governor Appoints New Members to the State Pension Committee

Most of you know that Mr. Josh McGee has been appointed by the Governor to the State Pensions Committee. His appointment also stipulates that he will be the presiding officer of the committee. Mr. McGee is a vice president with the Arnold Foundation of New York and the foundation is generally not favorable to “Defined Pension Plans.” This appointment does not bode well for those who hope someday to retire under the existing guidelines of TRS retirement.

Next State Legislative Committee Meeting

Our next legislative committee meeting will be held in Austin on January 14. If there is anything significant to report after that meeting I will be glad to do so.

Dr. Robert Nicks, District 5 Legislative State Committee