

SCRTA NEWS

Summit County Retired Teachers Association

"A Teacher's Heart Never Retires"

October - November 2025

Scholarship News

In 2018, a senior at Barberton High School, Nicholas Ratay, wrote the following on his application for a SCRTA scholarship, stating why he wanted to become an educator:

"For as long as I can remember, I have wanted to become a teacher. However, it was after I became a drum major in my high school's marching band that I realized I wanted to be a music educator. I am pursuing a career in the field of education because I want to make a difference in the lives of kids."



Nicholas Ratay
SCRTA Scholarship
Award recipient

Mr. Ratay is currently the director of the Walsh Jesuit High School String Orchestra. It is made up of students in grades 9-12 and is directed by **Nicholas Ratay**. The group performs at four instrumental concerts each year, but often performs at other events including school masses, receptions, and more. The string orchestra plays a mixture of formal classical music and fun modern and pop music."

It is our good fortune to announce that this orchestra, directed by Nicholas Ratay, will be providing **musical entertainment at our General Luncheon Meeting on November 11, 2025 at Guy's Party Center. WE have come full circle with this fine young educator!**

PLEASE NOTE

See page 6 of this newsletter and the insert page for some additional Scholarship Committee info about Nicholas Rayta, and Scholarship co-chairs, Vicky Shaw and Judi Hill.



President's Message



It is hard to believe that we are in the last quarter of 2025. Time seems to have zipped by. The leaves are changing colors daily and falling to the ground. The holiday season is right around the corner, and it will be time to celebrate with family and friends.

Thank you for the generous donations that were brought to the September meeting. If you forgot to bring your items, you can do so at our next meeting in November. Your continued support of our community projects, The Ronald McDonald House and Safe Landing, is greatly appreciated.

The Summit County Board of Elections has a new location. The new address is 1050 E. Tallmadge Avenue, 44310. Don't forget that early voting has started. Check to make sure you are still eligible to vote. Election day is Tuesday, November 4, 2025.

The next SCRTA Luncheon and General Meeting promises to be quite entertaining. Nicholas Ratay, a 2018 SCRTA scholarship recipient, will bring students from Walsh Jesuit High School to perform. We have been quite proud of Mr. Ratay and look forward to their presentation.

Don't forget to send in your luncheon form and invite a friend. I look forward to seeing you on November 11th at Guy's Party Center. Doors open at 11:30 am.

Johnnette S. Curry,
SCRTA, President



**Your attitude, not your aptitude,
will determine your altitude.
Zig Zaglar**



We welcomed 21 new members so far this year! Please invite a friend to the luncheon on November 11, 2025 at Guy's Party Center.

We request your assistance with an initiative aimed at recruiting new members. Postcards will be available at our November 11th Luncheon for you to send to friends with a message about SCRTA's goals and benefits.

Total membership is 330 with 194 Lifetime members. Resources are limited! We are grateful for our Lifetime Members that 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 a * by your name on this newsletter, your dues are due!

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

Jackie Hovey
Membership Chair
jhoveysue@gmail.com
330- 940-9147





From the Archives: 25 Years Ago in SCRTA

A memorial fund that began in memory of Oliver Ocasek raised \$800 and was expanded to honor three members - Oliver, his wife, and his sister. A granite paver was purchased and placed at Discovery Park outside the STRS building. The inscription is

**In Honor of Oliver Ocasek
Virginia Ocasek
and
Betty Ocasek Peters**

The Travel Committee arranged four trips in 2000. The first was to Cleveland for a city tour. Second was a trip in May to Laurel Highlands, PA, to visit Frank Lloyd Wright's Falling Water, a Lenox outlet, and Seven Springs Resort for lunch and a tour of the grounds. The third trip was to attend the opening ceremonies of Discovery Park in August. In October members visited the STRS and ORTA buildings, Discovery Park, and COSI.

At the April meeting, Ms. Broad presented a monologue and slide show about Amelia Earhart. Senator Leigh Herrington, 28th OH District, spoke in September on three major issues. At the November meeting in addition to the memorial service, the Rubber Capital Harmonica Club played music from the 30s and 40s. Meetings were held at the Tangier Restaurant.

Newsletter editor Sue Frutchey featured SCRTA member Mabelle Miller Lowrey. As a teacher for 50 years, she was celebrating her 100th birthday. Members were invited to her open house. *Article submitted by Rebecca Moore*



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)



summitcountyretiredteachers.org

Legislative and Legal Updates



Bill Siegfert

Board Takeover

The legal battle is underway over the elimination of the elected member majority on the STRS Board.

By way of a last minute, late night conference committee addition to the state budget bill, the number of retired and active educators on the Board will be reduced over time from seven to three. The bill also bars an active or retired STRS member from serving as the Board chair. The change was the brainchild of Rep. Adam Bird (R-63), a member of the Ohio Retirement Study Council (ORSC). It appears that Bird acted as a lone ranger. There has been nothing to suggest that the ORSC played any role in support of Bird's amendment, nor was there any prior discussion among representatives or senators about making the change.

Three teacher groups—the Ohio Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers and the Ohio affiliate of the American Association of University Professors—filed suit in Franklin County Common Pleas Court in mid-September, seeking a **temporary restraining order** (TRO) to block implementation of the law and a **preliminary injunction** challenging the legality of the manner in which the change was made. The court granted the restraining order on September 17. That decision was upheld by the 10th District Court of Appeals.

A hearing on preliminary junction was scheduled for October 10, as this publication was going to press. The difference between a TRO and a preliminary injunction has to do with the immediacy of the action. Both stop an action from taking place until a full blown hearing on the issues is held.

The lawsuit alleges three violations of the Ohio Constitution (as follows) occurred when the

retirement board issue was included as part of the budget bill. (1) Equal protection: the bill leaves STRS as the only public pension system whose members are a minority on their system's board. (2) Single Subject Rule: the constitution states that bills can cover only one subject and that the make-up of the STRS Board has nothing to do with the state budget. (3) Three Consideration Rule: the constitution requires every bill to be considered on three separate days.

Ohio Vouchers

We've previously reported that a Franklin County Common Pleas Court judge ruled Ohio's school voucher plan unconstitutional. That decision has been appealed by the State of Ohio. The appeal hearing has not yet been scheduled, and is likely not to take place until at least mid-2026. Over 300 districts have joined the coalition behind the lawsuit, including Summit County districts Akron, Barberton, Cuyahoga Falls, Green, Hudson, Nardon, Springfield, Twinsburg and Woodridge.

Private school voucher funding increased this year by 9.4% while public school funding rose only 1.5%. In order to accommodate the grossly unfair funding increases, the legislature and Governor trashed the final phase-in of the bi-partisan fair school funding act, falling miserably short of the additional funds that formula would have budgeted for public schools. Clearly, diverting public dollars to private schools impacts our retirement system as teacher and employer payroll contributions are less than they otherwise would be.

Voucher programs have been in the news in many states across the country, most of which have constitutional language governing public school funding very similar to Ohio's. Fortunately, not one state has thus far ruled private school vouchers constitutional.

SB69, The "Placeholder Bill"

Sen. Mark Romanchuk introduced SB69 as a "placeholder bill" last February. A placeholder bill is typically defined as a short bill expressing an agency's intent (in this case, the Ohio legislature) to review or

Please see Legislation, page 5

Legislation Continued from page 4

study a topic or issue (in this case, Ohio's public pension systems). Romanchuk is a member of the Ohio Retirement Study Council (ORSC); the intent of his bill is ultimately to provide a legislative framework for improvement of the state's five retirement systems.

In March, the STRS Board submitted a list of legislative requests to Romanchuk. Among them is a proposal that the employer contribution rate, currently 14%, be increased by 4% to 18% over an eight year period. STRS has put together a coalition of groups supporting an employer contribution increase. SCRTA is a member as are the state's two teacher unions.

Passage of the budget bill in July hasn't helped the prospects of an employer increase being proposed let alone approved. The shortfall in funding mentioned in the Voucher section above represents a huge challenge. Add to that talk of drastically reducing/eliminating property taxes, the lifeblood of public school funding, and we have to wonder if the placeholder bill will ever get written and if it does, will it include STRS's most important request.

COLA Lawsuit

The long running battle over the legality of STRS' decision in 2017 to reduce the then 2% COLA to 0% for five years may finally be set for trial. The original complaint was filed in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio in 2019. The case was dismissed, then filed with the Franklin County Common Pleas court in late 2021.

A jury trial is reportedly due to begin October 26. The suit is a class action lawsuit. The two original plaintiffs are retired Cincinnati teachers, both of whom are active in ORTA, one serving on ORTA's Executive Council.

The suit asks the court to find that the elimination of the COLA in 2017 was unlawful and in some cases, violates the U.S. and Ohio constitutions and certain federal and state laws. The relief sought includes damages and/or restitution in the amount of

lost retirement benefits plus interest, an injunction enjoining STRS "from continuing to ignore its obligation to pay the annual two percent COLA benefits..." and "reasonable attorney fees and costs incurred by the plaintiffs...in processing this matter." Interestingly, the suit is signed by attorneys from three different law firms. We are not aware if they are being paid for their services or, if they are, by who.

(There may have been further developments in one or more of the above topics by the time our newsletter reaches you. If that is the case, we will update the stories via SCRTA email and on our website.) Bill Siegfert



SCRTA Election Scheduled for November Luncheon Meeting

Members are encouraged to attend the **November 11, 2025** General Membership Luncheon at Guy's Party Center during which time elections will take place for officer position terms (two years) effective January 1, 2026.

The following are candidates for office; additional nominations for any office will be accepted from the floor on the November 11th:

President, **Bill Siegfert**; 1st Vice President, **Elaine Jarvis**; 2nd Vice President, **Rozanne Emich**; Administrative Assistant, **Becky Moore**; Treasurer, **Bill Siegfert**; Assistant Treasurer/ Membership, **Jackie Hovey**.

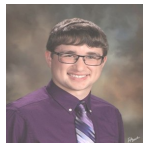
We also will be electing (3) Nominating Committee members: The nominees are **Carol Caughron, Micki Lavis, open**; and (2) At-Large Nominating Committee members, **Christine Bean, open**.

Scholarship News Continued from page 1

Nicholas Ratay matriculated at Kent State University, and as requested of all our scholarship recipients, kept us abreast to how he was doing at Kent State at the end of each semester. Here are some of the communications that we received from him between his 2018 - 2025 journey:

December 2018

Hello SCRTA,



I have just completed my first semester at Kent State. I have had a great time! I really enjoyed performing in the marching band and the symphony band, and enjoyed my classes for my major of music education. Next semester, in addition to my classes and performing, I will also begin observations, where I will be able to visit classrooms and observe music and band classes. My grades for this semester were all As and Bs. Thank you all again very much for the scholarship you awarded me. It was a great help to me for my education! I wish you all a fantastic holiday season and will write again soon. Thank you, and Merry Christmas!

August 2022:

Hi SCRTA,

I hope you all are doing well! I wanted you to know that last month, I was hired by Walsh Jesuit High School to be their band director. My responsibilities include concert band, string orchestra, marching band, and jazz band. I have had a great time working there, the kids are great and it is a fun job! I couldn't have gotten here without your support. I am so thankful to have received your scholarships. Thank you all for your help!

August 2023:

This past school year was wonderful! I was very blessed to have wonderful kids, and a wonderful senior class, to help me as I navigated through my first year of teaching. Walsh Jesuit is a great school with good kids, parents, and staff. I love my job and look forward to many more years! Last year, I was part

time, with duties including teaching concert band, string orchestra, and marching band. This year, I have been promoted to full time! I will still teach concert band, string orchestra, and marching band, but will also get to teach jazz band, a music theory class, and will get to help with the show choir! The past two weeks have been our marching band camp. It feels very good to be leading a camp that I planned out, and seeing how much the students are accomplishing in such a short amount of time! I am looking forward to a great school year!

Thank you again for reaching out! I hope you all are well. Thank you! *Nicholas Ratay*

We are so proud of what Nicholas has accomplished, and are grateful for his steadfast dedication to keeping us informed after each semester.

A note From Another Scholarship Recipient

Dear SCRTA Members:

I am writing to provide a summary of my current leadership roles and involvement:

As of September 2025, I am in the final semester of my Educational Leadership Master's program at Bowling Green State University, with an expected graduation date in December of this year. Over the past year, while completing my program, I have been serving as a Graduate Mentorship Coordinator for the BGSU Office of Student Success Initiatives. In this role, I mentor and advise students who live in residential spaces on campus, and my tuition is covered through this position.

In addition, I substitute teach for Toledo Public Schools and Bowling Green City Schools to maintain relevant experience, as I am not currently in a full-time teaching role. Upon graduation, I plan to return to the classroom as a full-time English teacher for grades 7-12. While I have some uncertainties about where I will end up teaching, I am excited about the future and trust that God will guide my path. Thank you for your support.

Best regards,

Shirrell White | Graduate Mentorship Coordinator
Educational Leadership - Bowling Green State University

We are always extremely pleased when we hear from our former scholarship recipients. *Vicky and Judi*



2025 Teacher Grant Applications Are Arriving!

The word is out! Your Teacher Grant Committee is already receiving grant applications from teachers in several of our Summit County School Districts. We would love to have the funds to award twenty-five grants this year. This would be five more than last year, when YOUR contributions enabled twenty teachers and over two-thousand children to experience enhanced teaching and learning activities. Your contributions provided the materials so first-graders could make individualized closed terrariums to illustrate the water cycle, 5th graders could pick a grade-level biography and become that character, middle schoolers could construct clocks which used rational numbers to replace the basic 1-12, and high school biology students could examine models of the human heart, brain, skin and pelvis. Your donations also purchased materials which revitalized a school learning- garden, postage for letters of gratitude, adaptive seating for a special-education classroom, a stationary bike for a library Ride and Read Program, math manipulatives and many other programs and items enhancing the teaching/learning experiences in Summit County Public School Classrooms. Why wouldn't we want to expand this program every year? Wouldn't we have loved to have been given this opportunity to bring an idea or plan, cost prohibitive for us alone, to fruition? Let's look back; Remember; Look ahead; and HELP more teachers and more students! Donate now and read about the classroom successes YOU funded in future issues of this newsletter!

Grants are awarded the first week of January, so *NOW* is the time to send a tax-deductible donation to Bill Siegfirth, our treasurer, at 82 Cedar Woods Dr. Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio 44223. Write Teacher Grants in the Memo. Thank you! Christina Haas—Teacher Grants Chairperson

SCRTA General Meeting September 16, 2025



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

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

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

October—November



2025

SCRTA Website
www.summitcountyretiredteachers.org

Michael Rusnak - Webmaster
summitcountyretiredteachers.org



Thank you for your generous donations to Shelter Care and Ronald McDonald House. As a member of the Sunshine Committee, I send get well cards to ill members and sympathy cards to families of deceased SCRТА members. I use the Beacon Journal to learn of deceased members. Many families do not put obituaries in the newspaper. If you know of any deceased SCRТА members, please let me know. You can e-mail me, clbean@neo.rr.com, or call me at 330. 703. 2196.



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

February 10, 2025 (Tuesday) ... SCRТА Management Board Meeting ... 10 am at the AEA Building.

April 7, 2026 (Tuesday) ... SCRТА General Luncheon Meeting ... 12 noon Guy's Party Center. Doors open at 11:30 am.