

SERREAM

Newsletter

Fall 2017

President's Message: Kay Morcomb

A Bit of History continued

In the last newsletter the story of Ethel Percy Andrus started. Andrus had an outstanding career as a teacher, then as a principal, meanwhile continuing her own education earning a MA. and Ph.D.

In 1944 her mother became seriously ill and Dr. Andrus became a full time caregiver. When her mother's health improved Dr. Andrus, long concerned about the financial struggles of retired educators, took action to remedy the situation. Thus began a second career.

Dr. Andrus began to examine pension and other benefits of retired teachers across the country. From her research she decided a national organization was needed to meet their needs. In 1947 she founded and became president of the National Retired Teachers Association (NRTA) in order gain health care and better pensions for teachers.

At that time medicare did not exist and insurance companies felt insuring insuring older people was too risky. Dr. Andrus contacted over 40 insurance companies. Continental Casualty finally agreed to underwrite a program for NRTA members in 1956, the first group health insurance program for retired persons over the age of 65. There were so many requests from other retirees that Dr. Andrus established another organization, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) in 1958. She spent the rest of her life in service to retirees working right up to her death from a heart attack at age 83 in 1967.

NRTA and AARP shared many goals and collaborated in the development of countless programs. In 1982 the two associations merged at the national level and NRTA became a division of AARP known as NRTA: AARP's Educator Community. Other organizations have the same initials, so spell out National Retired Teachers Association on Google to find the many amazing ways NRTA supports retired educators and learning. NRTA also maintains a working relationship with a network of state and locally based Retired Educator Associations. These state associations are independent self-governed non-profit associations of retired school employees who receive their pensions from TRA or PERA. REAM (Retired Educators Association of Minnesota) was formed in 1954. REAM volunteers monitor the actions of, and provide information to TRA, PERA, LCPR (Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement), Minnesota House/Senate and Governor, the powerful groups that control and vote on your pensions. Find more information on REAM at MNREAM.org. SERREAM is a regional group of REAM that supports the state organization and through conferences provides a connection between retirees and the pension decision makers. Don't miss the opportunity to learn how your pension is determined.

Coming up:

The SERREAM Fall Legislative and Health Conference on October 11th.

Find the agenda and registration form at the back of this newsletter.

Invite other TRA and PERA members and their spouses.

Sign up early.

You don't have to buy groceries for lunch that day, but somebody does.

The number to prepare for is important. You help the whole planning committee too.

SEREAM EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING Minutes – August 16, 2017

President Kay Morcomb called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM. Present were Kay Morcomb, Sharon & Ben Baratto, Don Leathers, Edna Thayer, Keith Larson, Ed Mikulich, Lyle Olson, Gayle Goetzman, and guests, Karen Reopelle and Darlyne Burchfiel. A mileage sheet and breakfast contribution envelope were passed around. Barattos attended the funeral of long time board member, Bea Burmeister. Many people were in attendance and her talented family provided a lot of music.

Secretary's Report: (Sylvia Swede) Sylvia was absent. Minutes were approved. Kay is subbing.

Treasurer's Report: (Sharon Baratto) Our total assets are \$7678.06. Soon there will be expenses for the newsletter and it is time for membership dues.

President's Message: (Kay Morcomb) See page 1.

Committee Reports:

a. Membership: (Ben Baratto) 696 members received newsletters. Reminders were sent to 103 unpaid members to keep the mailing list current.

b. Legislative: (Don Leathers) The topic of pensions continues to be avoided by the legislators. Legislators need a push to action from their constituency.

c. Health: (Don Leathers) See newsletter report.

d. Newsletter/Web: (Open position) Send articles to kmor.nkamp2@gmail.com.

Meeting date	Articles due	Newsletter published
August 16, 2017	August 23, 2017	September 13, 2017
November 15, 2017	November 22, 2017	December 13, 2017
February 21, 2018	February 28, 2018	March 21, 2018

e. Educator Awards: (Edna Thayer) See newsletter report.

f. REAM: (Don Zwach) Don was absent but left a tentative agenda to finalize for the October 11th conference. Confirmations are still needed from a couple contacts.

Continuing Business:

a. Open positions: Open positions are an editor and web master, which can be a shared position. Prerequisite is computer experience. Board members will help. More local unit representatives are needed. There are four board meetings annually and a newsletter is published after each one.

b. Web update: Board members are taking extra responsibility to do the newsletter. The only thing being done on the web site is putting on the newsletter. Volunteer opportunity!

c. Membership: We ask all SEREAM members to invite eligible non-members to the conference. We need to spread the word about our organization to people who do not get a newsletter. After attending a conference they may want to join. Personal invitations are the best means to increase our membership. With your registration you can send the attendee's name, unit if he/she belongs to a local, contact information and registration fee or copy the registration form for him/her to send their own. Growing our membership is vital not only for our pensions but also for protecting public education.

New Business:

a. Finalize Fall Conference Plans: At the March planning meeting the board decided to keep the same price as the October 2016 conference even though the room rent increased. A formal vote at the meeting was not taken, so voting was done by e-mail. Motion: Registration for the conference will be \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door. The motion passed.

SERAM Minutes Cont:

b. President-Elect: A president-elect is needed by the April Annual Meeting. No prior experience is necessary. The president-elect has one year on the board to gain experience. For the first year of the two year presidential term, the past president is still on the board for assistance. For the second year of the term the next president-elect is available to assist.

Announcements: Next board meeting Wednesday, Nov. 15, 8:45 at The Homestead at Rochester. Guests welcome, but call Kay Morcomb 507-535-2176 the week before.

REAM conference Monday and Tuesday, September 25 & 26 at Hinckley
SERAM conference Wednesday, October 11, 2017 Rochester

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 10:25 AM.

SERAM Legislative Article Fall 2017

---Don Leathers

If you'll recall in the Summer issue of the SERAM newsletter, I expressed real disappointment in the legislature's inability and unwillingness to address TRA and PERA pension reform in the 2017 session. A lack of transparency characterized the Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement's [LCPR] process with cancelled meetings, pulled agendas and an apparent unwillingness to act in good faith for the benefit of the pension systems and the actives and retirees the commission members supposedly represent.

So, after two consecutive years of accomplishing nothing for PERA or TRA, the systems are back to where they were in 2015. You may recall that Governor Dayton vetoed the 2016 Omnibus Pension Bill because the cost of the reforms fell totally on the backs of retiree. TRA's assumption rate remains at 8.5%, a number that makes the plan appear healthy, but which is perhaps 1% higher than the TRA Board recommended. Retirees will receive a 2% COLA on January 1, 2018, and actives and school districts will continue to make contributions to the fund at 7.5% of payroll.

TRA staff called shareholder meetings for August 29 and 30 to get input on how to move forward on pension reform during the 2018 session. The TRA Board will once again work tirelessly to craft legislation to improve the health of the plan as will the PERA Board. I will keep you updated as we move closer to the beginning of the session.

In other business, TRA Executive director Laurie Hacking announced her intention to retire at the end of the year. Laurie has done an outstanding job as the head of TRA, always demonstrating a measured and reasonable approach to managing our fund. She and TRA staff have also communicated openly with active and retired groups in countless forums. She will be missed. The new TRA Director will be Jay Stoffel, formerly the director of the Duluth fund and current Deputy Director at TRA. We wish Jay the best in these uncertain times for public pensions, and we are confident that he will do an outstanding job directing the fund.

Incidentally, Jay will be presenting at the SERAM Health and Legislative Conference in Rochester in October. Specifics concerning the program are highlighted in the current newsletter. It promises to be exciting and informative conference. Let's pack the International Events Center on October 11 to show our support for protecting pensions for us and those who follow in our footsteps.

SERAM Health Article

Fall 2017

---Don Leathers

Up until now, I have followed the script of my title as SERAM Health Chair with, what I perceive as, due diligence. In other words, I write about health issues, usually in a positive manner, that affect seniors or enhance their quality of life - the health benefits of the Mediterranean Diet, how eating nuts is good for you, the powerful impact of yoga on mind, body and soul. This time I'm veering a little off track.

The recent Great American Eclipse on August 21, so named because it was solely confined to our continent, captured the imagination of millions of Americans, including mine. The eclipse's Path of Totality, a 70-mile wide swath that covered states from Oregon to South Carolina, was a modern day Mecca for Americans who travelled enmasse to get a glimpse of one of nature's most awe inspiring phenomena: the moon totally blocking out the sun. Outside the Path, sun gazers in Minnesota and elsewhere could witness a partial eclipse. Of course, if they used special eclipse eyewear.

Imagine being in Teton National Park near Jackson, Wyoming, when the two or so minutes of darkness occur during the eclipse. You look up at those towering mountains in the eerie half light, and you are completely humbled by the experience.

Moments before the darkness descended you witnessed rabbits and squirrels running around in confusion, a horned owl leaves its perch for its night hunt while songbirds fly up to roost in trees. An almost unworldly experience. Then light returns, and you wonder what your ancestors thought during an eclipse thousands of years ago. In a strange way, you feel connected.

Similar scenes played out in countless towns and cities across our great country. People came together in Idaho Falls, Idaho; Carbondale, Illinois; Nashville, Tennessee; Charleston, South Carolina, to name a few. I happened to make the modest trek to Des Moines, Iowa, to witness a partial eclipse (96% occlusion) near the Capitol in the heart of the city. It had rained until late morning when, at precisely 11:45 a.m., staff from the Iowa Science Museum began handing out free eclipse glasses to the thousand or more people on hand, and the drama began.

While everyone patiently waited, the clouds started to break and the sun began its travel into patches of blue while the moon made its crescent ever so gradually visible. Over the next hour or so thick clouds took center stage, but the crowd was confident of the sun's return.

Then ten minutes before "total" eclipse at 1:08, as if nature was approvingly looking down on us, the clouds parted and the sun and moon reappeared. The crowd applauded and shouted with joy at our good luck.

It was something that I will remember for a long time.

Educator Awards Committee

Congratulations to four SEREAM members who will be receiving awards from REAM at the state convention in Hinckley on September 25. Receiving the 2017 Educator Award are Donna Crowl and May Bottke from FARE and Keith Burmeister from Lanesboro. Donna and Keith received the SEREAM award this year and May received the SEREAM award in 2003, but did not receive the REAM award that year. She has continued to be very involved in promoting membership and the causes of the Retired Educator group, so her name was submitted for the REAM award this year.

The Moriarity award goes to John Bellingham for his work in government, politics, and the Board of Teaching.

All four are very deserving recipients.

Think about whom you will nominate in 2018. Detailed criteria will appear in the December newsletter and nominations are due by January 31 of 2018.

Awards Committee: Edna Thayer from Elysian, Nancy Reynolds from Winona, and Jeanette Bergler from Rochester.

MEMORIALS

Beatrice Burmeister

From Keith Burmeister, Edna Thayer, Carolyn Goplen, Renata Rislow,
Curt & Shirley Schroeder, Ben & Sharon Baratto

Donation from Barb Beeman for Keith & Beatrice Burmeister;

Note from Barb read:

“In gratitude for the awesome duo of Bea & Keith Burmeister as supporters of education and the teaching profession, and in honor of the life of Bea Burmeister.

SERREAM

2017 Fall Legislative & Health Conference

Wednesday, October 11, 2017
Rochester International Event Center (at the Airport)
7333 Airport View Drive SW, Rochester, MN

Agenda

- 8:00 – 8:25 Registration – Coffee, Juice, and Rolls.
- 8:25 – 8:30 Welcome by President Kay Morcomb.
- 8:30 – 9:15 Erin Parrish, Associate State Director of Advocacy and Outreach for AARP, Social Security Tax Relief bill and a Retirement Savings Plan and Other current Legislative issues affecting retirees.
- 9:15 – 10:10 “What’s an Aging Brain to Do?” Angela Lunde, MA., Associate in Neurology, Mayo Clinic Study of Aging
- 10:10 - 10:20 Comments by Lonnie Duberstein , REAM President
- 10:20 – 10:30 **Coffee Break**
- 10:30 - 10:40 Edna Thayer - Humor THAYER-apy.
- 10:40 – 11:30 Laurie Hacking and Luther Thompson, MN TRA Staff; “Our TRA & PERA Pension Challenges and 2017 Legislation Update”.
- 11:30 – 12:30 **Lunch**
Free Flu Shots available during lunch
Darryl Thompson, Perimed Services
You need to show your Medicare Card or Social Security No.
- 12:30 – 1:20 Representative Gene Pelowski, Winona. “How Education Fails To Educate the Legislature On Its Needs”. Rep. Pelowski is one of the most senior members of the Minnesota House having served since 1986.
- 1:20 – 1:25 Stretch!
- 1:25 – 1:35 Chuck Hellie, REAM Executive Director
- 1:35 – 2:25 Jay Furst, Editor, Rochester Post Bulletin. Topic “Fake News”.
- 2:25 Wrap-up and Door Prizes

**Registration For
SEREAM Fall Legislative and Health Conference
Wednesday, October 11, 2017
Rochester International Event Center, 733 Airport View Drive SW
Rochester, MN**

Name _____ Unit _____

**Registration fee (which includes noon lunch) \$20 in advance
\$25 at the door**

**Make checks Payable to: SEREAM
Mail Registration and Check to:
Don Zwach, 2620 8th St. NE Waseca MN 56093
507-835-1768 zwach66@gmail.com**

(NOTICE: We want to thank all of the members who have renewed their delinquent membership dues after receiving the letter. Also, many of those who have sent in dues for the coming year. However, this newsletter will be the last one for all those who have not paid since 2016).

SEREAM Membership Form

Complete this form and mail with \$10.00 per person to:
Ben Baratto, 779 Bluffview Circle, Winona, MN 55987

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

Make checks payable to SEREAM.
Membership year: September 1, 2017–August 31, 2018

SOUTHEAST RETIRED
EDUCATORS ASSOC. OF MN
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