

SERREAM

Newsletter

Summer 2020

President's Message: Kay Morcomb

**Coming together is a beginning;
Keeping together is progress;
Working together is success.**
Henry Ford

COMING TOGETHER

Coming together is not easy. The pandemic cancelled the board's plans to meet in March and May. Regretfully we had to cancel the 2020 April Spring Conference/Annual meeting in Faribault, which was planned for Earth Day. We are happy to announce that Faribault is making plans for April 21, 2021, which is John Muir's birthday. Mark your calendar.

The SERREAM board continues to think of our members and wants everyone to stay healthy. We believe and want to heed the science warning of another virus wave in October. Although we miss gathering together we have cancelled the 2020 SERREAM Fall Conference. The Rochester International Event Center has rescheduled us for October 20, 2021. Hope your 2021 calendar is not full.

KEEPING TOGETHER

Keeping together while staying apart is important. It seemed prudent to cancel the 2020 Fall Conference considering the facts. However, we want to maintain our members. We hope everyone renews and brings some new members. Our careful pension protection plan agreed to last year is in disarray. Perhaps more people can be convinced that a pension plan is not iron clad. Get information from trusted sources like REAM to keep us together.

WORKING TOGETHER

Working together as educators continues. The present hit to our economy is about so much more than protecting our pension. As millions, billions, and even trillions of our (taxpayer) dollars are dispersed we need to learn where that money is going and what can be done to see that it is appropriately spent. The May 16th Rochester Post Bulletin reported that Betsy DeVos has directed millions of federal dollars intended for public schools and colleges to private and religious schools. We need to protect public education and our democracy. Public funds should only go to public schools. How do we get from something should be done to what should we do? Educators need to help with solutions.

**Main items that were on the agenda of the
April cancelled business meeting:**

1. A vote to keep the dues the same for another year.
2. 2020 is the year to vote on a president-elect. No candidate as yet, and my term is scheduled to end in April 2021. Also an editor is needed. That is an appointed position. Recent retirees who have more computer experience would be good candidates for this job.
3. Award presentations for Ken Kangas and Irene Lande. Awards will be presented at the April 2021 meeting. Tribute poems are in this newsletter.

MN Political Campaign Refund – Use It!

Use the Minnesota Political Campaign Refund to support your local State House & Senate candidates, your County Political party or State Political party. You can give up to \$50 per person, \$100 per couple and receive your contribution back dollar for dollar. Go to <https://www.revenue.state.mn.us/political-contribution-refund> for more information.

The recipient political organization that receives your contribution, will send you the MN Revenue Form and a voucher verifying your contribution. You then submit the forms to the Minnesota Revenue Department and receive your contribution back usually within 3 to 6 weeks.

2020 Election – Get Involved!

I urge fellow educators to be personally engaged in the 2020 political election like never before! There is so much at stake in the direction of policies that affect all of us in our State and Country in 2020 and going forward!

Here are suggestions on how you can be engaged:

- Vote on November 3. Seriously consider voting absentee to avoid coronavirus concerns at your polling booth.
- Support your local State candidates that are open minded in dealing with our PERA and TRA funding challenges going forward. Our future pension stability depends upon how our economy and the stock market rebounds in the future.
- Use your Minnesota Political Campaign Refund to support your local candidate financially.
- Consider allowing local candidates you support to place a lawn sign on your property.
- Encourage relatives and friends to vote in the election and to take advantage of the State Political Contribution Refund Program.
- Go to the REAM website at MNREAM.Org for the latest challenges facing our defined pension plan.
- Be sure to fill out your household census form. In 2021 Minnesota will reapportion our Congressional Districts and our State Senate and House districts based on the 2020 census. Minnesota is on the population bubble whether we retain 8 Congressional Districts or lose 1 District. It will be based on our census numbers – we need everyone counted.

Our great American democracy only works if concerned citizens are involved in the political process.

Donald Zwach, SEREAM Board Member

Zwach66@gmail.com

612-718-9121

“Pension Issues In The News” Across our Nation

An Association of USA State Public Pensions, monthly identifies under “Pension Issues in the News” articles from Minnesota and around the nation related to State Pension plans. It is important for members to be aware of State Pension news from around the country; because pension concerns, trends and legislative actions in other states, fore-shadows challenges we may face in Minnesota.

Go to MNREAM.org and click the icon PIN on the home page and review this month’s 40 listed articles. Below is a short synopsis of 3 articles in the May 5 Edition.

How the Market Downturn Could Affect Public Pension Funds

States and cities face a host of short- and long-term challenges

The Pew Charitable Trusts, April 23, 2020

Nationwide, state pensions hold 75% of their assets in stocks and alternative investments, the vehicles most correlated with swings in the financial markets. As a result of the stock market’s recent decline and economic conditions more generally, most public pension funds are on pace for their first fiscal year loss since 2009. In the aggregate, they are currently short of annual return targets by 10 to 15 percent. Absent positive returns in the next three months, overall state pension debt, currently \$1.2 trillion, could increase by \$500 billion, reaching an all-time high.

Public Pensions Face Reckoning From Equity Rout, Tax Losses

Fola Akinnibi at Bloomberg April 15, 2020

U.S. public pensions suffered a double blow from the coronavirus pandemic: losing hundreds of billions of dollars in the equity market rout just as unprecedented revenue losses piled up for the governments that pay into the funds.

Public Pensions Have Lost \$1 Trillion in Value. That’s Bad News for Teacher Pay

Education Week (Blog), April 10, 2020

Public pension funds, heavily tethered to the stock market and **woefully underfunded**, have lost in value close to \$1 trillion, or 21 percent this fiscal year, according to a recent Moody’s report.

That means states and districts will likely have to contribute significantly more money next fiscal year to continue paying out retirement benefits to a rapidly aging teaching force and prevent their pension plans from collapsing. That could ultimately impact districts’ credit ratings, which affects their ability to take out loans to pay for essential things such as technology and facilities.

TRIBUTE TO KEN KANGAS 2020 SEREAM EDUCATOR AWARD RECIPIENT

It's a pleasure to present Ken Kangas the 2020 SEREAM Educator Award. He recently was named Sr. Citizen of the year from Rice County Fair Board.

In 1956, from Grand Rapids High he did graduate
Then earned an AA from Itasca Junior College in 1958.
In 1960, his BA from Bemidji State in English and social studies; was done.
A Driver's Training Certificate from Mayville, ND was added in 1961.
In both Duluth & Minneapolis, he attended the U of MN—
Sixty credits were earned after the BA as an addition.

For 2 years he taught English at Warroad, grades 7 through 10.
He directed senior class & one act plays for competition back then.

He taught English 9 plus some coaching & umpiring at Faribault Jr. High the next 5 years.

His marriage to Pat, another teacher brought many cheers.

In 1967 Ken left for Bloomington Olson Junior High.

From his home on the farm, up the freeway, he'd fly.

For 31 years he taught English, creative writing and theater arts to students.

He gave extra help to those with special needs in a program called Project Achievement.

For his work which included department chair, spelling bees & honor society,

Chairing a building site council & a North Central accreditation study,

Representing Olson at the district on a leadership council & an English teachers Committee,

In 1996, Ken accepted the Ed Byhre Olson School Service Award, happily.

Upon retiring in 1998, Ken joined FARE, SEREAM and REAM.

He's currently FARE treasurer, and at various conferences & events he's seen.

On the Board for Habitat for Humanity for 25 years, while serving,

He chaired fund raisers, received grants, helped build & led landscaping.

Ken has been involved in many activities at First English Lutheran Church since 1962.

Confirmation teacher, church council, congregation president, building committee chairman and Church delegate to name a few.

For Hospice Board, Community Café, Rides for patients, Meals on Wheels & many fund raisers, time is spent.

To promote community projects & financial support, he served on boards for AAL, and Thrivent.

He raised funds for special Olympics by serving a breakfast for 100 Wagon Train Riders

He helped with Heritage Days, Paradise Center for the Arts projects, & was a 4-H leader.

In the summer, teaching driver's training, & coaching summer baseball was great.

He received the Distinguished Service to Mankind Award from Faribault Sertoma in 2008.

TRIBUTE TO IRENE LANDE – 2020 SEREAM EDUCATOR AWARD

A 2020 SEREAM Educator Award goes to Irene Lande—
A secretary who created a learning environment in school that was dandy!

After graduation from Forest City, Iowa, she went to Mankato to attend
Commercial College—
Where she learned her secretarial skills and added to her knowledge.

At Rochester, MN, she became a secretary in an elementary school.
After 25 wonderful years she retired and then some subbing was cool.

Irene loved her job where her motto was to treat people like you want them
to treat you,
She greeted people with a warm smile and a word of welcome, too.

Her goal was to make the schools in which she worked – a warm and happy
place,
For the teachers, principal, other staff members, and students of any race.

She saw that teachers worked very hard and she had much respect for them.
She often volunteered at school, especially for events her children were in.

Besides volunteering at school for various activities,
She taught Sundry School, and Bible School, and chaired girl scout sales of
cookies.

She's been a member of RARE, SEREAM, and REAM since retirement 20
years ago,
Attending events at RARE and SEREAM and to yearly REAM conventions
she would go.

For Rochester Area Retired Educators, she typed the newsletter for many
years.
She and husband, Darrell, live in a senior apartment where she again
volunteers.

She was in a video advertising the homestead, and in a choir she sings.
She picks up “I’m Okay” signs, and shows their apartment to people a bus
tour brings.

Thank you Irene for making the world around you a happier one—
It's a pleasure to give you the SEREAM Educator Award that you've won.

MEMORIALS:

Verdel Sandsmark	From: ALARE
Davis Gilbertson	From: ALARE
Dennis Johnson	From: Carl & Rosemary Most
Jeanne Olmstead	From: Renata Rislow

**More important now to show our strength in numbers to the
legislation to protect our pensions.
PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP.**

SERAM 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 SERAM.

Membership year: September 1, 2020–August 31, 2021

The newsletters can be found at SERAM.org.

SOUTHEAST RETIRED
EDUCATORS ASSOC. OF MN
Ben Baratto
779 Bluffview Circle
Winona, MN 55987

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