

SCRTA NEWS

Summit County Retired Teachers Association

THE SUMMIT COUNTY AFFILIATE OF Ohio Retired Teachers Association August - September 2024

VOUCHER EXPERTS TO SPEAK AT SEPTEMBER LUNCHEON

“Hey, I don’t like the idea of public tax dollars being used for private school vouchers. But I’m retired, so it really doesn’t impact me, right?” ***WRONG!***

Funding for the Ohio school voucher program, known as EdChoice, exploded to \$2 billion in the budget bill signed by the Governor last year. Voucher funds come from the same budget line-item that funds our public school systems. When vouchers were first enacted, a family of four earning \$75,000 or less a year qualified for full vouchers. Now, the income ceiling has been raised to \$135,000; vouchers for k-8 kids are roughly \$6,200 and \$8,500 for high school kids. Incredibly, families making more than \$135,000 qualify for vouchers albeit in reduced amounts.

Vouchers draw dollars away from schools, putting more pressure on taxpayers to approve levy requests. Vouchers draw students away from public schools, decreasing enrollment and reducing teacher numbers. The result is fewer members contributing to the retirement system, smaller district payrolls upon which employer contributions are based, and a much greater challenge to legislatively increasing the employer contribution percentage.

Vouchers Hurt Ohio is a coalition of public-school districts (including Akron and seven other Summit County districts) suing the state over the unconstitutional and harmful voucher program. The Ohio Coalition for Equity and Adequacy of School Funding is leading the litigation effort. Its Executive Director, William Phillis, led the Coalition’s 1990’s Supreme Court victory declaring Ohio’s method of funding its public schools unconstitutional.

Retirees do have a stake in the fate of the Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit. To learn more about the lawsuit and what retirees may do to support the effort, we’ve invited three experts from one of our own districts (Woodridge Local) to speak with us at the September luncheon. N’ecole Ast is the current Woodridge Superintendent. She is a member of the Equity and Adequacy Coalition’s Steering Committee. Ms. Ast’s predecessor, Mr. Walter Davis, was instrumental in the district board’s decision to join the Vouchers Hurt Ohio lawsuit. Woodridge treasurer Tom Morehouse will talk about the impact of EdChoice on district budgets.

So yes, vouchers do impact you as an STRS retiree. We strongly urge you to join us for lunch on September 17 to learn more about this growing threat to public school funding in Ohio and how you can help the lawsuit succeed. *Bill Siegfert*



Woodridge Local Schools
Superintendent N’ecole Ast



Retired Woodridge Superintendent
Walter Davis



Woodridge Treasurer
Tom Morehouse

President's Message



While looking through some old newsletters, I came across the beautifully written memorial for Ruby Winter, who passed away in June of 2022. The article was written by Becky Moore. In it, Becky mentions the several organizations that Ruby volunteered for. She had been the SCRTA luncheon coordinator for decades and was a faithful member of the Management Board. During her lifetime, she was well known for her gifts of being the best hostess and was generous in sharing her talents. I was impressed how Ruby kept so active after her thirty-four years as an elementary teacher in Barberton. Besides enjoying life with her family, she enjoyed helping others and meeting members at the SCRTA luncheons.

I will always remember Ruby as a real team co-worker who had a gracious, generous and youthful spirit right into her eighties. Her legacy and longevity will include how she refused to sit on the sidelines of retirement but became involved and volunteered her talents, gifts and time with others.

I hope that you will get involved in volunteering your time or skills, if you have not started already. You can start with SCRTA. We need some members who will lend a little time to help us. More details will be shared at our upcoming luncheon meetings.

Don't forget that all area school districts are invited to join SCRTA and attend the general luncheon meetings. Our next date is September 17th at Guy's Party Center on Waterloo Rd. Come early to meet and greet old and new friends.

Continue to enjoy your summertime and I'll see you in September.

Johnnette Curry, President



One of the primary reasons our SCRTA organization exists is to help our members navigate life more safely throughout their retirement. There has been much written about the scourge of scammers. A scammer is constantly developing new methods to target victims with the goal being to get one's personal information and/or money. This article highlights 3 current scams ... check cooking, voice printing, and the multistage grandparent scam ... along with some actions one can take.

CHECK COOKING This scam involves fraudsters taking photos of stolen checks and using digital tools to alter information such as the name and the amount. The fraudster easily manufactures dozens of checks and drops them into numerous drop accounts.

What to do! Consider using credit cards or online banking. If you still use paper checks, drop the mail off at the post office and always look for suspicious transactions.

VOICE PRINTING SCAM AI generated voice scams, also known as voice synthesis themes scams, use artificial technology to create lifelike imitations of real voices. Scammers use these voice replicas to impersonate relatives, friends, or even financial institutions in phone calls to deceive unsuspecting victims.

How can you be safe? To prevent your voice from being duplicated, don't answer the phone immediately. Be aware of answering calls from people not on your contact list since the call could be coming from a phone that has been stolen or had its SIM card cloned.

If you do answer the phone **1.** Verify the callers' identity; **2.** resist the urge or pressure to act immediately, especially when money is involved;

Please see Scam Alert, page 4

Legislative and Legal Updates



Bill Siegfert

Quick Fix for WEP and GPO Unlikely, Even as Support Swells

The number of legislators co-sponsoring bills in the House and Senate concerning the Social Security Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset is growing steadily. Unfortunately, prospects for a final resolution during the 118th Congress (2023-2024) remain slim.

Two bills in the House have both been referred to the Ways and Means Committee. HR 82, the Social Security Fairness Act, calls for a total repeal of both provisions. The bill has a record 323 co-sponsors. HR 5342, the Equal Treatment of Public Servants Act, has 35 co-sponsors and proposes amending the formula under which federal benefits are reduced. On the Senate side, S. 597 was introduced in March of 2023 and like HR 82, is known as the Social Security Fairness Act and calls for the repeal of both WEP and GPO. The Senate bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Finance.

Most supporters of the bills recognize that the price tag for resolving the unfairness of the current formula, whether done by total repeal or by changing the formula, is high. Many feel that no bill can pass as a stand-alone bill, and that changes must be made as part of a broader social security bill addressing all of the problems Social Security faces now and in the coming years. Passage of legislation of that magnitude is not seen as occurring in the current Congressional session.

Employer Contribution Increase

Lynn Hoover, STRS Acting Executive Director, spoke at our June luncheon meeting about the System's effort to place a bill before the General Assembly which would increase the employer payroll

contribution rate from the current 14% to 18% over an eight year period (.5%/year). Getting a bill introduced and passed requires at the very least a team effort by STRS staff, active members and retirees.

Legislators may not be anxious to pass any bill that would increase local school district costs, especially in an election year. As if that in itself doesn't present enough of a challenge, ORTA, the organization that purports to represent the interests of active and retired teachers, has made the task much more difficult by its never ending allegations of mismanagement by STRS staff and countless other baseless and inaccurate criticisms of the System. One of ORTA's latest gaffes appeared in their July Update. (Updates are not normally published in July, but "recent media reports" drove the Executive Committee—all three of them—to determine one was needed this year.) In typical "the world's against us" fashion, Robin Rayfield claimed that with the exception of the Toledo Blade, reporting across Ohio's major newspapers "on matters concerning STRS is slanted in favor of the STRS narrative." Inexplicably, ORTA's home page has a link to an editorial by the "neutral" Blade suggesting that any legislator "dumb enough" to increase employer contributions to STRS "deserves the harsh TV commercials and mailers that would come with their next campaign." The editorial further accused ORTA's "reform majority" of having "lost their nerve" by voting for the STRS bonus proposal after initially rejecting it. As an aside, among The Blade editorial staff is a writer who prior to moving to the Blade blistered ORTA for its involvement in the QED investment scam. His editorial, reported on previously in SCRTA newsletters, was titled "Time for the Full Truth from ORTA." ORTA's decision to provide the link to the editorial on its home page is truly enigmatic. While the piece satisfies ORTA's thirst for criticism of the Retirement System staff and "non-reform" Board members, it also attacks increasing the employer contribution rate (a goal which ORTA ostensibly supports), and some of the reform candidates ORTA

Please see legislation, page 4

Legislation continued from page 3

portrays as STRS saviors.

In spite of the challenges, including many coming from within STRS membership, it is our understanding that leadership's plans are to continue to seek an employer contribution rate increase. *Bill Siegfert*

Scam Alert continued from page 2

3. refuse to do wire transfers, cryptocurrency or gift cards.

How to quickly identify an AI voice scam.

You only briefly hear your loved one's voice; they can't answer simple questions; you are called from an unknown number; someone quickly takes over the call; you're told to pay a ransom by a cryptocurrency or gift cards.

MULTISTAGE GRANDPARENTS SCAM In the past, scammers would call victims and impersonate grandchildren in a crisis. They temporarily claimed that they had been arrested after a car accident and that they needed immediate funds from their grandparents for a lawyer or bail. Referred to as the grandparent's scam, the con typically sees fraudsters call seniors and claim to be their grandchild, saying they've been arrested and need money to pay for their bail. However, a new variation of the scam sees the imposters **text** victims rather than call them.

How to stay safe: If you get a call or text from an unfamiliar number from a family member claiming to be in trouble, don't panic. Instead, after you've finished talking and certainly before sending money, the **Federal Trade Commission (1-877-382-4357)** recommends that you **call or text** the person at his or her usual number and check to see whether the family member is in trouble. If they don't answer, contact other family members or friends. If you have any concern that the emergency could be real, the scammers plead with you to **keep the situation secret**, so you won't try to confirm it.

Finally, if you think you have been scammed,

hang up and call all financial institutions immediately.

You must notify your bank and credit card issuers as soon as possible regarding your credit cards and attempt to reverse the situation. Block the scammer, secure your account and call law enforcement. Remember, even if you end up with a scammer, it's not too late to prevent a bad situation from getting worse. **Stay safe! Stay alert!**

Elaine Jarvis

(Editor's Note: See more scamming info on page 7 of this newsletter.)



2024 SCRTA MANAGEMENT BOARD

President - Johnnette Curry

1st VP/ Program - Elaine Jarvis

2nd VP/Legislative - Bill Siegfert

Administrative Assistant - Rebecca Moore

Treasurer - Bill Siegfert

Asst. Treasurer/Membership - Jackie Hovey

Past President - Mary Lou Swartz

Membership Luncheons - Micki Lavis and Phyllis Lewis

Sunshine Committee - Christine Bean and Rozanne Emich

Newsletter Editor - Elaine Jarvis

Web Master - Leroy Martin

Nominating Committee: 3 elected members
Carol Caughron, Micki Lavis and Phyllis Lewis ;

2 At-Large Members: Community Service -
Christine Bean and **OPEN** Member At-large

Scholarship Committee - Vicky Shaw and Judi Hill - Co-Chair

Bulk Mailing - Rozanne Emich

Travel/Excursions - **OPEN**

Teacher Grants - Christina Haas



It's not just an urban myth; the Ronald McDonald House really does collect aluminum pop/pull tabs from cans. We can generate thousands of dollars from our pop/pull tab collection program every year and that helps us keep the lights on! That's important for our House, which is open 24 hours/day, 365 days a year. And it wouldn't be possible without the amazing support of children and adults who faithfully collect the tabs. It's an easy way to do something good and make a difference in the life of a seriously ill child.



Save Those Acme Fresh Market Receipts!

Acme's Community Cash Back program for 2024-2025 begins **August 1** and runs through **February 15, 2025**. We are asking SCRTA members to help fund our scholarship program by saving Acme Fresh Market receipts during this time. We will earn 5% cash back on all purchases of the following participating brands: Acme Fresh Market, Food Club, Top Care, Crav'n, Tippy toes, Simply Done, Full Circle market, Sweet P's, Over the Top, Cape Covelle, That's Smart, Pure Harmony, Wide Awake Coffee Co. and Paws Happy Life.

In spite of a late start last year, we earned over \$100 for the SCRTA Scholarship Fund. We can do better this year!

As you accumulate receipts, mail them any time during the program to: SCRTA, 82 Cedar Woods Drive, Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44223. Thank you!



We welcome our new members, Mark Reaman, Karen Bennett, and Nina Robishaw ... Akron. It was great to see so many familiar faces at the June luncheon. Attending our luncheons is only one way to become involved with our worthy causes. There is always room for members to be involved with awarding scholarship, grants and currently, SCRTA supports two community organizations ... Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) and Shelter Care ... primarily by giving them toiletries, cleaning and paper products that are donated by our members at our General Luncheon meetings. We welcome help, a little or a lot!

We have 294 members, 188 Lifetime members and email addresses for 200 members.

Your dues and contributions will help us achieve our goals, benefit current and future educators and ensure that you will continue getting our newsletter.

We have 26 members that still owe dues. If there is an * by your name on this newsletter, your dues are due!

We are grateful for our lifetime members who have made contributions towards our teacher grants and scholarships.

If you have any questions about your membership status, contact me.

Jackie Hovey

jhoveysue@gmail.com



SCRTA June 4, 2024 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MEMORIES



Guy's Party Center Buffet Luncheon



**Paul Green and Paul DiMascio -
Emeritus Officers**



Ronald McDonald Pull Tabs Display - Chris Bean



SCRTA Luncheon Program



Reservation Table - Micki Lavis



Lynn Hoover - STRS Active Executive Director

Scholarship News



The Scholarship Committee was overjoyed that we were able to award two \$1,000.00 scholarships at the June General SCRTA meeting to deserving Summit County students **Sydney Peterson** and **Jonathan Fridline**. Thank you again SCRTA members for your dedication and contributions to future educators.

At the September 17, 2024 General Membership meeting, there will only be donation cups on the tables.

For the November 12th General meeting, we will do the four-day Double Good popcorn sale again, in addition to the donation cups and a 50/50 raffle. We will also participate in the Acme Cash Back program again this year. More information is on page 5 in this newsletter regarding the Acme program.

Vicky Shaw and Judi Hill

**START WHERE YOU ARE.
USE WHAT YOU HAVE.
DO WHAT YOU CAN.**

— ARTHUR ASHE

Address Changes ...

Temporary, Permanent

Whether you are changing your address temporarily, permanently or you are a snowbird, please contact **Jackie Hovey, Membership Chair**, with your new address via email: jhoveysue@gmail.com., phone: (330-940-9147), or postal address: 1085 Cookhill Circle, Akron, OH 44312. Let Jackie know if you have added or changed your email address; the SCRTA Board will soon be using email to send important information to members between the publication of newsletters. Thank you!

OUTSMART THE SCAM



Stop talking & hang up

Do not give out personal information. Do not make ANY payments — especially payments via cryptocurrency, prepaid gift cards, wire transfer, or by mailing cash.

Call a trusted source

Scammers can "spoof" phone numbers so calls appear to come from a trusted source. Dial the number that you know & ask them to verify the information.

Alert the authorities

Report Summit County government imposter scams to the Sheriff's Dispatch at 330-643-2181.

Social Security scams can be reported online at oig.ssa.gov or by calling 1-800-269-0271.

Make sure your friends and family know about these tips!



**ILENE
SHAPIRO**
COUNTY ENGINEER



VICTIM ASSISTANCE
330-376-0040

Summit County Retired Teachers Association
82 Cedar Woods Dr.
Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44223

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AKRON, OHIO 44309
Permit No. 418

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

August—September



2024

SCRTA Website
www.summitcountyrta.org

Leroy Martin - Webmaster
lmartin561@gmail.com



SCRTA received thank you letters from the two groups that we support...

Ronald McDonald House Charities: "Your gifts give families a place to stay together focused on what matters most."

ShelterCare: "Thank you once again for your thoughtfulness and for joining with us in reaching out to the many children in our community with critical needs."

"Just a reminder that school is back in session and the children can use school supplies. Thank you for all your donations."

Christine Bean, Community Service Chairperson



September 17, 2024 (Tuesday) ... SCRTA General Luncheon Meeting ... 12 noon at Guy's Party Center 12 noon. Doors open at 11:30 am.

October 1, 2024 (Tuesday) ... SCRTA Management Board Meeting ... 10 am at the AEA Building.

October 15, SCRTA Mailing Meeting ... 10 am at the AEA Building.

November 12, 2024 (Tuesday) ... SCRTA General Luncheon Meeting ... 12 noon at Guy's Party Center. Doors open at 11:30 am.

"A Teacher's Heart Never Retires"