

Retired Educators Association of Minnesota

 REAM Still serving-Still sharp

The REAM News

 NRTA
AARP's Educator Community

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July 2015

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

John Fisher, REAM President

A REAM tribute is in order to Joyce Sukola to recognize and appreciate her services to retired teachers. Joyce brought her 30 teaching years of skills and dedication to our organization, and REAM and its members have been the beneficiaries. Her observation has always been, "Teachers are the best people you could find" and "Teachers need to know the bad news so we can react." So like Joyce!

Her service to our organization spanned 17 years! She was REAM Central Minnesota director with Marie McConnel, attending local meetings and bringing the latest in pension developments from the Minnesota Legislature. She remained Central Minnesota director when she became REAM president (2006-2008) and when she later served as vice president. Recently Joyce has been helped by her loyal confidante and husband Lyndon.

Joyce Sukola, REAM thanks you for your exceptional service, your input and dedication. You will be sincerely missed.

As this article was being completed, the Minnesota Legislature completed its session without harming our mission of preserving the vitality of TRA/PERA pensions to current retirees. REAM has represented you at legislative commission hearings and TRA meetings. Thanks to your board of directors, the REAM Legislative

Committee and local leaders, we have been heard this session. The next Minnesota legislative session will find pensions (TRA/PERA and MSRS) under attack. Pensions preservation is in a state of crisis. Pension challenges result from misunderstanding the nature of pensions, including lack of knowledge that we contribute to our pensions; that public pensions are governed by the state of Minnesota; that we contribute to the state's financial vitality; and that pensions are an economic incentive for qualified personnel to join in building the quality of life for which Minnesota is nationally known. As we face the next session it is our obligation and duty to inform legislators and skeptics of the true nature and benefits of public pensions.

REAM is available to help you with this challenge. We, along with our colleagues at TRA/PERA, will provide you with the best and latest information to answer questions and concerns involving pensions. The REAM leadership team and I are willing and available to speak to your locals about the value and earned benefits of pensions. Your involvement is critical to the preservation and continuation of Minnesota public pensions for ourselves AND for the benefit of our colleagues who are currently teaching and serving Minnesota education. Contact us. The future of Minnesota TRA/PERA/MSRS pensions is in our hands!

PRESIDENT-ELECT REPORT

Anita Hellie, REAM President-elect

How many boomers retired from your school district this year? Did you invite them to join REAM? What about other retired school employees in your community? How are you reaching out to them? Many of us fall into the following trap: We put a meeting announcement in the newspaper, or we do special mailings touting the benefits of belonging to REAM or to our local.

Here are some important points about attracting our younger retired professionals: They are not attracted to groups who emphasize socialization as a "biggie." This younger generation has its own ways of socializing. **Retiring professionals want to make a difference, not just a contribution.** What are you doing that will make this younger group excited about joining you? What projects are you doing that might appeal to them? This group of boomers was ready to change the world in the '60's, and they still believe in causes.

What is your cause?

Retiring professionals aren't afraid of commitment, but there must be a payoff. The payoff could be our cause or a benefit to them personally. (You might think of monitoring pensions and pension information, AMBA benefits, travel opportunities, and a good fall convention as starters). Encourage your younger nonmembers to join us at the Sept. 28-30 convention in St. Cloud. We must be friendly, helpful, willing to eat and visit with them. We must be a welcoming group.

If you're looking for younger professionals to take over a particular job, remember, they're often on the go, traveling, taking care of parents or grandchildren. Some go for the winter. **Retiring professionals want flexibility.** New formats and times for meetings may be needed to encourage more

Continued on page 3

I am going to employ a different approach to this issue's legislative piece by taking up two subjects, both of which greatly affect public pension recipients in Minnesota. The first topic is unraveling the main points from the 2015 Legislature's Special Session. The second is the much anticipated TRA Experience Study and its impact on the costs of the pension fund going forward, especially as the 2016 legislative session approaches next March.

As you'll recall, the House GOP "flipped" ten seats in last fall's election (nine of them outstate) and took over majority status in the chamber. Rep. Kurt Daudt, R-Crown, won election as House Speaker, and early in the session he had to mitigate a heated dispute between Senate Majority Leader Tom Bakk, D-Cook, and Gov. Mark Dayton over commissioners' salaries. That rift between the two DFL leaders presaged a tension that hung mightily in the party's caucus until the final gavel ended the special session on June 13.

When the session concluded, the real winners were Daudt and House Republicans, who held firm on spending and forced the governor to backtrack on several of his early key initiatives: an increase in the gas tax for highway funding, universal pre-K, and key environmental issues, such as eliminating the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's citizens' board. There was a shift at the Capitol.

Leading up to the 2015 session, one of the major issues of discussion across the state was the achievement gap in Minnesota's K-12 educational system. With a \$1.9 billion surplus, Dayton made a firm pitch for \$345 million in universal pre-K funding to improve school readiness. He also proposed 1-percent increases in per-pupil funding in 2016 and 2017. The final bill that won Dayton's signature in June called for a \$525 million increase in K-12 spending and 2-percent increases per pupil in FY 2016 (to \$5,948 per pupil) and in FY 2017 (to \$6,067). Also in the Education Bill was a \$100 million increase for family and early childhood programs, including \$48 million for early childhood scholarships.

One positive new development in the special session was the addition of a \$343 million bonding bill that will help pay for Capitol renovation, flood mitigation, and disaster relief. The bill also contains \$140 for repairing Minnesota's trunk highway system infrastructure, a far cry from the governor's original proposal for a continuous, decade-long income stream for highway repair and replacement via an increased gas tax. Lawmakers left about \$800 million of the \$1.9 billion surplus unspent. Republicans will be looking for "significant tax reduction" in the 2016 session.

Experience Study

TRA Executive Director Laurie Hacking and staff met June 11 with the REAM Board of Directors to go over an experience study that actuaries have been working on since last July.

The study, which is both a backward- and forward-looking document, is an attempt to predict future experience based on economic assumptions such as inflation, mortality rates, and investment returns. The experience study covers the period from July 1, 2008, through June 30, 2014.

The study timeframe coincides with the future review of the Select and Ultimate period (assumption rate returns to 8.5 percent from 8 percent in 2017), which has allowed TRA's fund balance to approach 83 percent. A 90 percent fund balance that would trigger an increased COLA of 2.5 percent was expected to be reached in 2031. The data contained in the experience study casts serious doubts about the sustainability of those projections and of the continuation of an 8.5 percent assumption rate going forward. If you'll recall, PERA and MSRS both had their rates lowered to 8 percent in the 2015 Omnibus Pension Bill. The lower the assumption rate, the less healthy the pension fund appears. Anti-pension groups see lowering the assumption rate as the first step toward changing the pension plan to something that resembles a 401-k, which none of us wants for our active members.

Lower inflation assumptions and projected investment returns, combined with the reality of retirees living longer, will result in added costs to the TRA system. How (and if) those costs can be made up is what Ms. Hacking and her staff are grappling with at present.

On June 17, the experience study results were presented to the TRA Board. An August retreat will include the actuary group directly presenting the board with its findings. Stakeholder group meetings are scheduled in early fall to discuss sustainability options and gain feedback. Information will be gathered by TRA staff and shared with the board, and cost studies will be analyzed. The ultimate goal will be to draft legislation to be introduced when the 2016 session convenes in early March.

This process has the potential for posing serious implications for retirees, active members, and school districts. Those are tax dollars they'll be talking about. And, taxpayers listen to that conversation.

Remember the Pension Reform Bill of 2010 and how it affected your pocketbook? Stay informed on this very important issue.

LOCAL UNITS

Please consider donating a door prize for the State Convention this year. For details contact Chuck Hellie @ 507-301-3609

Chuck's Comments

Please check out the information on this year's REAM Convention in St. Cloud. We are looking forward to seeing you there. A registration form is on pages 4 and 5.

The optional Historical Coach Bus Tour spends most of the time at the Stearns County History Museum. There will be a short tour of the facility and a program with a root-beer float for all participating. The bus tour is \$10 less than last year due to the St. Cloud Chamber and Visitors Bureau providing guides and some dollars to make our convention a little less expensive. The total registration, which includes all meals and rental of the facility, is \$5 less than 2014. Partial registration is also \$5 less than 2014. The convention is at the Best Western Plus Kelly

Inn, 100 4th Avenue South in downtown St. Cloud. The hotel is just on the west side of the Mississippi River.

For 2015 we still have two REAM-sponsored trips. Oct. 1 is a trip to the New England states and is called "New England Rails & Trails." The colors should be quite impressive. Oct. 11 is a trip called "Prague & Highlights of the Danube." It's a cruise down the Danube River.

There are still openings on both trips. Contact me at 507-301-3609 or cchellie@charter.net for a brochure and registration form if interested.

Anita Hellie, REAM President-elect *continued from page 1*

people to attend. Be open to "change" suggestions.

How do we ask someone to fill a position or to do a job? What worked in the past doesn't work well today. When asking, we need **to appeal to what they consider their strengths, background for the job, and interests.** Too often, we come across sounding like anyone who is walking and breathing could do this job and it won't take much time. When we ask that way, the response often is, "No." The person is thinking, "If anyone can do the job, why ask me?"

The new breed are uneasy about aging and self-conscious about identifying with silver-haired colleagues. They may

have a passion for our cause (protecting pensions) but can't fit into a previous operational mold or organizational pattern. How flexible are we? What can we learn from them?

Finally, don't give up. Use a different approach and ask again. We kept varying instruction with our students so they'd "get it." We can vary our approach again and again with nonmembers until they "get it."

The above information comes from the NRTA (National Retired Teachers Association) meeting held in San Antonio in March 2015.

REAM MEMBERSHIP

RE-MEMBER! It's almost that time of year again. All annual REAM memberships expire on Aug. 31, 2015. Annual members will be receiving a letter in mid-August asking you to renew your membership. Please send it promptly – we need big numbers! If you are taking advantage of any benefits from AMBA (Association Member Benefits Advisors), your REAM membership must be current, so don't risk losing a benefit because you didn't renew your REAM membership.

REAM membership for 2014-15 is 7,795 at this time, but about 80,000 letters will be mailed to TRA and PERA retirees mid-August and we have fewer than 8,000 members. Where is everyone? Encourage your retired or friends who'll retire within five years to join! Pensions are at stake!

2015 AMBA benefits are listed below. For information on these benefits, please call 1-800-258-7041.

- Long Term Care/Home Health Care Insurance
- Medicare Supplement Insurance
- Cancer, Heart & Accident Insurance

- Whole Life & Guaranteed Acceptance Life Insurance
- Tax-Deferred Annuity
- Dental & Vision Plans
- Medical Air Services Association (MASA)
- Identity Theft Solutions
- American Hearing Benefits (AHB)
- Apple Discount
- Dell Computer Discount
- LaQuinta Inn & Suites Discount
- Government Employee Travel Opportunities (GETO)
- Rental Car Discounts
- 1-800-Flowers
- AMBA Travel Perx
- CU Wireless – Discounted Cell Phones & No Commitment Plans
- myAMBAadining.com
- Road Scholar

Judy Resler
Membership Co-Chair

2015 REAM CONVENTION REGISTRATION

1. This form is for the convention registration fee and meals – not room reservations. See below for room reservation information.
2. **Deadline** for mail-in convention registration: **Sept. 10, 2015**. A late fee of \$30 will be charged after Sept. 10 for full convention registration, and \$10 for partial registration.
3. If two people register on this form, be sure Monday & Tuesday dinner choices **A** or **B** are those for Name **A** or **B**.
4. No more than two convention attendees per registration form. Make additional copies as needed.
5. Make checks payable to **REAM** and make a copy of the registration form for your records.

ROOM RESERVATIONS

1. Call Best Western Plus Kelly Inn at **320-253-0606**. Request the REAM block of rooms.
2. Room Rates: **\$79 plus tax** (12.375%) = **\$88.78**.
3. Have your credit card number ready.
4. Block Release Date: **Sept. 14, 2015**. After that date, rooms not booked are turned over to the general public.

MAILING INFORMATION

Send REGISTRATION FORM and CHECK payable to REAM to:

MARY MORTIER
104 HEATHER LN. APT. 3
MANKATO, MN 56001

PHONE: 507-388-7678
EMAIL: mortie@hickorytech.net

REAM CONVENTION 2015

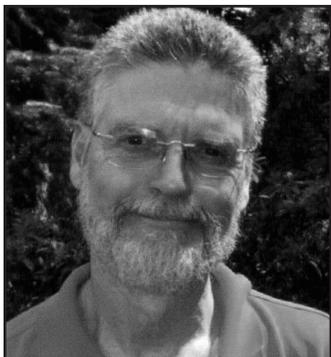
Best Western Plus Kelly Inn
SEPT. 28, 29, 30 – St. Cloud, MN

2015 REAM CONVENTION PRESENTERS



Janelle Kendall is the Featured Speaker for the 2015 REAM Convention. She will speak at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, September 30. Janelle is the Attorney for Stearns County. She leads an office of 27 Attorneys in Criminal, Juvenile and Civil Divisions. Janelle graduated from Blooming Prairie High School in Minnesota. She earned a

B.A. from Hamline University and a JD from the University of Minnesota Law School.



Tom Hergert is a Professor of Instructional Design and Technology at St. Cloud State University. He will speak at the REAM Convention on Tuesday, September 28, at 2 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. on new ways that technology will impact our lives and schools. Dr. Hergert has a B.A. from Lindenwood University,

St. Charles, Missouri and a PHD from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia



This is a photo of the group "Friends in Harmony" which performs at the REAM 2015 Convention on Tuesday, September 29 at 7 p.m. This music group is made up of a diverse group of singers from Central Minnesota. They represent varied backgrounds: teachers, coaches, nurses, workers in business and industry, professors and clergy. They sing pop, Rock, country and patriotic.



"Tech High School Music Ensembles" who will be the entertainment on Monday, September 28 at 7 p.m. These are students from St. Cloud Technical High School led by Gary Zwack, the Tech High School Band Director.

2015 REAM CONVENTION REGISTRATION

REGISTRATION(S) INFORMATION

(A) Name _____ (B) Name _____

Address _____ Address _____

City/State/Zip _____ City/State/Zip _____

Please PRINT as you wish your name to appear on name badge:

Name _____ Name _____

City/Unit _____ City/Unit _____

REGISTRATION FOR TWO-HOUR HISTORICAL COACH BUS TOUR

Coach bus loads at 12:15 p.m. & departs at 12:30 p.m. from hotel entrance on Monday, Sept. 28.

	A	B
Coach bus tour - \$10 per person.	\$ _____	\$ _____
Cost includes coach bus, guides, museum entrance fee, program and root-beer float.		

REGISTRATION FOR FULL CONVENTION

Full convention registration includes registration, meals, breakouts, taxes and gratuities (not rooms) @ \$130 per person.

If late- after Sept. 10, the fee is \$160 per person. _____ \$ _____ \$ _____

Meal choice selections:

Monday dinner: Chicken breast (A) ____ (B) ____ **OR** Walleye (A) ____ (B) ____

Tuesday dinner: Pork chop (A) ____ (B) ____ **OR** Salmon (A) ____ (B) ____

OR REGISTRATION IF ATTENDING ONLY PART OF THE CONVENTION

Note: Tax, gratuity & service fees are included in meal prices.

Registration fee must be paid by all **Partial Registrations** @ \$25. _____ \$ _____ \$ _____

Late Fee after Sept.10 @ \$35. _____

Monday, Sept. 28

Dinner reservations @ \$34. _____ \$ _____ \$ _____

Indicate your choice for Monday dinner:

Chicken breast (A) ____ (B) ____ **OR** Broiled walleye (A) ____ (B) ____

Tuesday, Sept. 29

Breakfast reservations @ \$14 _____ \$ _____ \$ _____

Lunch reservations @ \$14 _____ \$ _____ \$ _____

Dinner reservations @ \$33 _____ \$ _____ \$ _____

Indicate your choice for Tuesday dinner:

Pork chop (A) ____ (B) ____ **OR** Salmon (A) ____ (B) ____

Wednesday, Sept. 30

Breakfast reservations @ \$15. _____ \$ _____ \$ _____

Lunch reservations @ \$15. _____ \$ _____ \$ _____

GRAND TOTAL \$ _____ \$ _____

REAM UNIT CONTACTS 2014-2015

CENTRAL DIVISON

BRAINERD AREA

Sherrí De La Hunt
218-963-2699

CROW RIVER AREA (Dassel)

Betty Hendrickson
320-275-3851

STAPLES

Gail Honek
218-894-1105

ST. CLOUD AREA

John Augustin
320-654-9428 or
Joyce Wittenhagen
320-252-3478

VIKING LAND AREA (Alexandria)

Keith Redfield
320-763-4126

WEST CENTRAL (Willmar)

Mike Norberg
320-235-6131

PAYNESVILLE AREA

John Janotta
320-243-3916

SAUK CENTRE/MELROSE

Carol Musburger
320-351-4565

NORTHWEST DIVISION

AGASSIZ AREA (Fertile)

Gary Werner
218-945-6766

CROOKSTON AREA

Leland "Bud" Ellingson
218-281-5440

DETROIT LAKES

Elaine Meyer
218-847-7269

MOORHEAD

Gerald Koenig
218-233-4774

NORTHLAND AREA (Thief River)

Jane Oberg
218-681-3532

ROSEAU COUNTY AREA

Elaine Lang
218-528-3650

NORTHEAST DIVISION

CARLTON COUNTY

Jennie Hanson
218-357-2385

DULUTH AREA

John Zallar
218-525-5819

NORTH CENTRAL AREA

Dennis Jerome
218-259-8795

IRON RANGE AREA

Lois Ferguson
218-744-3642

SOUTHWEST DIVISION

MANKATO AREA

Darlene Anderson
507-388-5403

SOUTHEAST DIVISION

ALBERT LEA

Donna Widenhoefer
507-373-8459

AUSTIN

Ramona Swenson
507-437-4701

KENYON/WANAMINGO

Carol Lozon
507-789-6497

OWATONNA

Gary Schwartz
507-451-6676

ROCHESTER

Dorothy Norman
507-775-2950

TRI COUNTY

Gretchen Schade
507-875-2592

UPPER HIAWATHA VALLEY

Linda Ahlers
651-345-3851

WASECA

Don Zwach
507-835-1768

WINONA

Lyle Laturno
507-452-2481

METRO DIVISION

FOREST LAKE

Carol Martin
651-426-4765

HASTINGS

Paul Ehrhard
651-319-0777

MOUNDS VIEW

Myrna Strand
612-861-6697

NORTH ST. PAUL

Laura Lewis
651-739-2432

ROSEVILLE

Lonnie Duberstein
651-429-8009

STILLWATER

Jan Fischer
651-436-4093

WEST SAINT PAUL

John Hagman
651-454-1529

AHRSA (Anoka-Hennepin)

Lynn Montgomery
612-670-8281

CARE (Osseo)

Mary Jo Martinson
763-553-7998

BELLE PLAINE & JORDAN

Phoebe Einertson
952-718-6349

BLOOMINGTON AREA

Elaine Rothman
952-931-0843

RICHFIELD

Dorothy Pearson
952-943-8989

HOPKINS

Ronelle Laitinen
952-544-5025

MINNEAPOLIS

Patience Gall
763-420-4063

MEMORIALS AND GIFTS — JULY 2015

IN MEMORY OF:	FROM:	AMOUNT:
DON "CORKY" BRODERSEN	KENNETH BOM, MINNETONKA	\$10
DON "CORKY" BRODERSEN	CURT HUTCHENS, ST. CLOUD	\$20
DON "CORKY" BRODERSEN	MARY/PETER BUDGE, BLOOMINGTON	\$50
MAE L. GOEDE	BILL GOEDE, COLD SPRING	\$25
MARGARET HULS	JOYCE WITTENHAGEN, ST. CLOUD	\$10
RUTH JOHNSON	CARLTON COUNTY REAM	\$10
ROBERT KENDALL	CURT HUTCHENS, ST. CLOUD	\$20
ROBERT KENDALL	SHELDON D. JOHNSON, MONTICELLO	\$10
HELEN DUNCAN PURSCCELL	KEITH PURSCCELL, MANKATO	\$40
KEN QUEENSLAND	SHELDON D. JOHNSON, MONTICELLO	\$10
MARIAN SIBLEY	MOORHEAD AREA REAM	\$10
WALLY WAISANEN	CARLTON COUNTY REAM	\$10
GIFTS	LAVERNE I. COLNESS, SEDONA, AZ	\$20

REAM OFFICERS

President: John Fisher

1766 Linden Cove
White Bear Lake, MN 55110
(651) 653-9498
johnffisher@hotmail.com

Exec. Director: Chuck Hellie

1129 Heritage Drive
Northfield, MN 55057
(507) 301-3609
cchellie@charter.net

Membership Chair:

Judy Resler
(651) 484-6030
email: jresler@comcast.net

President-Elect: Anita Hellie

1129 Heritage Drive
Northfield, MN 55057
(507) 301-3609
ahellie@charter.net

Secretary: Karna Brewer

431 Fremont St.
Anoka, MN 55303
(763) 427-8595
brewer.com2@juno.com

Editor: Steve Schild

(507) 454-7042
sschild@smumn.edu

Past President: Curt Hutchens

614 N. Montrose Rd
St. Cloud, MN 56301
(320) 229-8806
onthelake2@msn.com

Treasurer: Gordon Wagner

317 Waite Avenue S.
St. Cloud, MN 56301
(320) 251-7645
gmkwagner2@gmail.com



Staples Motley REAM chapter representative, Jeanne Rohr, presenting two REAM scholarships to two seniors, Emily Hirschey, left and Kaitlin Spar, right. This presentation took place at our Staples Motley Dollars for Scholars Award Ceremony on May 6, 2015.

REAM has two spots to fill:

1. Joyce Sukola has resigned as Vice President of the Board of Directors, so we're looking for someone to finish the last year of her term.
2. We need a Central Minnesota Division Director.

If interested in either position, please call John Fisher @ 651-653-9498 or Chuck Hellie @ 507-301-3609.

The REAM News

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St. Paul, MN 55113

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REAM STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Represent all school retirees, present and future, certified and classified.

Educate and inform all school personnel on matters related to the improvement of their economic and social status.

Assist and work to strengthen local and regional units in every way possible.

Monitor the actions of, and cooperate, with the legislature, all government units, and other organizations that deal with present and future retired school personnel.

If you are retired or within 5 years of retirement as an educator (any school personnel) you are eligible for REAM membership.
FOR AN EDUCATOR THE CHOICE IS EASY – JOIN REAM

MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION - RETIRED EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA, INC.

Legal Name _____
(Last) (First) (Middle)

Mailing Address (Street or Route Box) _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Winter Address if different _____

*If winter address is not known at this time, please notify us when you do know it, either by regular or e-mail: jresler@comcast.net.

Phone _____ Email Address _____

CHECK MEMBERSHIP DESIRED: Please check appropriate box so that we can record accurately.

1. \$175 Life
2. \$70 Five Year New Renewal
3. \$15 Annual New Renewal

Membership Year Sept. 1 to August 31

Make check payable to REAM. Mail payment and form to: REAM MEMBERSHIP, BOX 130547, ROSEVILLE, MN 55113.

For membership card, enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope. www.mnream.org



PENSION SOURCE:

- TRA
 PERA
 St. Paul, Duluth
 Other