



VRTA Newsletter

Publication of Virginia Retired
Teachers Association

Winter 2021
Special Edition

A Message from the VRTA President



As I compose my first message for the VRTA Newsletter of 2021, I pray that this new year will be one of renewed efforts to provide virtual ways to communicate with all of our members in order for us to conduct business in an efficient and timely manner.

Good News! We have purchased 12 Zoom licenses, and our state Vice President Karen Whetzel will assign them to district presidents. For further details, you may contact Karen at kswhetzel@gmail.com or at (540) 740-8589.

To ensure that our members will reap the full benefits of our Zoom licenses, the first-ever VRTA virtual Zoom Class **will be held on Thursday, February 18, 2021, from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m.** Some of the topics will include how to set up a Zoom meeting, how to use features such as chat, how to share a screen with a co-presenter, how to change a Zoom background, and more.

To register, please send an email message to Karen Whetzel and you will be sent the link for the Zoom class closer to the date. Also, feel free to send Karen, in advance, any questions about Zoom that you would like to be answered. **The class is open and free of charge to any VRTA member.** Karen Whetzel, also VRTA membership chair, will be joined by Dr. Mary Ann Stripling, who is president-elect of the Augusta Retired Educators Association and owner of the business, Ducks In A Row, which helps clients organize their estates. Mary Ann also teaches a class at Blue Ridge Community College through Zoom. Mary Ann will teach participants Zoom basics, with Karen assisting.

Glenn C. Pair

NRTA Year One Pilot Best Practices Toolkit

Some of these practices include:

Leadership Calls

What: Meeting between head of the local AARP office and the local REAs

Purpose: Discuss plans for the month and align agendas, volunteers and resources, where and when appropriate

Outcome: Cohesive support for both AARP and local REA programming

Sip, Sample and Serve Events

What: Joint fun and educational events to learn what program AARP offers

Purpose: Introduction to AARP and a Get-to-Know-You between AARP leadership and REA leadership

Outcome: REA Leaders become aware of programs AARP has to offer, the point of contact, events/campaigns they have for the year, and can develop ways to join and collaborate.

AARP Presence at REA events

What: Having AARP speakers attend REA conferences and events

Purpose: To help local REA members better understand the resources available to them through AARP

Outcome: AARP may draw more members and volunteers: REA members gain access to more programs get fun program to attend.

Other practices are also available in the toolkit.

Virginia Retired Teachers Association

"Organized November 28, 1936"

2020- 2022 Officers

President—Glenn Pair, Sr.	(434)594-9661 gpair1949@gmail.com
President-Elect—Jean Marrow	(804)275-7278 izybellha@verizon.net
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Secretary—Reba Evans	(366)200-1093 1924rlevans@gmail.com
Treasurer—Weldon Martin	(540)473-2636 hooman4949@gmail.com
Immediate Past President Ben McCartney	(540)347-9516 bhccart@gmail.com

Membership Update

Karen Whetzel

As of December 1, seven VRTA district presidents have accepted the offer of a ZOOM license to better communicate with local units and members. These are the districts: D, G, M, N, P, Q, and T. THANKS, district presidents! Keep in touch with how you are using ZOOM or other ways of communicating and keeping members connected, mostly email messages to all members! District U already had their own ZOOM license, and Districts B and E are using other ways to communicate. If your district is not listed and the president would like a ZOOM license, please contact Karen Whetzel, Membership Chair, at kswhetzel@gmail.com or 540-740-8589!

Here are what some districts are doing or can do with ZOOM:

Executive committee meetings held virtually

Set up meetings for local units to hold virtually

Set up a ZOOM meeting to plan/practice a virtual meeting

District G hosted a virtual meeting with retired teacher Linda Dinsmore presenting a program on her homesteading grandmother. (For link to recording, contact Karen Whetzel!)

ZOOM has many resources to help! Go to zoom.us and use the Resources tab at the top right to access videos, tutorials (some live!), and other things to help.

Don't forget about the Zoom class being offered on February 18th. Sign-up with Karen now and the link will be sent to you later.

Future membership reports will include other ways to keep in touch with members during the pandemic. Facebook pages and other ideas will be shared. Send things that YOU are doing to Karen!



District N president Janet Dye was one of the first district presidents to accept the ZOOM license offered by VRTA. She is facilitating meetings for local units in District N. Loudoun County RTA Board meeting, which Janet facilitated, was held on December 17th.

From the Treasurer

Local unit treasurers have continued to collect and submit membership dues during the pandemic. Since we are unable to have in person meetings at the local, district and state levels, our membership renewal numbers are down. I am grateful to our local treasurers and presidents for contacting their members in various ways and collecting dues. Keep up the good work, please! It is so important for us to maintain our membership during these difficult times. I appeal to all of our members who have not done so to consider renewing your membership now. There is still time to renew your 2020-2021 membership. I am still processing membership renewals and will be happy to continue doing so. Please mail a check for your membership to your local treasurer if you have not done so. If you are one of those who send your dues directly to the state treasurer, I will be happy to receive your dues renewal check soon.

I want to remind our local treasurers to continue sending those dues in. Please let me know if you need additional membership forms, dues settlement statements or if you are running low on membership cards. I will be happy to mail them to you. Don't forget to send out membership cards to your members who are renewing their annual memberships.

It is important to keep in touch with your membership. Use Zoom for virtual meetings, send out email or print newsletters, set up Facebook pages, or use other social media platforms for keeping in communication with your membership. The pandemic will be over and we can resume having in person meetings soon.

Local unit treasurers are reminded that you should have filed your annual epostcard by November 15, 2020, with the IRS, if you are a part of our VRTA IRS umbrella. But if you have not done so already, it is not too late to do it now. Please remember, that if you fail to file for three consecutive years you will be dropped from our umbrella by the IRS. You don't want this to happen, because it is very costly to be added back. You are required by law to be registered with the IRS as a nonprofit organization, so be sure that you have filed. The IRS requires that I have copies of approved budgets for our affiliated units and districts, so please submit your 2020-2021 budget (signed and dated by two officers) if you have not already done so. If you are having difficulty with this requirement, I have suggested to some of you that you might consider using your 2019-2020 budget amounts for another year and have that approved by your unit or district's officers.

I also appreciate your continuing to send me the names of deceased members so that I can update the rolls.

Hang in there everybody. I am looking forward to seeing all my VRTA friends at an upcoming state conference soon! I miss you.

Weldon Martin
VRTA Treasurer

The Times They are A-Changin*

By Bonnie Atwood



I feel sad as I write this. I am remembering what it was like at the Capitol more than 20 years ago, and what it is like today.

I first saw the Capitol on a school field trip. My classmates and I were shocked to see separate white and “colored” bathrooms and water fountains. After all the tours and lectures about Thomas Jefferson and the legislature, that was the part that stuck with us most. Fortunately, that is history.

I didn’t know then that years later I would be at the Capitol every day. First as a citizen lobbyist working for awareness of autism, and then, after law school, as a professional lobbyist and writers for the esteemed David Bailey Associates. I remember the first days, when I was afraid of the tall men in suits, but I overcame that and came to enjoy the interaction.

And interaction, it was! Handshakes, back pats, meetings around conference tables, quick chats in elevators. It was an extrovert’s dream.

Computers were barely used. I shared one with the other workers at DBA. Mostly it was stacks and stacks of papers, and delivering them most of the day long. Then we all got our own computers—the big kind, not laptops—and we learned a whole new way to work.

But even that change did not compare with the horror that was to come. I was getting dressed on a beautiful fall morning, listening to the news as my thoughts went through my responsibilities for the day. We were going to put the Virginia Capitol Connections Quarterly Magazine together, and I had a lot of decisions to make. Then....

A plane flew into one of the twin towers of New York. I was sure it was an accident, and I phoned my mother. She agreed that it must have been a tragic accident and she reminded me about the plane that had flown into the Empire State Building in 1945.

As I drove to work—I remember I was on Leigh Street—the radio announced another plane hitting the other tower. I knew then, it was no accident.

Within a week or two, I felt like I was living in the old USSR. No more skipping in and out of the Capitol, the Governor’s Office, City Hall. Now we had every item in our hands and pockets examined and x-rayed—from cell phones to a stick of chewing gum. I had brought a fork to eat the salad I packed, but that fork had to go in the trash. Barricades were built. “No entrance” signs were posted. We all had to show identification cards.

What will our children think, I asked? They will think the city was always like this. We were forever changed. My father had worked at the U.S. State Department and I was used to coming and going, backpack on my back, and greeting the friendly guards. No, there was no going back.

And now the virus. The masks, the distancing, the closed stores, the rules. Our children will get used to that, too. WE CAN’T GO INTO THE CAPITOL THIS YEAR. WE CAN’T GO TO THE OFFICES OF OUR LEGISLATORS. We, the people, the owners, are, for good reason, shut out.

Our Capitol City has changed. We can only hope that the next changes will be all for good.

*Bob Dylan

VRTA Spring 2021 Newsletter Deadline

Since the VRTA will not be having its Delegate Assembly Meeting in 2021, the deadline for the spring newsletter will be later than usual. The deadline will be on **Thursday, April 1, 2021**.

Here are several reminders about submitting articles to the newsletter.

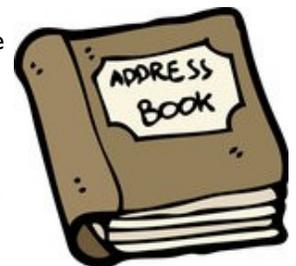
1. Articles that are typed and sent by email are helpful for accuracy.
2. Pictures sent by email are best for the newsletter. Pictures from a newspaper are poor quality. Remember that people have to give permission for their pictures to be included.
3. Because it would be difficult for the editor to decide which articles should be in the newsletter, tributes to deceased members cannot be included.
4. Articles should be received by the due date. Late articles may or may not be included.

If you have been receiving your newsletter by mail and would like to begin receiving it electronically, just let the editor know. Also let us know if your email has changed.

Send articles for the newsletter to Susan Martin at: susanmartin730@gmail.com or 1049 Martins Lane, Fincastle, VA 24090

VRTA Directory

Some 2020 VRTA Directories are still available on a first come, first serve basis. If you would like a copy of the Directory, contact Susan Martin at: susanmartin730@gmail.com



2021 Directory Update

District and unit presidents should send Leigh McKay updates of 2021 officers to clo49lm@gmail.com or 4720 Sweetfern Row, Apt. 210, Wilmington, NC 28411. Please notify her if your officers remain the same as well.

Visit VRTA’s Website at VRTA.org

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A New Coalition



You may remember that VRTA has been a member of the Alliance for Virginia's Students for several years. That coalition has morphed into Fund Our Schools, a more diverse group of 15 organizations that have joined forces to advocate for adequate school funding. Believing that there is strength in numbers and diversity, VRTA is planning to join this coalition.

In preparation for the upcoming General Assembly session, the coalition has three work groups - Standards of Quality, Revenue, and Pandemic Response - that have established the following legislative priorities for 2021:

- *Pass and fully fund the School Equity and Staffing Act (the coalition name of their bill for fully funded SOQs), ensuring that schools are adequately staffed and that students who face the most barriers to learning are adequately supported.*
- *Delay the student enrollment adjustment for school divisions until March 2022 so that local leaders have the stability to budget, plan, and focus on student learning.*
- *Maintain continued levels of state direct aid support to schools through the end of the next school year by offsetting any sales tax losses.*
- *Increase broadband access and affordability so that students have access to high speed internet for learning, regardless of where they live or what their families can afford.*
- *Maximize any new available federal stimulus dollars to direct towards school divisions.*
- *Fully tap into the Revenue Reserve Fund to fund the School Equity and Staffing Act.*

The work groups are in the process of creating resources to support each priority. These will be shared as soon as they are approved by the coalition. I encourage you to check the website (www.fundourschoolsva.org) for information on the member groups and their efforts to support public education.

Although we have not been able to have in-person meetings on the local, district, and state levels for over nine months, leaders at all levels are still working, and now more than ever, we need members to be prepared and energized to lobby. Be sure to read the Creekside E-Newsletter which is sent to district presidents and then forwarded to every member the 15th or 16th of each month. Also, when the GA begins on January 13, check your email daily for information on bills that have been introduced.

Wishing all of you a safe, happy new year.

Bea Morris, VRTA Legislative Chair