



AASRA Newsletter

All Arizona School Retirees Association
affiliated with NRTA, a division of AARP

Fall 2019

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Get Ready

I recently tried to ignore another birthday and was reminded, more discourteously than my daily reminders, that I am aging. To acknowledge my birthday, I bought hearing aids for my loved ones. I'm the one that wears the devices, but my ability to hear better benefits those that I love.



Like me, **AASRA is now well into its 60's**. In fact, the original retired teacher organization in Arizona, the Southern Arizona Retired Teacher Association (SARTA), now Pima County School Retirees Association (PCSRA), was born the same year that I was. SARTA ultimately joined with Maricopa County retired teachers and started our statewide organization in the mid-50's in order to have more voices advocating for retired teachers throughout Arizona.

Our organization has successfully lobbied for the wellbeing of retired educators for over six decades. Our advocacy **was critical in establishing** the Arizona State Retirement System (**ASRS**). We also were **successful in our efforts to allow teachers and other public employees in Arizona to participate in Social Security**. When Social Security was originally founded public employees were not allowed to participate.

In the early 1950's, the US Congress opened a window and allowed states to decide whether public employees could join Social Security. Arizona overwhelmingly voted to allow that participation. There are still 15 states in the US where teachers do not receive Social Security because they were not allowed to contribute to the fund. Their pension is their sole source of income. I

feel fortunate that I will soon claim my Social Security benefits in addition to my secure pension.

We also **advocate for retired educators with our participation on the ASRS Insurance Advisory Committee**. Along with other public employee retiree groups, we advise ASRS on the criteria for and the selection of health Insurance offerings. I thank AASRA for my retirement security. **There is no other group that has advocated for retired educators as long as AASRA.**

Through the decades since its founding, AASRA has fought off various challenges to educator pensions. *That fight must continue as we are facing one of the greatest challenges ever.* The Reason Foundation, a Libertarian think tank that advocates for "...choice, limited government, and market-friendly policies" has joined forces in Arizona with Americans for Prosperity (AFP). FactCheck.org says AFP, a Koch brothers funded organization, "seeks to support free markets and entrepreneurship by advocating lower taxes and limited government spending and regulation."

I happened to be driving in Phoenix on January 15, 2019 listening to KJZZ when **Andrew Clark, the state president of AFP**, was interviewed on The Show, a weekday production of the radio station (<https://kjzz.org/podcast/the-show>). In the interview Clark **said that public pension reform was a priority of his organization**. He stated the goal of AFP is "choice" for teachers in their retirement plans. We later learned that The Reason Foundation has joined with AFP in an effort to allow teachers to enroll in retirement plans other than ASRS.

The two groups claim that teachers want portability with their retirement plans (403(b) or 401(k) style) so they can switch from one career to another. AFP and The Reason Foundation ignore the research that says

that teachers tend to remain in place unlike other professions where job hopping is more common.

It is my assertion that what the two free enterprise advocates want is to provide a profit incentive for private financial managers to manage the money of educators. **Research tells us that privately managed funds lead to reduced accumulation of assets, reduced benefits in retirement and the potential for retired teachers to become dependent on the state for assistance. That is not my wish for future retirees.**

I don't need my new hearing aids to understand loud and clear the threat to our security. I will be writing more about this in the coming months as the battle takes shape. **However, I already know that I cannot win this battle alone or with the assistance of our few board members. It will take the combined efforts of every one in our organization and many more to win this fight.**

Set out your battle gear and get ready. Go to www.azleg.gov/MemberRoster/ in order to find your legislators' contact information. Make sure AASRA has your email address so we can keep you apprised and reach you quickly. Regardless of whether you live in Kingman, Safford, Sierra Vista, Benson, Casa Grande, Tucson or Phoenix I look forward to seeing you soon to talk more about this issue.

Jerry Holmes, AASRA President

AASRA Meeting Dates 2019-2020

September 23	Board Meeting
November 18	Board Meeting
January 27	Board Meeting
March 3	Legislative Awareness Day
March 23	Board Meeting
June 2-3	Convention (tentative)

**You are invited to attend our meetings.
Just notify our Executive Director, Janet Fee, a week before.**

Joanna Haspels President – elect

Joanna has been a leader since her junior high years. Through the years she has led choirs, wrote skits, edited yearbooks, established a hospital auxiliary in Parker, been active in her church and much more.



As a home economics teacher on the Navajo Reservation, she met many challenges and made many friends. Later while working as Extension Home Economist for the University of Arizona Extension Service, she held the position of president of the Arizona Chapter of Extension Home Economists.

Teaching special education in a middle school, working with those in adult education and engaging in a number of long term substitute positions further prepared her for the last almost ten years of teaching incarcerated adult men at a California prison.

Since moving back to Arizona, Joanna is active in the local community choir, drives for DAV (Disabled American Veterans), holds membership in two local organizations - one of which is the AASRA Unit in Kingman, is clerk of her local church board, takes friends to concerts in Las Vegas and Flagstaff, and does solo work on occasion both at church and with the community choir. She enjoys sewing, crocheting, reading, traveling, and spoiling pets, Molly and Muffy, her furry felines.

She has been active with the AASRA State Board for several years as District 5 Vice- President (Kingman Area), held the position of AASRA Scholarship Foundation Board executive secretary, and has attended the state convention for the last few years. She currently serves on the Government and Business Documents Committee and the Legislative Team, plus being President-elect.

Leadership is about vision and responsibility, not power.

Seth Berkley

Leadership comes in small acts as well as bold strokes.

Carly Fiorina

Two Past Presidents



Millicent Kasun (1995-1997 from Cochise County) was the last Arizona Retired Teachers' Association (ARTA) President. She just had her 92nd birthday. Last year her family gave her a 91st birthday party. In Bisbee

she is still active and continues to volunteer at the Mining Museum, Covenant Presbyterian church, the hospital auxiliary, rotary events, Red Cross blood drives, as well as going to her exercise classes. Rotarians have honored her for being the oldest member both in years of service to the organization and in years of age with a \$1,000 scholarship to give to a Bisbee High School Senior or share with several students. Lorene Shough, Huachuca Unit, had attended last year's party. Thanks Lorene for sharing with us information about Millicent. She was and still is quite the lady. Bless you, Millicent.

Duane Nelson (2014-2017 from Kingman Area) moved to Bucharest, Romania in 2017. He will be teaching Grade 4 at the Beirut International School, subjects Language Arts, Math, Social Studies and Science starting September 9. He will be teaching only with English and has instruction for 17 hours a week.



He will follow them to other subjects (non English) to make sure they act right. The school is working to get him a work visa. He's the only American in the school. Only one other teacher has visited the U.S. Duane says, "I retired 9 years ago from teaching, but I will give it a try." He has signed his second year lease on an apartment and is getting adjusted. He will return to the U.S. in December to renew his driver's license! We wish him success in his return to teaching.

Some AASRA Convention Highlights



The June 4-5 All Arizona School Retirees Association Annual Meeting (Convention) was held at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel in Phoenix. Attendees enjoyed visiting the vendors' tables and picking up interesting information. The omelet breakfast was

super. The strawberry roses were so unique. **Dana Kennedy, AZ AARP State Director**, spoke about Ethel Andrus working for pensions and health insurance for teachers. Finally it happened in the mid50s after many

attempts. AARP was founded by Ethel Andrus. (Before that she was instrumental in the founding of our organization.) Our association has been partners with the AZ AARP for many years.

Superintendent of Public Instruction, Kathy Hoffman,

was warmly welcomed. She stated her position is not just administrative but getting out and seeing education where it happens. Kathy had visited schools in 10 of the 15 counties. A Navajo Reservation school had a visit from her and was so surprised. No other person in her position had visited up there. She listed the Legislative accomplishments. Being proactive, showing what you are proud of and being more visible and building coalitions help in achieving education goals.



John Moody, a legislative consultant, related statistics of the legislative session, ups and downs of it, what was accomplished and what needs to be tended to. He introduced the **AASRA Legislator of the Year, Michelle Udall**. Michelle was chairman of the House Education Committee. She served on the Mesa School Board 2010-14 and is currently teaching math at Mountain View High School. She had the House Education Committee use a rubric to evaluate proposed education bills! **Joe Carter, AASRA Legislative Team Chairman**, presented her with a framed certificate for being 2019 AASRA Legislator of the Year.



Joe Carter, Michelle Udall & John Moody

AASRA President Jerry Holmes presented a "tongue in cheek" log of his personal year. Then he launched into his informative presentation on the attack that is coming to defined benefit pensions. He advises all of us to be informed and to inform others. Be sure to read his message beginning on the first page of this newsletter, and he will be bringing the information to the units this fall in getting the message out.



Convention Award Winners

Katie Elgar, AASRA Awards Chairman, announced the nominees and winners . The units who completed 20 of the 21 points for **Units of Distinction** were: East Valley, Northwest, Pima County, Saguaro, and Westside.

The Outreach Award

Outreach: To give recognition to an individual who promotes educational and charitable projects in the community.

Alice Reule



The Meritorious Award

Meritorious: To give recognition to an individual who promotes and strengthens the status and advancement of AASRA.

Joe Carter



The President's Award

President Jerry Holmes honored **Sue Secret**, AASRA Treasurer, for 12 years of dedicated service to the organization.

Sue Secret



THERE WAS . . .



Installation of Officers



Drumming and more Drumming



and Drumming Strawberry roses



Plus Dancing to



The Rosewood Rascals



and Dancing



and Listening



to Paul Matson



Around the State

In May **Westside** Unit heard speaker Christine Tuttle, Outreach Librarian for Arizona Talking Books which is part of the National Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Currently, It serves 12,500 individuals ranging in age from 4-103. The unit started collecting school supplies for back to school backpacks, and food for the Valley View Food Bank.

This spring at the **Northwest** Unit meeting, Karen O'Keefe received the Mary Anne Vath "Beacon of Light" Award. She received this award because of her outstanding service to the community and to her students. Our Award committee is Barbara Weber, Alice Reule, with help from Mary Rogers, who has participated in Pencil Pals for many years.



L to R: Barbara Weber, Alice Reule, Karen O'Keefe, and Mary Rogers



The secret is out. **East Valley** Unit has a leprechaun, member Doug Honaker. Only a teacher will keep an outfit for 30 years to wear it just once a year! September's meeting is about Brain Health presented by Dr. Yasaman Tasalloti, a naturopathic physician.

Sue Davis, **Kachina** Unit, introduced the May speaker, Mary Heyborne, poet and potter. Poetry is her first love but she has been a ceramist for fifty years. She exhibits her poetry and ceramic works at the Sedona Arts Center. She shared her poetry with them by reading several of her poems.

In April **Huachuca** Unit's guest speaker was Charles Hancock, president of the Southwest Association of Buffalo Soldiers. He spoke about the history of "The Buffalo Soldier".

Saguaro Unit heard the Navajo Code Talkers, who stymied the enemy in World War II at its September meeting. Judy Weber, a Northwest member, presented this informative program.

Pima County honored its own **Frieda Baker**, an outstanding educator and long-time member of PCSRA.



Frieda graduated from high school in Cleveland, Ohio, and received her first college degree from the University of New York in Buffalo. Her first job in education was in the Buffalo school system. Her first position in education in Tucson was at Borton Elementary School. She also taught at Robinson and

Davidson before being elected President of the Tucson Education Association in 1995. There is so much more! At the April meeting the members learned all about Frieda's contributions to education and "kidz".

Most of the scholarships reported by the Units are given to college students or a high school senior going to college. **Pima County** donated two scholarships to University of Arizona College of Education students for 2018-2019 year. The unit has sent a \$1,500 check to the University of Arizona Education Department for a student majoring in education for the 2019-20 school year. **East Valley** unit gave two Arizona State University \$1,000 scholarships and has a goal to do the same this year. **Kachina** Unit gave a \$1,000 scholarship to a Verde Valley High School senior enrolling at University of Arizona.

Saguaro Unit decided this year a school librarian would be given a certificate for Gardner's Book Service. The recipient goes to the librarian at Quentin Elementary School.

As information came in for this newsletter, many of the units have a year's worth of programs planned. Those units are to be commended. Others have designed brochures for their unit. It is amazing the amount of charitable works these units do for their communities.

Hats off to our units activities!

In May harpist, Christine Vivona, played classical, jazz, and Broadway tunes on her harp. Her music was awesome and her skill on the harp was outstanding. It was a perfect ending to **Pima County's** year.

The September speaker at **Westside Unit** was Jerry Holmes, AASRA President. He brought the message on threats to our retirement system and pensions.

May all the Units have a successful year.

Without **MEMBERSHIP** There is **NO AASRA**

Membership is the backbone of the association.

AASRA's membership is from January 1 to December 31. In the fall the units begin meeting and start reminding you about renewing your membership. **Please pay your dues as soon as possible.** It would be so nice to have 100% paid before January 1st. **ADD members**, who have an automatic dues deduction from their ASRS pension, **never have to worry about writing a check for dues.** **Make your life easier and sign up for ADD.** This option is only open for members receiving an ASRS pension.

Who can be a member at the state level?

Active membership – Any retired school employee in Arizona, school retirees from other states and current school employees who are aged 50 years or more. When members reach the age of 90 years, they become Honorary members and will not have to pay dues. All active members have the right to vote and to hold office.

Members may join a local unit or be a member-at-large.

Friends of AASRA membership: Any person interested in education. The Friend members may not vote or hold office at the state level.

Become a recruiter. Get membership forms from your local unit president.

An increase in membership increases AASRA's voice.
Remember: AASRA is you and YOU are AASRA.

Membership Chairman, Kristi Koziol, has plans/goals for membership. She shared these to the Board in January and some to the convention attendees in June. Unit Presidents and District Vice-Presidents presently are the leaders for attaining these goals.

Membership Goals for AASRA

Get out the message to our members and repeat!

- Pension Protection
- Giving back to your community
- Networking and socializing
- Member Benefits

Communication

- Email blast newsletters, Legislative Day events, & convention
- Membership state and/or local brochures revised and issued
- State and Local events post on the website and/or Facebook

Update information on the website

Membership training for leaders

Use resources to present a workshop on Membership

Database

Membership roster for each unit that includes: member's name, mailing address, phone number, and email address for communication of events and other information.

LIVE LIFE, UNINTERRUPTED.



KEEP LIVING YOUR WAY.

You can, with these benefits and discounts from **AASRA & AMBA:**

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Myambabenefits.info/aasra



Membership Tip

This membership tip comes from a large Maryland local unit. It could be adapted for a smaller unit.

This is a **Benefit List**. The unit places the Benefit List beside every place setting at each of their meals so members can use it to recruit other members. They also use this list when they call people to renew.

Below is a suggested Benefit List:

Your Unit/AASRA Benefits

As a member you will be able to take advantage of the following:

- ◆ The "Our Unit" newsletter
- ◆ Your Unit local website: www.yourunit.net
- ◆ Your Unit Facebook page
- ◆ Directory of all members
- ◆ Luncheons and picnics
- ◆ Book Club
- ◆ Card Club
- ◆ Outreach to the community (could list the activities)
- ◆ Updates on legislative issues
- ◆ Speakers and entertainment
- ◆ Recognition of scholarship recipients
- ◆ Benefits offered by **AASRA**
 - ❖ AASRA Website: www.aasra.org
 - ❖ Facebook page
 - ❖ Legislative Team to monitor the AZ Legislature and ASRS
 - ❖ State Newsletter
 - ❖ Speakers from State
 - ❖ Eblasts of information
 - ❖ Legislative updates
 - ❖ Legislative Awareness Day event
 - ❖ State Convention
 - ❖ Unit assistance as needed
 - ❖ Lois Snyder Fund
 - ❖ Scholarship Foundation
 - ❖ AMBA Benefits (could list them)

Please send your information and photos about your Unit and members to: azredsunset@cablone.net.
 Deadline **Thurs., January 30** for the Winter Issue
 Send in an email or attach items as a Word or PDF document and photos in JPG format.

Do it as it happens!

Another Idea

Hopefully, this **Membership Tip** will help your local think of new ideas to promote membership.

This membership tip has been used at an AASRA units' membership workshop.

It is the **Pill Container**.



You must collect the plastic pill containers about 3" tall with a cap. Take off the drug store label. Choose a candy like M&Ms and fill the container.

Make a new label which reads:

Name: Your Unit Name members

RX: Positively Promote Membership

Green: Grow Membership

Yellow: Spread the Word

Orange: Enthusiastically

Blue: Be a **Blue Ribbon** recruiter

Take Often

Now take a piece of clear tape to secure label to the pill container.

+++++

Share the POWER of Membership!



THANK YOU for being a member of AASRA !

Fall is approaching and it is time to renew our friendships with attending unit meetings. Your Unit Presidents have been planning informative meetings and providing magnificent volunteer opportunities for you. **AASRA is protecting your pensions with the help of our Legislative Team.**

We are here for you so...

Let's share our **MEMBERSHIP** with others and keep us strong as a great organization.

Kristi Koziol, AASRA Membership Chair

You cannot be a modern association without a contemporary board.

Omer Soker, The Future of Associations



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Know These Facts

**Don't apologize for your pension!
It isn't a "gift"! You earned it!**

Tell everyone you know the facts:

- ◆ ASRS is the premier public employee pension plan in Arizona and one of the top rated plans in the nation.
- ◆ Defined benefit pensions last for your lifetime and provide financial security.
- ◆ Defined benefit pensions help attract and retain employees in public service jobs.
- ◆ 401(k) plans have higher administrative costs, higher risks and lower returns.
- ◆ Defined contribution plans are a bad choice for taxpayers as well as public employees.
- ◆ Retirees on defined contribution plans can run out of retirement savings and become solely dependent on Social Security and government welfare.

Everybody's help is needed to protect our ASRS pension and other defined benefit pensions.

Joe Carter, Legislative Team Chair



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5279. President-Jerry Holmes, President-elect -Joanna Haspels, Secretary-Pearl Nancarrow ,Treasurer-Sue Secrest, Co- Executive Directors-Janet Fee & Kristi Koziol, Newsletter Editor-AnnJi Craig-Wooten.

www.aasra.org

Facebook – All Arizona School Retirees Association

Words for Action

In 2017 in his first article AASRA President Jerry Holmes stated these thoughts.

"I will ask for your help. To remain the strong voice of advocacy that we have been for over 60 years in Arizona, AASRA needs to grow. . . . We need as many voices as we can find to stand in unison to advocate for each and all of us.

. . .Without each other we stand alone, with each other we are a force to reckon with."

Janet Fee, ASRS Liaison from the Spring, 2019 issue said.

"ASRS is number 5 out of 63 funds in the nation among its peers. It is one of the best in the country.

Protecting our Pension is AASRA's #1 goal.

Remember: **ASRS IS AN EARNED BENEFIT**

AASRA is a member of The Arizona Retirement Security Coalition (ARSC), which is providing information to inform Arizonans the truth about defined benefit (DB) pensions. **ASRS is a defined benefit pension.**

There are groups in Arizona, which want to change our pension to a Defined Contribution (DC) pension plan, similar to a 401(k). **It is very important that each of us knows the value of our DB pension and to inform the public that we paid for it.** Our pension is cheaper to fund and will provide us with a pension for the remainder of our lives."

Many of the photos in this issue were taken by Terry Bagwell and some by others. Thanks for sharing them.