

SCRTA NEWS

Summit County Retired Teachers Association

THE SUMMIT COUNTY AFFILIATE OF Ohio Retired Teachers Association May - June 2025

President's Message



At the April 1st luncheon meeting, attendees were given a survey to fill out. The information will be used for future planning in our Membership Recruitment Strategic Plan. The first question asked was "How did you learn about SCRTA?" and the second question asked was "What were your reasons for joining SCRTA?" Many people shop, pick restaurants, attend concerts and vacation based on the recommendations from friends and mainly by word of mouth.

A major purpose of SCRTA is to promote the interests and welfare of retired educators. There is also a social side to being a part of this organization. Attending luncheon and general meetings is a great way to see former colleagues and make new friends. It provides updates on legislative issues in the retirement community that impact us all. Current SCRTA members are also encouraged to be active in this organization as an outlet to volunteer in the Summit County community.

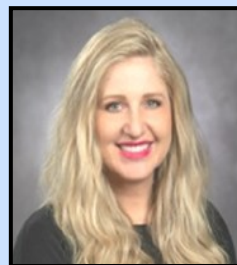
The Management Board has been impressed and encouraged with the increase in membership and the positive comments and suggestions received in support of our programs and community projects. Thanks to all members and friends who have contributed to the Ronald McDonald House pull-tabs project, Shelter Care, the SCRTA Scholarship fund, Teacher Grant fund and the Acme receipts collection

fund which supports Teacher Grants and scholarships.

Make an effort to bring a friend to the next luncheon on June 3, 2025. The speaker will be Christina Elliott, Deputy Executive Director of Member Benefits and Chief Benefits Officer of STRS. Doors open at 11:30 am at Guy's Party Center. Hope to see you there.

Johnnette Curry, SCRTA President

STRS Member Benefits Deputy Director to Speak at June 3rd Luncheon



Christina Elliott, STRS Deputy Director for member benefits, will be the guest speaker at our June luncheon. Ms. Elliott has joined us in each of the past two years. In addition to her presentation, she will be able to answer members' questions about benefits, including the changes approved at the April board meeting. Those changes include a 1.5% COLA for FY 2026 (July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026), payable on the member's retirement date anniversary and each month thereafter. In addition, the board passed temporary reductions in the number of years of service required for reduced and unreduced retirement benefits.

Ms. Elliott is one of three finalists for the STRS Ohio Executive Director position which is currently held by Interim Director Aaron Hood.

We hope to see you at the June luncheon!



WISH LIST ITEMS

SCRTA members are fantastic! We received many donations at our last luncheon meeting for both **Ronald McDonald House and for Safe Landing (Shelter Care, Inc.)**. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

After the presentation by Mark Grabowski, Marketing and Communications Specialist at Ronald McDonald House in Akron, members inquired about needs and appropriate items to bring and donate at lunches. Ideas for **Ronald McDonald House** include paper products, trash bags, wraps and sandwich bags, laundry detergent, cleaning products and personal care products such as deodorant, dental floss, toothpaste, soap, shampoo and conditioner. Gifts cards for gas and groceries, as well as for stores such as Walmart and Target are always welcome. There will also be a collection box at our donation table for cash donations and please continue to save and bring your pull tabs.

Safe Landing's current needs include bottled water, individually wrapped snacks, disposable silverware, paper plates, Ziplock bags, plastic wrap, cleaning supplies, and band-aids. Always helpful are shampoo and conditioner, body wash and deodorant with a request that these items be full size.

When you drop off your tabs or donations, remember to pick up a treat from the basket on the donation table. If you bring in five (5) items, please ask for your extra ticket for the door prize drawing at the welcome table when you pick up your name tag. Again, many thanks for your continued support for these charitable community organizations.

Article Submitted by Rozanne Emich, Community Service co-chair.

2025 SCRTA MANAGEMENT BOARD



President - Johnnette Curry (330-289-2354)

1st VP/ Program - Elaine Jarvis (330-607-0226)

2nd VP/Legislative - Bill Siegfert (330-819-4123)

Administrative Asst. - Rebecca Moore (330-497-9362)

Treasurer - Bill Siegfert (330-819-4123)

Asst. Treasurer/Membership - Jackie Hovey (330-940-9147)

Past President - Mary Lou Swartz (234-755-1490)

Membership Luncheons - Micki Lavis (330-854-3054)

Sunshine Committee - Christine Bean (330-703-2196); Rozanne Emich (330-603-7660) Co-chair

Newsletter Editor - Elaine Jarvis (330-607-0226)

Web Master - Michael Rusnak (330-472-3593)

Nominating Committee: 3 elected members

Carol Caughron (330-606-6900); Micki Lavis (330-854-3054); One **OPEN** position

2 At-Large Members: Community Service -

Christine Bean (330-703-2196) and **OPEN** (At-large Member)

Scholarship Committee - Vicky Shaw (330-957-5216); Judi Hill - (330-805-5550) Co-Chair

Bulk Mailing - Rozanne Emich (330-603-7660)

Travel/Excursions - **OPEN**

Teacher Grants - Christina Haas (330-752-3943)

Past President - Paul DiMascio (330-603-3374)

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much." Helen Keller

Legislative and Legal Updates



Bill Siegferth

Ohio House Continues All-Out Attack on Public Schools

The Ohio House recently passed its version of the next two year state budget. It includes, not surprisingly, further blatant attacks against public education in the state.

One provision in the bill eliminates elected state board of education positions and reduces the number of board members to five, all appointed by the governor. The board currently includes nineteen elected and eight governor-appointed members. The latest attack follows the renaming two years ago of the Ohio Department of Education to the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, a move that was accompanied by the stripping away of much of ODE's authority. In another example of the House's unwavering allegiance to charter and private schools, the proposed five-member board includes a member from each group, leaving traditional public school members with just 60% of the board's makeup.

Meanwhile, the Fair School Funding model, which has been in place for the last four years and was intended to address the years-ago Supreme Court ruling that Ohio's school funding formula was unconstitutional, was supposed to receive a \$666 million increase in this budget. The House bill reduces that amount by roughly two-thirds to \$226 million while increasing private school funding by more than double that to \$500 million.

As of this writing, the budget bill moves on to the Senate. The budget must be completed by the end of June.

"Reformers took a majority of the Ohio State Teachers board. Now their overhaul efforts are fizzling in the face of reality."

The headline above is not mine; it's from an April 8 online ***Pensions & Investments*** (P & I) article by **Rob Kozlowski**. In addition to posting news daily online, P & I publishes a bi-weekly magazine considered by many as the newspaper of record for institutional investors. P & I is rated by media watchdog ***Media Bias/Fact Check*** as least bias, highly credible, and mostly factual.

The crux of Kozlowski's article is that a series of elections since 2021 has given a majority of STRS board seats (6) to "a group of self-proclaimed reformers." (For the record, the majority of six includes one retiree seat and five active teacher seats, four of which were elected and one appointed.) Kozlowski attributes the election results to "social media-driven outrage by retirees led by advocacy organization (the) Ohio Retirement for Teachers Association..." His mention of social media is obviously in reference to ORTA partners STRS Ohio Watchdogs and the Ohio STRS Member Only Forum. ORTA and their online lemmings have pushed for investing primarily in index funds, which are passive investments and, as such, would save STRS tons of investment advisor fees, bonuses, etc., thereby allowing STRS to restore what they believe was a promise of a life-long 3% COLA.

Kozlowski noted that the "reformers," all of whom were endorsed by ORTA, "campaigns with platforms that included proposals to reduce costs by cutting investment staff bonuses, moving to passive investments and eliminating alternatives in order to restore cost-of-living adjustment benefits lost after a pension reform law was passed in 2012," suggesting their platforms were closely aligned with ORTA's position.

The "reformers," however, joined the remaining board members at their March 19 meeting in a unanimous vote for an asset allocation investment plan that differs drastically from their campaign positions and that of ORTA & Co. The allocation plan was

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recommended by STRS investment consultant Meketa.

Keith Brainard, a research director for the **National Association of State Retirement Administrators**, offered one reason why “reformers” supported an asset allocation plan so different than what some suggested during their election campaigns. STRS board members are required to complete an orientation program early in their tenure and to attend continuing education programs at least twice a year. “The fact that the board has set an asset allocation that seems to be different than what was the basis of the popular election of some of the trustees suggests that perhaps some of this continuing education is hitting its mark,” Brainard said.

STRS Interim Executive Director **Aaron Hood** also commented on the value of the education initiatives during his April 9 meeting with the Ohio House Public Insurance and Pensions Committee. Noting that more than half of the STRS board has been in place for less than a year, Hood said he believes that “some of the new board members have gotten much clearer in understanding... cutting through some of the noise that is out there... instead of getting their news from Facebook pages, they’re starting to get it from the reality of all the things that are factual and data driven.” Members interested in hearing Mr. Hood’s comments to the committee may visit <https://www.ohiochannel.org/video/ohio-house-public-insurance-and-pensions-committee-4-9-2025>. Once there, fast forward to the 52 minute mark.

The P & I article does not portray “reformers” in a very positive light given the contrast between their campaign pledges and endorsements and their most recent votes in favor of the new asset allocation plan. But that contrast is good news for members, as it shows a group willing to listen and cast votes based on advice from experts in the pension and investment field, and not on the basis of less than fully accurate social media and ORTA complaints

about benefit changes stemming from the universally accepted pension reforms initiated ten to fifteen years ago. **Bill Siegferth—Legislative Chair**



STAY STRONG

2025 SCRTA Recruitment Strategy Overview “50 in 2025”

What? New member recruitment plan.

Who? SCRTA members as recruiters with the management board and the marketing team taking the lead.

Why? To increase SCRTA membership so that the organization can be more impactful to both its members, current educators, and the Summit County community.

How? Energize the SCRTA members to become personally involved in this project by 1) providing incentives to both the recruiters and new members; 2) writing good mission and vision statements; 3) creating and following goals and objectives; 4) revising the website; and 5) using a timeline and tracking plan.

Backstory: We began, after much prior discussion, with a SCRTA written recruitment overview and questionnaire on February 11, 2025, at the Management Board meeting and then presented the questionnaire to members at the April 1, 2025, General Luncheon meeting. Moving forward, the strategic plan will be promoted to the entire SCRTA membership in the May/June 2025 newsletter and at the June 3, 2025, luncheon general meeting. We are using the slogan “50 in 2025” to indicate we are striving to reach 50 new members in 2025. Please join us in keeping SCRTA a strong organization. In the days ahead, watch for more information regarding the SCRTA strategic recruitment plan. **Together We Can Make a Difference!** *Elaine Jarvis Marketing Chairman*

Scholarship News

The 2025 SCRTA Scholarship Recipients

The Scholarship Committee is pleased to announce the 2025 winners of the SCRTA scholarships. There were so many great applicants, we could not leave it at two applicants. The recipients are as follows: **Emilia Gifford**, Green High School - The Ohio State University; **LeKai Baity**, Akron Early College High School –The University of Akron; **Rachel Robinette**, Green High School - Kent State University; and **Samara Hampton**, The University of Akron, second year sophomore.

Vicky Shaw & Judi Hill - Scholarship Co-Chairmen.



My name is **Emilia Gifford** and I am a senior at Green High School! In the fall, I will be attending The Ohio State University to study Special Education and Psychology.

Throughout my high school career, I have taken every available opportunity to surround myself with kids and individuals with disabilities.

I am involved in numerous clubs, programs, and volunteer organizations in my school and community. Two of my favorite involvements are volunteering at Pegasus Farm, where I help people with disabilities learn to ride horses; and as an education aide, I assist in two general education classrooms and the special education classroom at my district kindergarten. Watching the kids I work with grow and achieve new things under the support of their teachers and mentors has ignited a passion in me. I can't wait to begin my career, advocating for inclusive education and making big impacts on the lives of little people.

I am so grateful to the Summit County Retired Teachers Association, and the opportunities that this scholarship will provide me. Thank you!



LeKhai Baity

I am so grateful to the Summit County Retired Teachers Association, and the opportunities that this scholarship will provide me. Thank you!

I had no expectations entering my fifth grade history class, however, when the school year ended, I knew that my purpose in life was to be a history teacher. After observing my fifth grade history teacher's enthusiasm for the learning environment, her teaching inspired my passion for history and education.

In order to achieve my career goal of obtaining a college degree in History, I applied for and was accepted into the Akron Early College High School. In May, as one of the valedictorians of my class, I will be receiving an honors diploma, as well as an Associates of Art Degree.

Before starting college in the fall, I'm participating in a summer study abroad program in Le Mans, France.

As an added note, I recently completed my field hours at the I Promise School and it reinforced that my purpose in life is to educate while also building confidence in students!

I really appreciate being awarded this scholarship. Thank you!



I, **Rachel Robinette**, am a senior at Green High School and will be going to college at Kent State University in the fall with a major in Early Childhood Education!

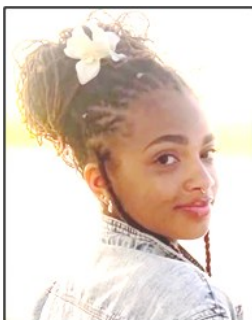
I have been Green High School's only twirler for the marching band for 3 years and I cheered for basketball season my sophomore and junior year! I currently work two jobs, one at Sweet Frog (frozen

Please see Scholarship Recipients, Page 6

yogurt) and another at 35 Brix as a hostess. I will also be pursuing nail school this summer so I can get my license before I leave for college!

Thank you for awarding me this scholarship!

Rachel



Samara J. Hampton

I am pursuing a career in the field of education to have a positive impact on the lives of children. I have had numerous educators in my life that have influenced me into the person that I am today.

Towards the end of my senior year at Akron Early College High School, I decided I wanted to pursue Biomedical Engineering because of my love for science and math. That same summer, however, I started working at Akron First Assembly of God Preschool. Having worked a couple of part-time jobs, this was the first job that truly felt like I wasn't working. Every day I went to work knowing that I could work in education for the rest of my life and this career would truly fulfill my passion. So, a couple of weeks before the fall semester of my freshman year at The University of Akron, I changed my major to Early Childhood Education. After my first school year, I added Manual Communication. Through my program, I will earn a license in general and special education. Experience in ASL will give me the skills to communicate with students who may have hearing loss or are non-verbal.

I currently work at Akron First Assembly of God Preschool and at NIHF STEM Middle School in the Akron After-School Program. Both continue to prepare and nourish me in my quest to be a full-time educator. I sincerely thank you for my scholarship.

Samara J. Hampton

SCRTA TEACHER GRANTS IN ACTION

As the 24-25 school year winds down, we are receiving exciting feedback from our grant recipients.

Scott Aten from Green Middle School sent pictures and video and reported: *"We used the grant money SCRTA provided to purchase the necessary supplies for our 26-student Robotics Team to build an Ant-Weight plastic combat bot (robot car) that was used to compete in the National Robotics Challenge in Marion, Ohio in April. The team's bot made it all the way to the championship match, where it lost, but received the silver medal. Our students are very excited about designing something different next year."*

Ashley Longville, from Lincoln Elementary in Cuyahoga Falls created a "hands-on cooking experience" station for her Special Education students. It includes a toaster oven, toaster-oven bakeware, griddle, blender, mixing bowls, hand mixer, cutting boards, oven mitts and cupcake liners. These items can be used over and over for several school years.

Melissa Clapper of Green Elementary School sent video and pictures of the small terrariums her first-grade classes created. She purchased 48 plastic Mason jars with lids, terrarium plants, artificial moss, mushroom decorations, gravel and terrarium soil. Her video shows a first grader explaining the water cycle, as he proudly shows us his terrarium, which is creating its own water-droplet rain!

Laurie Thompson from Ritzman Elementary School purchased books her 5th grade students are using to learn about various famous persons and will create a living Biography Museum to present to K-4 students in her building.

Over **3,000 students in 10 Summit County School Districts** have been positively impacted by the **20 teacher grants**, completely funded by individual and groups of retired educators!

Christina Haas, Teacher Grants Chairman



Notes from the Archives on Scholarships

In August of 2003, SCRTA President Bob Frutchey appointed four Management Board members to serve on a scholarship committee. The committee was created after four years of discussions concerning scholarships. That October the Board accepted the recommendations from Mary Anasson, Blin Scatterday, Betty Dyak, and Gene Thrall. Scholarships were offered to education majors from Summit County who were children of members. The following August SCRTA awarded a scholarship to Adam Dockus. The next few years, it appears few scholarships were awarded in part because there were very few applicants. No records were filed about recipients for several years. Sometimes the minutes show a scholarship was given, but the recipient was not named. If you can add information about the years 2004 to 2013, please let me know.

The major ways of funding the awards have varied slightly over the years. In July 2005 the Board passed a motion to collect donations in cups on the luncheon tables, one-half going to school supplies for children living at the Battered Women's Shelter and one-half going to the scholarship fund. The Board passed a motion in 2014 to donate \$3.00 of each new member's dues to the fund. Vicky Shaw and Judi Hill volunteered to cochair the Scholarship Committee in 2014. Since then, 29 high school and university students have received SCRTA scholarships. We have usually given two each year, although for the second time, we are helping four students in 2025. Our co-chairs have implemented fund-raising raffles, sales, the Acme Cashback program, and have continued to encourage donations from members for this important student assistance. You will find a report from Vicky and Judi in this newsletter on pages 5, 6. *Submitted by Rebecca Moore*



"All dues shall be payable, beginning in September, for the following year with December 31 being the deadline each year." *

We have 11 new members this year! Please invite a friend to the luncheon and to join.

Attending our luncheons is not the only way to become involved with our association. There is always room for members to help with awarding scholarships and grants to current teachers. 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!

Total membership is **332** with **208** lifetime members. Resources are limited!

We are grateful for our lifetime members who have made contributions towards our Teacher Grants and Scholarships.

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

If there is an * by your name on this newsletter, your dues are due!

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

Jackie Hovey

jheysue@gmail.com

*** SUMMIT COUNTY RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION STANDING RULES**

**"Do whatever you can with all that you have, wherever you are."
Theodore Roosevelt**

Summit County Retired Teachers Association
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Cuyahoga Falls, OH 44223

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U. S. POSTAGE PAID
AKRON, OHIO 44309
Permit No. 418

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

May - June



2025

SCRTA Website
www.summitcountyrta.org

Michael Rusnak - Webmaster
michael.rusnak@gmail.com



Thank you for your very generous donations to Ronald McDonald House and Shelter Care (Safe Landing for Boys and Girls). Don't forget you receive an extra prize ticket for bringing 5 or more donations. *Chris Bean—Community Service Co-chair*



I also send sympathy, get well, and cards of congratulations for milestone events to SCRTA members ... mostly upon requests from other SCRTA members. Let me know if I can be of help.



Chris Bean—Sunshine Committee Co-Chair



June 3, 2025 (Tuesday) ... SCRTA General Luncheon Meeting ... 12 noon Guy's Party Center. Doors open at 11:30 am.

July 22, 2025 (Tuesday) ... SCRTA Management Board Meeting ... 10 am at the AEA Building.

September 16, 2025 (Tuesday) ... SCRTA General Luncheon Meeting ... 12 noon Guy's Party Center. Doors open at 11:30 am.

"A Teacher's Heart Never Retires"