

NEWSLETTER



NOVEMBER 2023 – JANUARY 2024

It may seem early to be wishing “Happy Holidays,” but this is our fall-into-winter issue, outlining programs for the remainder of 2023 and letting you know about our holiday gift giving plans – see page 3. When you get this in early November, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and other winter holidays will be just around the proverbial corner – and then it will be 2024!

Below and on the next page are the details for **the November and December Zoom programs** along with our usual **in-person January informal luncheon at Goodwin House**. Between now and the next newsletter issue at the end of January, for February-March 2024, have a **very happy holiday season, with hopes for a safe year in 2024! Be sure to get your flu and Covid shots – and maybe RSV?!**

UPCOMING MEETINGS: NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2023

November 8, 2023 HOME FIT: Modifying Your Home for Comfort and Safety **Via Zoom, 1 p.m.**

On **Wednesday, November 8**, we will welcome on Zoom **Jane King**, an AARP Community Ambassador and expert on “aging in place.” Jane is currently on the board [and former chair] of At Home in Alexandria, a nonprofit organization that provides practical, social and emotional support to Alexandria residents ages 55+, and she serves on the Cooperative Extension Leadership Council in Northern Virginia. [AHA is a membership organization based on the “village” concept, which helps older adults age in place.] During her career, Jane was involved in developing livable communities that support the ability of their senior residents to stay in their communities as they age. On retirement, Jane was encouraged to join Alexandria’s Commission on Aging and later was recognized for her contributions to the City of Alexandria with the Commission on Aging’s Excellence in Aging Award for Lifetime Achievement. She has been designated a Living Legend of Alexandria.

In the many years of her volunteer role for AARP, she has led discussions on Medicare and health care reform and is currently presenting **AARP’s Home Fit program**. **The AARP Home Fit Workshop** provides information to you on how to decide what type of home modifications are needed to stay in your home as you age. It also provides ideas and inspiration on making those modifications. The goal of the presentation is to educate you on home updates that can make it easier for you to go about your daily activities while staying comfortable, independent, and injury-free in your home.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS for November 8 at 1:00 p.m. Alexandria’s retirees will join us for this informative presentation. We haven’t had a Zoom program since last April, so a few details: **Plan to sign in about 12:45 for pre-program visiting**. Ellen will send out a reminder with the Zoom link beforehand, and there will be chance to chat online after the program. However, we will not be posting any program videos, so do not click on the link post program. Post-program clickers will just see themselves staring at the screen!

December 13, 2023 HOLIDAY MUSIC BY ARLINGTON'S OWN --

Via Zoom, 1 p.m.

W-L Graduates Brian Cruse and Zack Cross



Coming back for a second year will be two former W-L music students to entertain us for our traditional holiday music program. The son of ARTA member Cindy Wilson, **Brian Cruse** grew up in Arlington, VA and first began playing the bass at the age of 13. At 14, he began studying electric bass, guitar & music theory with John McCain. During high school he was a drum major in the marching band and member of the Concert & Jazz Bands at W-L under the direction of Alex Robinson. While pursuing his degree at Virginia Commonwealth University, Brian studied classical and jazz double bass under the direction of Kelly Ali and Victor Dvoskin. Also studying under Doug Richards & Skip Gales, Brian graduated in 2008 with a Bachelor's degree in

Bass Performance with a concentration in Jazz Studies. While the musical setting around him frequently varies, as a versatile bassist Brian provides a solid harmonic & rhythmic foundation through his contributions in a diverse range of ensembles. While leading his own ensemble, B-Snaptet, Brian is also currently an active member of nine Richmond area bands and has realized his lifelong dream of opening his own private music studio, Bassline Music, where students of all ages can take music lessons on upright and electric bass, guitar, piano, drums along with many other instruments and music theory lessons.



Zack Cross started his classical piano training at age 6 and quickly discovered a deep passion for music. Zack has devoted himself to music both as an art form and as a means of personal growth. After discovering a love for jazz in his middle and high school years at W-L under the instruction of Alex Robinson, Zack went on to earn a Bachelor of Music degree from the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University in Bloomington, IN. It was during this time that Zack started to both teach and perform professionally throughout the

Midwest, leading his own groups and playing piano for the David Baker Jazz Ensemble. As a piano teacher, Zack takes an organic approach to each new student and tailors the learning experience to a student's specific musical interests, while also teaching the technique and discipline required to build foundational piano skills.

Joining Zack and Brian this year will be a third performer, vocalist/violinist **Reyna Pannell**, who was trained in classical violin and is a self-taught singer. She has performed in many quartets in the Richmond/DMV area and also as a solo vocalist. **Join us on Zoom for the performance by these three entertainers on December 13!**

And then, 2024! Happy New Year!!

January 10, 2024 A RETURN TO GOODWIN HOUSE FOR LUNCH!!

At NOON We had a large group and much socializing and reminiscing when we visited Goodwin House last January. Plan to join us in **January of 2024** to visit and lunch with our ARTA friends that reside there. **Mark your calendars to join us by Noon on Wednesday, January 10**, at Goodwin House, 3440 S. Jefferson Street, Falls Church. Parking is available on site or the nearby Giant parking lot.

We will have lunch in the main dining room. After signing in at the front desk, proceed to the dining area to purchase a full, sit-down lunch. The cost for the new year has not been set, but plan on around \$20. Cash or credit cards will be accepted. **Prior to lunch, the ARTA Executive Board will meet from 8:30 – 11 a.m. in the Smith Study.**

Please email or call Nancy King to let her know that you will be joining us. Do so no later than Monday, January 8, so that our Goodwin House host Lynn Juhl can let the dining staff know how

many guests to expect. Closer to the day, Nancy will contact those attending to share a more accurate cost of the lunch.



DECEMBER HOLIDAY GIFT GIVING

Again this year, we will be sending JOY and gifts to the **Mary Marshall Assisted Living Residence** located at 2000 S. 5th Street, Arlington, VA. 22204. I have been in touch with Katrina Holmes, Life Enrichment Director who has given me a list of things the residents need and can use. I will collect these items at my home at 1500 N Greenbrier Street, Arlington, VA. 22205 2 blocks beyond the intersection of Washington Blvd and N. George Mason Drive and will make arrangements to deliver them to the facility on Friday, December 15, 2023. If you would like to order something on line or from a local store, you can have the item sent directly to the home at the address above.

Here is the list:

Undershirts, sizes Large up to size 3X.

Socks, both colored, with designs, and white ones, sizes 9-11. [One resident needs socks, size 13-15, which I will get.]

Full size sheets, white or colored.

Towel sets, any color.

Dove soap bars and shampoo.

Bath gel or body wash products.

In addition to such actual items, the residents are awarded gift cards from Target and 7-11 stores in the amounts of \$5.00 and \$10.00 dollars. These cards can be sent directly to the home. For things that are sent, please be sure you place **Attention: Katrina Holmes** on your package or card. This way items will be in the hands of the person who will distribute them. In addition, 2024 calendars are given to each resident so bring them to me also. Personal donations will be accepted. Please add that you are a member of ARTA.

Sending thanks to each of you for making this possible with your generosity and support of the Arlington Retired Teachers Association.

~ Lynne Lilly

FROM THE DESK OF OUR PRESIDENT, LYNNE LILLY



Dear ARTA Members,

Welcome to Fall, with beautiful foliage now gracing our location in Arlington. The crazy summer weather is wrapping up now with the hope we will all see less crazy winter weather ahead of us throughout the far reaches where our members live in the United States.

This past month members of ARTA and your Executive Board have been navigating the rough and choppy waters of the changes in our health insurance coverage. Just as we thought we had some semblance of understanding of what happened and what the changes would be, we found out, often through the grape vine, something else has changed or will be changing.

Our wonderful Health Benefits Chairman, Cathy Eckbreth, and Randy McKnight, our Financial Advisor and Kaiser enrollee, have provided to the Executive Board what bits and pieces of information they were able to glean that had not been provided to us by the Arlington Public Schools Human Resources Department. It has been helpful though that School Board member Reid Goldstein has been instrumental in passing on what information and answers he has been able to gather. In the latest correspondence forwarded from Dr. Goldstein, he asked Dr. John Mayo, APS Chief Operating Officer, about the arrangement with Kaiser that continued the 65+ plan but not that for active employees and younger retirees. The answer was what some of us had thought all along – they were two different contracts: only the under-65 one was expiring and the recent RFP did not include the

65+ group. Therefore, 65+ Kaiser enrollees can continue for two more years. Apparently a new RFP will be issued late this year for both the United Healthcare and Kaiser Permanente plans with whatever is chosen to take effect on January 1, 2026. Until then 65+ retirees continue to have two options to select from for insurance coverage – United Healthcare or Kaiser Permanente. Medicare -- through the next two calendar years.

So, there is the latest word we have received. Let's hope this is the final word from the Chief Operating Officer and HR and there will be no other changes in what I have conveyed at this moment. If you have further questions, please review what the Human Resources Department has posted to the Arlington Public Schools website, at www.apsva.us. Scroll down to the heading "Retiree Open Season," which has many, many links to follow, including the October 16 letter from Dr. Mayo announcing the continuation of Kaiser for 65+. You can also reach HR at **703 228-2726** or by emailing to hr.support@apsva.us. There may still be some discrepancies on their website still so if you have further questions, please contact them at the contact information above. We hope this is the most up to date information.

Early Happy Holidays to all.

~Lynne Lilly

NOTE: Additional Information on the Health Insurance Change, from the official APS website:

2024 Retiree Coverage

Pre-65 Retirees: On January 1, 2024, CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield will begin as our new healthcare plan provider for all active employees and pre-65 retirees. The new benefit plans and enhancements are focused on increasing overall well-being and affordability for APS retirees (under 65) and their families. In the event you are currently enrolled in a Cigna or Kaiser Permanente plan you will be required to select a CareFirst plan to continue coverage.

65+ (Medicare) Retirees: On January 1, 2024, Kaiser Permanente Medicare Advantage and United Healthcare Medicare Advantage will continue to be options for retirees 65+ (Medicare).

[**Editor's note:** It's ironic that APS is going back to BCBS as when they took it away from us almost 25 years ago, we thought the world was ending and the sky would fall! We survived.]

LOOKING BACK: SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER 2023

September 13, 2023: After years of distance meetings, we had a chance to meet live for the Appraisal Roadshow, held at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Arlington. While the numbers were smaller than the two previous roadshows, the large open space added to the fun and anticipation as we learned about the treasures many had brought. Whatever the appraisal offered on these items, the fellowship (and the snacks) were winners. **Steve Gouterman: Paradigm Experts-certified Gemologist** and **Daniel Sanders: Four Sales LTD-Estate Sale Company** provided appraisal values for each item brought. These experts divided people's treasures by type--Steve doing precious metals primarily and Daniel doing porcelains, paintings and various exotic items people brought. Some items proved to be quite financially valuable. A signed autographed Beatles photo was likely to get at least \$700, but possibly up to \$3,000. An Asian vase (Japanese?) assessed at \$400, but Daniel noted that Asian art was the most complicated area of assessment. Porcelain painted china does not often fetch a commanding price. The same holds true for silver, unless it presents with a lion on the back with four paws down (95% silver). Silver coins, 1964 and older made of coin silver, offer a higher price, especially if uncirculated. Gold coins and jewelry are valued by karat weight: 24 K= highest, 18 K=75% gold, 14 K =54% gold. Whatever the appraised value, we learned and had fun...the goal of any educator! These two appraisers made the meeting a highly entertaining event.

~ Mary Ann Bell

October 11, 2023 FIELD TRIP: Arlington County Detention Facility

Fifteen very interested ARTA Members (see photo below) participated in a fascinating tour of the Arlington County Detention Facility. Our identities had to be checked at the front desk security, where we gave our drivers' licenses in exchange for a Visitor's Badge. All personal items were locked up. We were escorted throughout the tour by two officers.

Before the tour began, we sat in a small waiting area. The Sheriff's #2 in charge, Chief Deputy Johnson, informed us of her background in law enforcement, and then gave us facts about the facility. Little did she imagine the line of questions that our group would be asking! Chief Deputy Johnson did remember Patty Hammond's fifth grade class making annual visits! Sorry that Patty couldn't make the trip.

Some interesting facts we heard: Arlington County's crime rate is at 28% on the national level and is not made up of just the locals; many of the 350 inmates (25 females) are detained due to abuse, drug use, sex offenders, and mental health; people are there for misdemeanors and felonies; it is a working jail; it is a social hospital with the biggest mental health unit; no cell phones allowed, and no pictures can be on the walls.

The overall impression is that there is a dedicated staff of professionals, who work to rehabilitate the people in their charge into society, rather than punish them. We posed for a group photo (minus one) before leaving and happily discovered that none of us received parking tickets for the overtime we spent at the jail. It was a great field trip.

~ Michele Milden



Back Row: Jay Michael Michele Judith Carol Linda Kathryn Max Karen Captain
Missal Wiener Milden Knight Cadby Allen Scruggs Scruggs Darnier O'Neill
Middle Row: Juanita Kauser Pres. Lynne **Front Row:** Chief Deputy Lynn
Zientara Shahid Lilly Johnson Juhl



We in ARTA extend our deepest sympathy to the families of these departed members and associates.



Janice H. McCarthy, age 96, of Arlington, Virginia passed away on Saturday, September 9, 2023. She retired from the Guidance Department at Jefferson, but she and I had been colleagues for many years at Wakefield. Visitation and funeral at National Funeral Home and Memorial Park in Falls Church were on September 15-16, 2023.

<https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/falls-church-va/janice-mccarthy-11445123?>



Eileen Delany, of Port Lucie, Florida, passed away on September 16, 2023, shortly after turning **99 years** old on August 22! Eileen retired from Washington-Lee High School after serving as a school health nurse as her career. She was originally from New Hampshire before settling in this area -- I have a vague memory that she was perhaps an Army nurse (?). Funeral services were held in Florida on September 21, with interment at Quantico National Cemetery the following week. Beautiful pictures at

<https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/west-palm-beach-fl/eileen-delany-11463236>

Just before this newsletter is going to press, I've received this word from the husband of dear member **Pat Scherago**: "This is Pat's husband Bob writing on her behalf. I'm sorry to tell you that Pat died last night [October 23] after a six-month battle with cancer. Please pass it on to the ARTA members, as I'm sure there are a lot of folks who will remember her and want to know about this."

Chris Scheer, extraordinaire substitute teacher, died suddenly on October 8, while running. He is the husband of member **Karen Scheer**, who was a teacher at McKinley and has for many years been a major contributor to our Scholarship Fund. Deepest sympathy to Karen and family in this sudden loss.

Thanks to Glenda Finley for notifying us that retired music educator **Carol Erion** died in September, with a memorial service on September 30, 2023. When she retired she had the job that Larry Bohnert had for years, supervisor for music teachers.

From member **Cintia Johnson**: "It is with a heavy heart that I share, with friends, that our mother, **Maria Z. Tellez-Calin** passed away on **Sunday, August 20 at the age of 95**. She is survived by her six children and many grandchildren and great-grans. Please lift us up in prayer during this difficult time and thank you for being a part of our families

CONCERN FOR THE CONCERNS CHAIR ☹ ☹

Our ever-active Board Secretary, Health Benefits Chair, and Concerns Chair, **Cathy Eckbreth**, fell at her home the evening of October 20 and broke her left hip, so she is a bit incapacitated at the moment and unable to write any reports for this newsletter. She's so good at sending cards to ARTA members – now it's our turn to send cards to her! As stated in her note on October 24, she expects to be moved to Vierra Falls Church, once released from Virginia Hospital Center. **2100 Powhatan St, Falls Church, VA 22043**.
<https://www.vierracomunities.com/vierrafallschurch>

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Michele Milden, Membership Chair, requests those who have not yet paid the current dues to mail the **2023-2024 Renewal Form** [sent in August] and dues check (**payable to ARTA**) for **\$20** to ARTA's Treasurer (**after Nov. 10** and weeks before the Dec. 31 deadline) to **Angie Osgood, 110 Founders Avenue, Apt. #1524, Falls Church, VA 22046, Mailbox: 229**. If anyone needs another Renewal Form (or a New Member Form) call or email Michele. [Check for form on website.] Any dues received after the deadline will need to pay \$25 for one or \$30 (for two at single household).

ARTA LEGISLATIVE REPORT -- OCTOBER 2023 – by Jeanne Trabulsi

Because the Virginia General Assembly has recessed, there are no bills to report on. Instead, I chose to highlight the potential consequences of and opportunities for two important documents recently published: **2023 SOL Results** and **JLARC Report**.

2023 SOL Results

VEA Statement: “The stalling out of pass rates is troubling and cannot be accepted as the new status quo.” (No change for reading and writing scores from 2022 to 2023.)

VEA Statement: Student groups who lost the most ground during the pandemic remain far behind pre-pandemic pass levels. The highly unequal results are by design and not a surprise.

VEA/The problem: Governor points to **one-time money** from state budget. BUT, the reason state budget has **so little new ongoing K-12 funding** is that Youngkin fought for massive tax cuts to corporations and wealthy individuals over funding for schools.

VEA/The problem: Governor offers a feeble plan, a soundbite, with inadequate resources telling divisions to start providing 3-5 hours a week of high dosage tutoring to all students **by October 16 this year.**

VEA/The fix: We need intensive tutoring, reading specialists and proven attendance interventions.

[Editor’s Note here: I recently sent out this link for people to learn about acceleration grants being given to families and the chance for retirees like us to get paid to tutor these kids:

<https://www.doe.virginia.gov/parents-students/for-parents/k-12-learning-acceleration-grants>]

JLARC Study—Joint legislative Audit and Review Commission

The General Assembly (SJ 294) directed the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) to study the cost of education in Virginia and make an accurate assessment of the costs of the Standards of Quality.

JLARC Study Results:

- State underfunds Virginia K-12 schools.
- Standards of Quality funding formula underestimates how much funding schools actually need.
 - VA schools receive 14% less funding from state than the 50-state average. Equal to about \$1,900 less per student. Virginia spends less than West Virginia, Maryland, and Kentucky.
 - SOQ formula indicated VA schools needed \$10 billion in state and local funds, but schools actually spent \$17 billion.
 - SOQ formula indicated that VA schools needed 113,500 full-time instructional, support, and administrative staffers, but divisions employed 171,400 people.
- There are flaws in the current funding formula because it...
 - Underestimates salary costs by underweighting salaries in the large school divisions (Arlington)
 - Does not take into account how many students are labeled higher-needs due to poverty
 - Does not take into account special ed needs
 - Does not take into account English Language Learners
 - Does not take into account labor cost differences
 - Does not take into account difficulties faced by small, rural school divisions

JLARC Recommendations:

Virginia should switch to a student-based formula instead of a staffing-based formula.

Virginia should spend \$3.5 billion more on education.

ARTA Opportunity: this report Impacts election season in which Republicans are pushing for tax cuts and Democrats are calling for bigger increases in school funding.

ARTA Opportunity: all candidates for school boards and county boards should read JLARC 163-page study and discuss what its implications are for Arlington County.

VEA Position: President James Fedderson, in a press release, stated that the JLARC study on state funding formula offered a road map for critical investments needed to live up to the bare minimum

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standards the state has set for itself, which would cost more than \$4 billion annually. VA is a rich state and has more than \$5 billion in state surplus. **“The only ingredient missing in VA to meet all student needs is political will.”**

[No one sent in the usual “Bits and Pieces” for this issue!!]

REQUESTS/REMINDERS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Remember that if you want to make a donation to the Scholarship Fund, please write that as a separate check to the **Arlington Community Foundation** – **do not** write the check to ARTA!! As usual, Cathy Eckbreth will send her annual “scholarship letter” in early February which will include an envelope in which to mail contributions directly to the Arlington Community Foundation.

Take Note

We like to inform members as soon as possible of the death of an ARTA member, When you learn of the death of a member, please send full information to **our president, Lynne Lilly** so that she can notify **Ellen Bartlett** to send the info by email and Telephone Tree chair **Bonnie Fowler** to activate the “tree” to call those from that person’s school who don’t have email.

Our "Concerns" chair, **Cathy Eckbreth**, reminds us that she would like you to notify her of any occasions for which she should send a card. This is especially true for illness or death, but also for happy occasions such as special birthdays or anniversaries.

Remember to send any interesting newsletter items to **Ellen Bartlett [me, your editor]**, by **January 15, 2024, to go into the next issue (for Spring 2024)**.

VRTA MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS --The ARTA website, www.arlingtonretiredteachers.org, includes a link to our state organization VRTA. Those of you who are VRTA members and newer retirees might be interested in exploring the estate and life-planning resources available through the VRTA-affiliate Creekside Financial Group, Inc. Check out your available VRTA Benefits at vrta@creeksideadvisors.net

REMINDER: IMPORTANT CONTACTS TO HAVE AVAILABLE IN YOUR RECORDS

Take Note

- **Virginia Retirement System (VRS)** - Call 1-888-827-3847 or visit www.varetire.org. You can also use this site to check the value of your VRS life insurance policy. This policy is held with **Securian Financial**, Phone: 1-800-441-2258.
- **Visit www.varetire.org/publications** for a copy of the VRS inventory guide for members and retirees, *Get Organized* and *Losing a Loved One, Guide for Families, Help with your next steps to claim VRS benefits*.
- **VRS Defined Contribution Plans**- Call 1-877-327-5261 and ask to speak with an Investor Services Representative, or visit www.varetire.org/dcp.
- **Arlington County Retirement Office** - (Supplementary benefit for pre-1981 hires) Phone: 703-228-3900 or 1-800-296-9510. There is no survivor benefit.
- **Social Security Administration** – Phone: 1-800-772-1213, contact your local Social Security Administration office or visit www.socialsecurity.gov. Have the Social Security number of the deceased ready to report. Note that often the funeral home has already reported this information.