

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

August 2025

# HARTbeat

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

The HARTbeat is edited by Cherry Wong

## July 21st Board Meeting



From left: Cheryl Wickliff- Recording Secretary, Rosa Espinosa-1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Johnnie Robinson- President



Board members hard at work planning for 2025-2026 .

### **HART will vote on new benefit for members 90+**

HART is ready to offer you a new benefit if you approve it. At the July 21<sup>st</sup> HART Executive Board Meeting, we approved a motion to pay both TRTA and HART dues if you are at least 90 years of age and have been a member for 5 years. This recommendation will be voted on at the HART September 12<sup>th</sup> general meeting. Please let Rosa Espinosa, HART 1<sup>st</sup> VP of Membership, know if you are eligible for this potential benefit.

# Books For Children

This year HART donated over 700 books to the students at Ed White Elementary. Members of the BFC committee came through, as usual, spending time ordering, organizing and labelling the books. Due to scheduling issues, the books were distributed to the students by their teachers, who explained that the books were given by the Houston Association of Retired Teachers. Early this summer, I picked up thank-you notes and pictures created by students, which I will share at our September meeting. They clearly enjoyed receiving the books!!

By Bonnie Herst

## And the winners are...

Jane Alexander, Ann Collum and Les Pronin

This year, HART offered membership incentives to encourage members to renew or join by the beginning of the membership year, July 1, 2025. Almost 300 members joined or renewed by the deadline. The three lucky winners will receive either a free year of membership, a \$50 gift card, or a \$25 gift card. Thank you to everyone who sent your dues to TRTA and HART. Together we are strong and have a significant voice advocating for retired teachers.



Members at the May 2025 meeting receive Perfect Attendance Certificates.

# Legislative News

The 89<sup>th</sup> regular legislative session ended without any benefit enhancements to TRS retirees. This was the first time in more than a decade that we did not receive some sort of benefit enhancement. TRTA is watching the bills that did pass and will be ready for the 90<sup>th</sup> legislative session to correct any issues with TRS pension fund and TRS Health Care that may result from the passage of those bills.

Education Savings Accounts (ESAs or Vouchers) will not go into effect until the 2026-2027 school year. So, we won't have good data on how that will affect TRS when the 90<sup>th</sup> legislative session begins in January of 2027. But we will have data on the hiring of public-school teachers. As always, TRTA will be watching the trends and advocating for TRS funding and solvency of the pension fund.

An item that was part of the budget bill that did pass directed TRS to conduct a plan design study in the interim. That means that TRS will be reviewing the defined benefit plan. TRTA will pay attention to this issue and the study results.

Also, Governor Abbott has called a special session to begin July 21st. One of the items on the agenda is redistricting or drawing new boundaries. Be sure to watch for any voting changes to your voting area. A good resource is the *Inside Line* and *The Voice*, publications from TRTA.

Mid-term elections will be held in November for the legislature. It is important to research candidates running to verify their positions on TRS funding and our defined benefit pension fund.

Stay alert and informed!

By Jan Eixmann

# Volunteer

Recycling is volunteering

My Savvy Seniors Lunch Bunch and my family members are collecting medium empty medicine bottles and plastic restaurant to go boxes to be used to serve the homeless. Howard and Juliana Bruce serve meals to the homeless and provide shampoo in the bottles.



By Rosa Espinosa

Answer the Call...

Like many of you, I'm sure, I have had a difficult time watching the devastation the Fourth of July flood caused. As an elementary teacher/librarian the loss of so many little girls and having experienced the loss of my daughter a few years ago has been hard. I had been thinking/praying about what I could do. As one of my volunteer activities I meet with a group of about 15 ladies to make quilts and shawls for charities in the Houston area. We meet once a month at Quilter's Emporium in Stafford, Texas. We sew. We talk. We sew some more. Sew It Fabulous quilt shop in Boerne, Texas put out a call that they were accepting quilts for those that lost so much in the flood. Our group leader sent out a text asking if anyone could deliver a load of quilts to them. I answered the call. On July 18 my husband and I were given the privilege of taking 51 quilts to Boerne. Upon our arrival, we were met with hugs of gratitude and tears of joy. The Southwest Quilt Guild is setting up a system to distribute the quilts. I love my time each month of sewing and fellowship. But seeing how they will help those suffering has helped me deal with this catastrophe as well. Answer the call. It's worth it.

By Cherry Wong



Alford Bleeker receives the ABCD Award from President Johnnie Robinson. (Above and Beyond the Call of Duty)



## What's On Your Disaster Preparation Checklist?

As teachers we probably earned an A+ for our classroom preparation, because in the end, we wanted our students to have a successful day.

Well, it is hurricane season here, in H-Town, and we need to be prepared if a disaster hits. We may either have to shelter in place or evacuate.

This is a suggested list of items to have on your checklist:

- (1) Your bible
- (2) Your cell phone and charger
- (3) One gallon of water per person for at least three days
- (4) Your important documents: will, insurance, deeds, medical records (All inside a waterproof bag or a waterproof container)
- (5) A written emergency list: loved ones, doctors, local emergency numbers
- (6) A weather radio
- (7) Emergency blankets or Sleeping Bags
- (8) A manual can opener
- (9) Flashlights
- (10) Non-perishable foods
- (11) Full tank of gasoline
- (12) Cash (Keep money on hand in small denominations, because ATM's may not work during power outages.)
- (13) Emergency Bag: clothes, medicine, copies of ID, water and hygiene items
- (14) Local maps
- (15) Manual can opener and matches
- (16) Rain gear
- (17) An escape plan with your family
- (18) Pictures on a flash drive of all your assets: home, car, furniture, computer, etc.

Hope that this list of items can be helpful to you and your family!



Everyone is invited to Miller Outdoor Theatre for this special Performance which will be a treat for the whole family:

BROADWAY ON THE HILL

August 29–8:00 PM

Featuring five alumni of HSPVA

Tickets are free and can be ordered by going to the Miller Outdoor Theatre website the day before—August 28– beginning at 10:00 AM.

Tickets can also be picked up at the theatre box office.

By Pat Bonner

## Celebrate!

### We're Not Going Back to School Party

Jax Grill - 6510 S. Rice in Bellaire 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

This is a fun time for retired teachers to get together for food, drinks and fellowship. We have had so many years of getting up early for the first day of school. Now we can relax and enjoy "Not going back to school."

- Please save close parking lot spaces for those who need them.
- Get your steps by parking in the HEB parking lot across the street.
- Order and pay for your food and drinks at the counter.
- Or just come for fun, door prizes and camaraderie.
- This is a great time to invite a colleague or retiree.

By Margaret Preston

## TRTF is Offering Disaster Relief Assistance for Retirees

TRTF is offering \$500 grants through the Disaster Relief Program to help cover emergency expenses for retirees affected by the 4<sup>th</sup> of July flood. Also, if you would like to contribute to this program go to [trtf.org](http://trtf.org). Additional information is available on the *INSIDE LINE*.

## Houston Area Retired Teachers

P. O. Box 6727

Houston, TX 77265-6727

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## Mark Your Calendar

- August 12 – **Not Going Back to School Party**, Jax Grill - 6510 S. Rice in Bellaire
- September 12 – General Meeting: Make your vote count.
- October 10 – General Meeting: TBD
- November 14 - General Meeting: Alzheimer's Association
- December 12 – **Holiday Luncheon**, Junior League of Houston -1811 Briar Oaks Ln, Houston, 77027. This is a ticketed event.
- February 13 – General Meeting: Personal Finance
- March 13 – General Meeting: Books for Development
- April 10 – TBD
- May 8 - TBD

*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. Handicap parking is on the Northeast side. Please do NOT park on the grass.*

Expanding Horizons Day Trips – More information coming soon.

September 16 – Houston Adventure

October 15 – Museum Adventure

November 18 – Brookwood Community