



# AASRA NEWSLETTER

Affiliated with NRTA, a division of AARP  
September, 2025

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## President's Message

### **Welcome Back Fellow AASRA Members,**

What a beautiful time of the year is approaching. I always think of the wonderful things that Fall brings, cooler weather, colorful leaves, pumpkins galore, and AASRA Unit meetings starting up again. It's a welcoming time after the long, hot summer to once again meet with our fellow members. There's an excitement in hearing new speakers, enjoying informative programs, and spending time with friends. Those of us who are actively involved in AASRA know how important this can be for our overall well-being.



Many of us know all too well that we as an Association, are seeing a decline in our membership—especially **active** membership and are concerned for our future. Our state organization needs a *Treasurer, a President-Elect, several District Vice Presidents and committee members*. Locally, some of our Units are dissolving or merging with another Unit. I do not want us to become discouraged; ***I want every AASRA member to rise to the challenge of building our Association!*** We all need to do our part to encourage new members to join and established members to take on leadership roles. I know it's not as easy as it sounds, and it has to be embraced by all members—not just the Membership Chair. So, what can be done?

First of all, invite potential members to join you at a meeting so they can see firsthand what we're about. Members can also help by providing a ride to a meeting for another member or potential member. If meetings are fun and informative, members will continue to attend. Be sure to make everyone feel welcomed and valued. People want to be where they feel valued and needed.

Throughout the year, the Board will be stressing the importance of asking members to help their Unit—even in small ways. Examples could be leading the pledge, giving a Thought for the Day, planning for a speaker or program, donating door prizes, making phone calls or sending greetings cards to home bound members. I would love to hear from Units about what they are doing and how we can assist other Units to succeed.

AASRA has the potential to be a vibrant organization. I challenge Units to find ways to help your Unit to grow. Please let me know how I can help. Call or text me at 602-799-1800 or email me at [barb.weber@yahoo.com](mailto:barb.weber@yahoo.com). It is definitely within our reach to make AASRA a thriving association.

*Barb Weber, AASRA President*

**“Stronger Together. Be Involved!”**

**We are looking for engaged members.**

**WE NEED YOU!**

## “Stronger Together. Be Involved!”

**Membership** generates power through active membership. Membership numbers matter by helping increase our AASRA visibility. Marshall Militano, Membership Chair, states, “I alone cannot do this job. I need the help and input from EVERY member. Recruiting members is the responsibility of EVERY member. TOGETHER we can grow the AASRA membership. TOGETHER we can protect public education and our ASRS benefits. TOGETHER we as a TEAM are better.”

AMBA has recruited 56 members this year. Marshall has contacted them with a welcome note and a list of units for them to contact. Did a unit contact any of them seeing an address near where it meets? Is our chain of contact not reaching our units so they may welcome and invite a new recruit to come to a meeting or tell them about our organization. How can we better reach these new members? You are sure to have ideas.

Numbers really matter when monitoring the state legislature, advocating for defined benefit pensions and public schools, plus fighting against attacks on our students, teachers and schools. Keep active by making education and senior issues a top priority to make life better today and for the future.

Being an automatic dues deduction (ADD) member has its advantages – you don’t have to write a check each year! It is so easy to forget to send that check in. Members with an Arizona State Retirement System (ASRS) pension may sign up for ADD. Your AASRA state and local dues are divided into twelve monthly deductions. That sure makes life easier!

Your membership dues for 2026 are due by January 1, 2026 or changing from cash pay to signing up for ADD.

Membership Forms – are available from units and AASRA will also send one.

Get a form and become a recruiter!

## State Treasurer Urgently Needed

For any organization to operate at its best, a full slate of officers is necessary. As of the close of our 2025 Convention **we are without a President-Elect or a Treasurer.** Our wonderful Treasurer, Katie Elgar, declined to run again. She has served us for many years, and is eager to pursue other interests.

The Treasurer is a crucial member of the Board and takes on many duties. We must fill that office soon so we can fulfill the obligations of our Association.

At our State Convention this summer, a well-meaning member suggested we hire a bookkeeper. My concern with that is AASRA is a volunteer organization and for over 60 years has flourished with the talent and support of volunteer officers. I would not want to start “outsourcing” our officers. What if in the future we cannot get a Recording Secretary or a President? I refuse to believe that in an organization with 700 members state-wide, we cannot find one member willing to take on the responsibility of Treasurer.

Please ask at your local Unit meetings and events for a volunteer for Treasurer. A job description is available so potential volunteers can see what the position entails.

I know many members have expressed that they enjoy belonging to AASRA, but we can’t continue without officers. **We cannot and will not be able to do this alone. We need your help.**

*Barb Weber, AASRA President*

## Convention 2025 - From the desk of the past AASRA President – Mary Henderson

First thank you to all who were able to attend in person the state convention in Phoenix on June 3, 2025. It was a great celebration and time to visit with so many friends from around the state.

Paul Matson, ASRS Director, gave us so much information about the status of our state retirement system. ASRS is still one of the top retirement pension systems in the United States!\_We can be so proud of the work that they are doing for us.



Later in the morning we had our Memorial Service presented by Barbara Kooistra and Judy Herbert. A beautiful way the recognize



our members who have passed during the year. Thank you to committee for all their work.

Enclosed in the convention folder was a new form for units to use to report the passing of a member. This form is available through your state officers.

During our lunch time attendees were able to visit with the vendors present and sign up for their door prizes or goodies. We had each of the vendors briefly speak about their organization. The photo shows Barb Weber with AMBA reps: Devon & Jacob.



Marge Threewit presented the state scholarship raffles for the beautiful basket and the gift cards. Congratulations to the winners. I hope you all enjoyed your prizes.



After lunch we received outstanding information from John Moody about the state of our Legislature. There is always lots going on down at the Capitol and this year is no different. As you remember the legislature was still in session so everything was very current.



Due to the fact that the legislature was still in session (just returned after a break) the Legislator of the Year was unavailable. In that time slot, Barb Weber, President Elect, and

Mary Henderson, President, presented information about membership. Celebrate membership!

The Constitution and Bylaws changes passed. In our constitution the Executive Director/s is appointed. Now the Executive Director/s can be a voting member of the Board of Directors.

The election and installation of AASRA officers

included Secretary - Joanna Haspels, President - Barb Weber, District 3B VP – Joe Carter, District 6 VP – Cindy Mort and District 5 VP – Melissa Bates. We are still looking for a President Elect, Treasurer, and District 7 VP.



The President's Award 2024-2025 was presented to Bonnie and Lou Bureson early April 2025 by President Mary Henderson. Bonnie passed away shortly after this photo was taken.



New President Barbara Weber adjourned the 2025 convention.

*Photos by Kristi Koziol & Mary Henderson*

## AASRA Scholarship Foundation

The foundation is a 501(c3) nonprofit organization. The scholarship foundation board decided to award two scholarships per each state university (U of A, ASU and NAU) instead of the usual one given. Universities have strict privacy protocols. They usually only give names after selection of the candidates. So far only one has given the foundation its selected candidates' names.

This year most of the six recipients are doing their semester of practice teaching – one secondary education in Math, one with Early Childhood Special Education, two with

Bilingual Elementary Education & Spanish, one with elementary education in upper elementary/middle school, and one accepted a 4<sup>th</sup> grade position and is “to learn how to run a classroom” from her team and mentor teacher.

Donations are welcomed from our members and others in the community to support a Future Educator.

## Bits of News

As Community Participation Chair, **Doug Honaker** – East Valley stated “We had great returns on voluntary hours and monetary contributions for 2024. Soon you’ll be reporting your items for Jan 1 – Dec 31, 2025.” Doug is also District 2 VP. He will be attending a Pinal County Unit meeting in Casa Grande on Tuesday, October 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Barb Weber** as President Elect served on the ASRS Dental Plan Selection Committee. She reported ASRS will continue with Delta Dental and Cigna Dental for 5 more years. Medical plans approved last year continue until 2029.

**East Valley** is starting its Holiday Raffle in October to raise money for its ASU student scholarship. This year’s recipient is Camille Brisbon working on a degree in Educational Studies. Tickets are \$10. Prizes are: baskets worth over \$100.00 including a quilt, assortment of jams, tea, hot chocolate, candy, popcorn, and BOOK! Drawing is Dec 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Northwest Unit** – In May members shared their summer travel plans. Marshall Militano explained the Soles for Souls project a worldwide organization with the goal of recycling, refurbishing and donating shoes to minimize landfill impact. September’s meeting was an informative program by Jodie Khotim from the Alzheimer Association.

**Pima County** met on Sept. 11<sup>th</sup>. Cristina Polsgrove, from the City of Tucson Environmental Services Dept. was the speaker on “Learn answers to your recycling dilemmas”. The group also heard information

on the upcoming Tucson city and school district elections in November.

## Northwest Honors Members



L to R  
Katie Elgar,  
Barb Weber,  
Lori Good,  
NW president.

Northwest Unit has honored two of their members with the Mary Anne Vath Beacon of Light Award. The award, named for former AASRA State President Mary Anne Vath, is presented annually to an individual who has shown exceptional contributions to their community.

This year, it was decided to honor two recipients, *Katie Elgar* and *Mary Rogers*. They served on the Northwest board for 14 years—since Northwest’s beginning in 2011! Katie was the Treasurer and Mary the Recording Secretary. They both made a lasting impression and definitely went above and beyond their job descriptions.

Katie was presented with the award at Northwest’s September 11<sup>th</sup> meeting. Mary was unable to attend. We will be sure to celebrate Mary at a future meeting.

*Barb Weber, AASRA President &  
MAV Committee Chair*



Pima County planning and working together.

PCSRA’s fundraiser: the Gaslight Theatre’s  
Phantom of the Opera  
All 92 tickets for the October 19<sup>th</sup>  
performance are Sold Out!!

# AARP's Celebration for Social Security's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday



Attending L to R – Joe Carter, Katie Elgar, Kristi Koziol, Mary Henderson & Barb Weber

## Best Lobbyist – Daniella Smith

Daniella Smith is a lobbyist with Arizona Retirement Security Coalition which is recognized by the National Public Pension Coalition. AASRA is a part of the Arizona coalition. She has presented information at our Legislative Awareness Day and keeps our officers informed on legislative matters. She won the Best Lobbyist category in the Arizona Capitol Times Best of the Capitol 2025 voting. AASRA is thankful for her hard work at educating legislators on the advantages of the ASRS public pension.



Saguaro – Trent & Patsy Cone



Laura D.



& Melissa Bates – Kingman Area



Lorene Shough – San Pedro & Pima County – Judy Hokett & Cindy Mort



Barbara Kooistra & Pat Rush - Westside



Terry & Dave Bagwell – Pima

## Convention Pictures by Kristi Koziol



Pinal County – Barbara Sundust & Joanne Kramer



L to R – Sandra Contrell, Sherry Schaerges, Georgia Schaerges, Mary Cantrell – Saguaro

Westside – Georgia Brown & Sandy Marshall



Sharing just a few of the convention pictures taken by Kristi Koziol. Thanks, Kristi.

## AN AMBULANCE COULD TAKE YOUR SAVINGS FOR A WILD RIDE, TOO.



### PROTECT YOUR RETIREMENT SAVINGS WITH A MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION MEMBERSHIP.

Medicare may not cover all of your medical transportation costs. Because a ground ambulance could cost thousands of dollars, and air transport can be \$50,000 or more, it's important to cover the gaps. With a membership from Medical Air Services Association (MASA), emergency transportation from home or anywhere in the world is covered, plus transportation of vehicles, children, grandchildren, and even pets are at no additional cost.

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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 Committee Chair*

**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.



The AASRA Newsletter is published three times a year. AASRA, 7250 North 16th Street Suite 302, Phoenix, AZ 85020-5279. President-Barbara Weber, President-elect -, Secretary- Joanna Haspels, Treasurer-, Executive Director – Kristi Koziol, Newsletter Editor- AnnJi Craig-Wooten.

[www.aasra.org](http://www.aasra.org)

Facebook – All Arizona School Retirees Association



# All Arizona School Retirees Association

## AASRA

Fill out this state and local membership form: **PLEASE PRINT neatly.** Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Year \_\_\_\_\_ (50-89 Pay membership dues, 90+ free membership)

### DUES Annual amounts – Please check the dues you will submit:

\_\_\_\_\_ **AASRA dues \$30 Plus Unit dues \$10 = \$ 40**  
*Includes Member-at-large (no local unit in your area)*  
*Your \$10 unit dues amount goes to AASRA Scholarship Foundation.*

\_\_\_\_\_ **PCSRA (Pima County) – AASRA dues \$30 Plus PCSRA dues \$16 = \$ 56**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Friends of AASRA (no unit dues) \$18**

**Dues amount being submitted \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

### Payment Option 1: Automatic Dues Deduction **(Only ASRS Retirees)**

I authorize the Arizona State Retirement System (ASRS) to DEDUCT any association dues as indicated below. I understand ASRS will forward each authorized deduction to the All Arizona School Retirees Association (AASRA) office. I understand the monthly deduction will continue until I notify the Arizona State Retirement System (ASRS), in writing, to the contrary. Your dues deductions will appear on your record statement under DEDUCTIONS as: Dues.

I authorize the Arizona State Retirement System (ASRS) to deduct the following amount from my monthly pension check **(please circle one)**:

PCSRA (Pima County) - \$3.83      All other units - \$3.33

### For Automatic Dues Deduction (ADD) ASRS requires your social security number.

My Social Security Number is (*last 4 digits only*) \_\_\_\_\_ (Privacy Protected)

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Payment Option 2: Personal Check

\_\_\_\_\_ I prefer to pay by check the yearly dues. **Please make all checks payable to All Arizona School Retirees Association or AASRA. Total = State dues plus unit dues.**

Mail this form and check, (if applicable) to: **All Arizona School Retirees Association or AASRA, Katie Elgar, 16202 N. 36th Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85053-2960.**

*Thank you for your interest and support.* Recruited by \_\_\_\_\_