

Houston Association of Retired Teachers - HART
An affiliate of the Texas Retired Teachers Association - TRTA

November 2024

HARTbeat

<https://www.houstonretiredteachers.org/>



HART members welcoming students on the first day of school at Braeburn Elementary.



New members Heylin Smith, Lisa Viktorin, and Brishaun Sutton were welcomed by Rosa Espinosa at the September meeting.



During the September meeting, Marcy Cann, Sheila Wolfe and Rosalind Haynes were honored. They enjoyed a presentation of their achievements and activities.

November is Texas Retired Teachers Fund Month

Disaster Relief Fund is available to you!

Were you affected by the recent storms, wind damage, or flooding? HART and TRTF remind you that the Disaster Relief Fund is available to provide financial assistance to anyone who might be experiencing critical emergencies due to these storms. (Anyone who receives or is eligible to receive an annuity from TRS may apply for aid.)

To request an application, please send an email to help@TRTF.org or call 1(800)880-1650 and ask for Sarah.

Judy Bristol, TRTF Chair



Mezzo Soprano Hannah Jones, a 2018 graduate of The High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, made her professional debut with the Seattle Opera in the role of Jennie Jackson in the premiere performance of "Jubilee", the story of the famed Fisk Jubilee Singers. Hannah was selected for this role after also being selected as a member of the prestigious Metropolitan Opera Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. She also has been the winner of several vocal competitions and was selected as one of thirteen young artists for the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis summer program in 2023.

In the spring of 2024 Hannah was a member of Opera for Peace and performed in Rome and Paris. That program was highlighted in August on CBS Sunday Morning. Hannah presented her Houston recital in June. She is a product of HISD schools: Parker Elementary, Meyerland (formerly Johnston) Middle, and HSPVA. She returns to New York to complete her residency with the Lindemann Young Artist program. She is the daughter of Sharnelle and Marcus Jones.

Pat Bonner



Mark Your Calendar for the Holiday Luncheon

Have you bought your ticket?

On December 13, 2024, we will celebrate the holidays with our annual luncheon at The Junior League of Houston, 1811 Briar Oaks Ln, Houston. Enjoy a delicious meal and celebrate the holiday season. Wear your most festive attire! Tickets will still be for sale at the November 8 General Meeting for \$50.00. Checks or cash only. Or you may call Virgil Fisher 832-623-0053 and he will mail you a ticket. \$100 Patron Ticket will be recognized in the program and include a cash donation to the HART Scholarship Fund.

Note New Meeting Location

All General Meetings will be held at The Episcopal Church of the Epiphany, 9600 S. Gessner 77071. Parking is plentiful and tables will be available for up to 100 guests. Please save the handicap spaces on the Northeast side closest to the main entrance to the fellowship hall for those who really need them. Others should park on the West side of the church. **BE SURE NOT TO PARK ON GRASS.** Members will be there early to help you find parking and the meeting room.

HART General Meeting Nov 8

- Come early, 9:30 a.m., for delicious snacks and fellowship.
- Program: Wills and trusts; TRTF
- Red HART shirts for purchase for \$25.
- Stilwell Retirement Home will be selling holiday items.

Membership and Community Volunteer Services (CVS)

Kudos to several of you who have introduced HART to newly retired teachers by paying for their TRTA and HART dues! In time they will recruit a new retiree and pay it forward!

New HART business cards have been printed. Come and get one at the meeting and introduce a potential retiree to the advantages of being a TRTA and HART member. Recruit! Recruit!

You will find that I have posted our 2023-2024 HART meetings in the ABC13 Community Calendar. If you have any ideas about how to recruit freshly retired members to HART and TRTA, please share them with me. ❤️ ❤️ ❤️

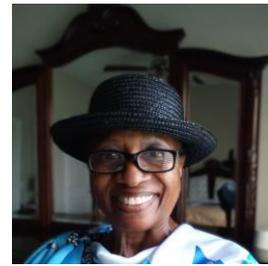
Community Volunteer Services or CVS hours are due by the end of the calendar year. I must submit them to TRTA. Acknowledge your volunteer service. You should have a calendar right beside you or on your phone to help you keep track of what you do. Helping others is what many of us do such as organizing trips for HART, buying food or treats or baking for various meetings, babysitting, driving someone to the doctor, helping at Kids Meals, taking care of the sick, leading songs at various events. Please tally those hours. Some members submit them by the end of the year, and some submit them at the monthly meetings. If you submit the highest number of hours at the monthly meetings you will receive a small prize. If you have the most hours at the end of the calendar year you will receive a grand prize!!! Just write your name, number of hours for the month and how you volunteered on an index card and turn them in to the membership table at the monthly meeting.

By Rosa Espinosa, 1st VP of Membership and Community Volunteer Services



HART Delegation at the District IV Fall Conference

President's Corner



They traveled from the east, west, north and south to attend District IV'S Fall Conference, wearing their red chapter/TRTA shirts. Yes, these were retired public school employees that were also members of a local chapter and the Texas Retired Teachers Association. The Church Without Walls, on Queenston Blvd., was the venue where we met for our meeting.

Early birds were encouraged to come and enjoy social time, games, music playlist, jewelry making and the chapter group game, "Building Bridges".

Other activities that were provided were photo sessions of each chapter group, raffle tickets were sold to benefit the Texas Retired Teacher Foundation (TRTF) and visiting tables of TRS, TRTF, Stilwell and AMBA.

President Sheila Wolf opened the meeting with a warm welcome. The purpose of this conference was to continue to connect all twenty-three chapters with each other and TRTA'S goals and guidelines.

Our three special guest speakers were: Mr. Tim Lee, the director of TRTA, Mrs. Ella Gauthier, the president of TRTA and Mr. James Talarico, the chief investment officer of TRS Annuity. Mr. Lee congratulated our district for making such an impact, as outstanding workers, during the Proposition 9 Campaign. He also reminded us to be sure to contact the legislators and senators and thank them for making our COLA and stipend a reality. Mrs. Gauthier encouraged us to think of the theme of TRTA this year- Bridge to the Future; and find a way to entice more recently retired employees to join and get involved with our local chapters and TRTA. Mr. Talarico assured us that our TRS annuity was holding steady. Also, we were told that sometime in mid-2025, TRS would open its new building in northeast Austin.

Breakout sessions were open to introduce/review the task/responsibilities of our officers and chairpersons in our chapters. While lunch was served, we all enjoyed the entertainment of the "Houston Harris Heartbeats" from Houston-Harris County Retired Teachers Association.

To add to the fun side of this conference, many received door prizes and awards.

Before the meeting was adjourned, we were to asked to share the following with our chapter members and prospective retirees: Please take a Push Card to your legislator/senator before the start of the Legislative Session in January, 2025; The Day At the Capitol – March 26, 2025; and our upcoming District IV Spring Conference.

It seemed that everyone wearing a red shirt walked in with an enthusiastic smile and left with more information and pride in District IV and TRTA.

REMEMBER, WE ALL NEED TO WORK TO MAKE OUR TRTA THEME A REALITY:

TRTA: BRIDGE TO THE FUTURE



Our President with her two-time Olympian grandson Bryce Deadmon.

Recent Congressional Action on the Social Security Fairness Act

As previously reported by the Texas Retired Teachers Association (TRTA), The Social Security Fairness Act ([H.R. 82](#)) has recently gained significant traction in Congress, marking a pivotal moment for public sector workers affected by the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO).

The bill, introduced by Rep. Garret Graves (R-LA) and co-sponsored by Rep. Abigail Spanberger (D-VA), seeks to repeal both WEP and GPO. [Recently, the bill secured enough signatures on a discharge petition to force a House floor vote.](#) Discharge petitions are relatively rare and have been successful only a handful of times in the past 50 years. Please stay tuned to the *Inside Line*, as we will let members know when to contact Congressmen and U.S. Senators through our TRTA member action alert system.

Excerpt from *The Inside Line*, a weekly email newsletter provided by the Texas Retired Teachers Association. Please see the full article for more information.

Scholarship News by Jane Eixmann

Thank you for your support of the HART Scholarship Fund! In 2024, we awarded five \$1500 scholarships to Rice University students entering the teaching profession. The University of Houston will be our focus for the 2025 awards.

Anyone can donate to the HART Scholarship Fund throughout the year in memory of, in honor of, or for special occasions.

Thank you to Mary Mellum, Johnnie Robinson, and Cappy Selig, who made donations to the Scholarship Fund in 2024.

Our main fundraiser is at the Holiday Luncheon held in December at the Junior League. This year's date is Friday, December 13, 2024. There will be envelopes on the tables to make donations to the fund. You will receive an acknowledgement to be used for your tax purposes. If you can't make the Holiday Luncheon, you can send donations made out to HART Scholarship Fund to HART, PO Box 6727, Houston, TX 77265.

Volunteers Needed!

Would you like to work on:

- Volunteer Committee
- Safety Committee
- Historian Committee
- Food Drive Committee
- Membership/Telephone Committee

To get involved, contact President Johnnie Robinson: HARTteachers2024@gmail.com

General Election in November and Legislative Thank You's

There will be a few unfamiliar faces in the Texas Legislature come January 2025 because of retirement, loss in primary, or moving to a new position. If you live in one of these districts, you should contact the candidates and find out their positions on TRS pension fund, TRS health care, public school retirees:

House District 26 (Jacey Jetton's old seat): Daniel Lee (Dem) vs Matt Morgan (Rep)

House District 29 (Ed Thompson's old seat): Adreinne Bell (Dem) vs Jeffery Barry (Rep)

House District 139 (Jarvis Johnson's old seat): Charlene Ward Johnson (Dem) No opponent so she is elected.

House District 146 (Shawn Thierry's old seat): Lauren Ashley Simmons (Dem) vs Lance York (Rep)

Senate District 15 (John Whitmire's old seat): Molly Cook (Dem) vs Joseph Trahan (Rep)

You can go to their campaign websites and find a telephone or email address.

November election dates:

Early voting in person: Oct. 21 to Nov. 1

General Election date: Tuesday, Nov. 5.

Have you said or sent a Thank You to your legislator for their support of retired public-school employees in the last seven legislative sessions? Ask Jane Eixmann for letter writing tips and send a thank you now. If you sent a thank you previously, send them another one showing how you have used the extra stipend and COLA for 2024 (pay credit card bill, help with rising prescription costs, help with rising grocery costs, etc.)

Houston Area Retired Teachers

P. O. Box 6727

Houston, TX 77265-6727

Mark Your Calendar

- November 8 - General Meeting: Wills and trusts; TRTF.
- December 13 – Holiday Luncheon, Junior League of Houston, 1811 Briar Oaks Ln, Houston, 77027. This is a ticketed event open to all who support our scholarship program.
- January 10 – Volunteer Activity – more information will follow
- February 14 – General Meeting: Riding Metro
- March 14 – General Meeting: Living a Healthy Life
- April 11 – General Meeting: Jack Angel
- May 9 – General Meeting: Celebrate a great year!

All General Meetings are at the Episcopal Church of the Epiphany, 9600 S. Gessner, 9:30 a.m. social time, 10:00 a.m. meeting time.