



MID-JEFFERSON COUNTY RETIRED SCHOOL PERSONNEL NOVEMBER 2014 NEWSLETTER

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Beverly Minaldi
Hospitality

October 14, 2014

Program by Peggy Harrison

Texas Lions Camp



- ◆ **Next meeting:** 1:30 PM, November 11, 2014, at Marion & Ed Hughes Public Library, 2712 Nederland Avenue (Ritter Center is still being repaired).
- ◆ **Program:** **Bren Rodriguez**, representing Harbor Hospice in Beaumont
- ◆ **Refreshments:** Dixie Tucker (Chairman), Helen Reynolds, Loretta Morman, Susan Jones, and Rhonda Richey

Let's do our part . . .

a message from MJCRSP President Gail Krohn



As this month's newsletter is printed, early voting continues to break records. Truly, this is one of the most important elections for educators across the state. Numbers at this time seem to favor Gregg Abbott for Governor and Dan Patrick for Lieutenant Governor. Neither candidate has been especially supportive of the education community, which makes our personal contact with legislators even more critical.

Each of us must make a concerted effort to become more involved with those who represent us as well as with those who are in positions of importance on committees which have decision-making powers. We also must stay informed as to proposals being presented that will affect our pensions and health benefits. We cannot let others do the job for us. Every voice counts, so let yours be one of those voices.

If you are receiving the newsletter by email, a handout titled *Five Things You Can Do Right Now* is attached. **If you receive it by postal mail**, your list is included on the address page. In addition, a list of talking points is given on page 2 of the newsletter in the article about the fall conference in October.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: To keep up with meetings and activities of MJCRSP, check out the unit web site at www.localunits.org/MidJefferson. **The 2014-15 yearbook is now available on the website under *About Us*.** To access the yearbook, use the password **MJCRSP**. If you are receiving this newsletter by postal mail but have an email address, please help us to save the cost of a stamp and agree to receive it 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.

October highlights



(Row 1) TRTA state president Fran Plemmons and TRS representative Ray Spivey bring greetings and information to District 5 members on October 2; Richard, Gail, Becky and Dana enjoy the AI T's catered meal as did Susan, Zack and Cookie, Dana (again), Clara and Jessie, as well as Loretta, Lynne, and Linda. (Row 2) Clara wins a door prize; District 5 legislative chair Dr. Bob Nicks organizes a campaign to contact legislators about TRTA needs; hospitality committee for the October meeting includes Linda, Helen, Susan, Dixie, Mary and Ted; Peggy Harrison displays pictures of the Texas Lions Camp for children near Kerrville, Texas; Carolyn, Dana, and Dianne visit during the refreshment time; Helen gives healthful eating tips to members. (Row 3) Carolyn looks over her yearbook as Becky encourages members to deliver them to those who could not attend the meeting.

District 5 fall conference

Those who attended the fall conference on October 2 received helpful hints about making productive contacts with legislators before and during the 2015 legislative session. Dr. Bob Nicks met with unit presidents, legislative chairmen, and other interested members at the close of the conference. President Fran Plemmons and Ray Spivey both emphasized the need to energize our membership since there is just so much money available in the state budget and the money will go to those groups who work the hardest to make their needs known. Main talking points include the following:

- Make personal contacts with legislators (face-to-face, phone calls, email).
- Of the approximately 243,000 retirees in the TRS Care system, about 200 are over the age of 100 years.
- Since the last COLA (2001), retirees have lost 36% of our buying power. A 2% increase was given to some retirees in 2013.
- The average monthly annuity (*average!*) is \$1900.
- If the legislature does not do something to provide a long term fix for our health care program, premiums could increase by 135%. For some, this could be as much as \$1600 a month (see last item above).
- Retirees give back to the community in a variety of ways, including volunteer hours (see below) and our yearly book project. Legislators must be made aware of this. We are a vital part of the economy of Texas.

The above talking points are suggested when you approach legislators. In addition, make contact with active teachers. Make sure they know that they, too, will be affected by the decisions made about health care for retirees.

Volunteer Service: Each year **volunteer service hours** are reported to the TRTA office. In Texas, each hour of volunteer service is computed at **\$22.89 per hour** (payment in kind if it were done by a salaried individual). At the back of the yearbook there is a list of the types of volunteer service that qualify. This year, please keep track of those hours and make a note of the **kinds** of volunteer service you provide. Legislators must be made aware of how much retirees contribute to the welfare of their communities and to the economy of Texas. We will include the list of kinds of volunteer services with our yearly report in January.

HELEN'S HEALTH TIP: Eat these underrated vegetables as often as you can for their health benefits: celery, mushrooms, Brussels sprouts, carrots, onions, bell peppers, garlic, and kale.