

Newsletter

"To Serve, Not to be Served."

Affiliated with National Retired Teachers Association • Fall 2025

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Convention Recap HATS OFF TO YOU



by Carm Tobin
SDRSP Secretary



SDRSP Sioux Falls Convention May 6-7, 2025



TUESDAY, MAY 6, 2025

Registration opened at 9:00.

The day began at 9:40 with a pre-convention tour of CTE.

FIRST GENERAL SESSION:

The afternoon kicked off with President Cathy Anderson calling the 2025 State Convention to order and leading the Pledge of Allegiance. Next the Color Guard of Roosevelt High School Air Force JROTC performed followed by the Tribal Flags from Washington High School and concluded with the Drum Line from Lincoln High School.

President Anderson introduced Sioux Falls Superintendent, Dr. Jane Stavem, who welcomed us to Sioux Falls and praised us for our many years of teaching. Dr. Stavem concluded her welcome with this final comment, "You as teachers have sown knowledge throughout the state, nation and perhaps the world! Never doubt your impact and importance as retired educators. Thank you for your time, wisdom and lasting inspiration. I take my hat off to you all!"

The SDRSP Board Members were introduced by Cathy Anderson. The Past SDRSP Presidents were asked to stand and be honored for their years of service and dedication.

Our first afternoon guest speaker was Jeff Gould with the Wisdom Project. Mr. Gould is an author, broadcaster, speaker, podcaster and entertainer. He uses stories of inspiration and wisdom to help people live with purpose and

ROLL CALL BY UNITS:

Nine Units were present
with 58 members
in attendance.



Aberdeen • 2	Redfield • 0
Black Hills • 9	Sioux Falls • 33
Madison • 2	Sisseton • 3
Milbank • 2	Watertown • 3
Mitchell • 0	Winner • 0
Northern Hills • 2	Yankton • 0
Oahe-Mobridge • 0	
Philip • 2	
TOTAL • 58	

passion. He told us that CHANGE is the hardest word. Humans are all perfectly flawed. Nobody changes themselves. They either change for someone or with someone. First you make your choices and THEN your choices make you. Jeff Gould concluded his inspiring talk by saying that the world needs teachers. If the OLD will remember—the YOUNG will listen! At the conclusion of Gould's presentation, he gifted all convention attendees with his book *Insight and Inspiration from the Heartland*.

Steve Hildebrand was the second guest speaker with his presentation entitled *Promising Futures*. Steve is the founder and chair of the Promising Futures Fund, which offers reading programs and experiences to Sioux Falls Schools with high rates of poverty. Hildebrand serves twenty (20) schools with very high rates of poverty in the Sioux Falls School District. Sioux Falls Principals are the bosses and Sioux Falls Staff are the supporters of his Promising Futures Program. Hildebrand's number one goal is not to get kids to go to college but to get kids out of POVERTY. He concluded with this statement, "The thing I am proudest of is I dream BIG every day!"

Our final afternoon speaker was Jacque Storm from the South Dakota Retirement System (SDRS). SDRS celebrated its 50th year in 2024. A seventeen-member elected and appointed board of trustees oversees SDRS and is charged with the fiduciary duty to act for the exclusive benefit of all SDRS members. SDRS is funded by fixed, modest member and employer contributions with no appropriated general funds. South Dakota spends the least on pensions in the nation. According to Storm, SDRS is a model system. Pension experts routinely cite the SDRS fixed contribution, variable benefit design as an effective and efficient model. Jacque Storm concluded with this notable fact; variable benefits keep the South Dakota Retirement System 100% funded.

Before concluding the First General Session, we played Find Someone Who Has....an interaction game that was a fun and action-packed mixer!

SECOND GENERAL SESSION:

The evening began at 5:30 with a Photo Booth and Social Hour.

Gail Swenson, a SDRSP member as well as a Sioux Falls School Board Member, offered the blessing prior to dinner and dessert being served.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

Phyllis Schrag presented "Mirror, Mirror on the wall, I guess I'm my mother after all." Phyllis is a retired South Dakota public school educator now living in Ames, Iowa. Schrag used humorous stories, anecdotes and a PowerPoint presentation that reminded the convention audience of common expressions used by our mothers, along with fun stories and quotes that help us remember the powerful gene pool from which we came. This delightful and witty presentation was made possible by the financial support of the South Dakota Humanities Council.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 7, 2025

The Leadership Meeting was held from 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. with Unit Presidents and the SDRSP Board Officers.

THIRD GENERAL SESSION:

Memorial Service:

At 9:00, the 2025 Memorial Service entitled *Celebrating Lives and Legacies* was led by Vice-President, Rhonda Preller. We celebrated and honored seventeen (17) members lost from seven (7) units. Preller created an honorary PowerPoint with photos as a new addition to the ceremony.

Bill Zubke solemnly announced each name, followed by Rhonda reading a brief life synopsis as Carm Tobin placed a

hat on the memorial table to honor the lost member.

Business Meeting:

At 9:10, the Business Meeting was called to order by President Anderson. Following the sharing of reports and Diane Odland passing out Community Service Awards the Annual Business Meeting was adjourned at 9:53.

FOURTH GENERAL SESSION:

Erik Gaikowski from AARP was our first guest speaker of the morning. Erik reminded us that AARP is always in our corner as a wise friend and our fierce defender. AARP's vision is that all people live with dignity and purpose and fulfill their goals and dreams. AARP's mission is to enhance the quality of life for all as we age by changing the way America redefines their aging. Gaikowski shared that AARP consistently supports SDRSP with resources, expertise and grants which enables us to do outreach to retirees. The 2025 AARP Executive Council consists of two SDRSP members: Gerri Larson and Jacque Sly.

Garrett Mowery from AMBA spoke next. He lives in Hershey, PA and was very excited to be in South Dakota again. Mowery shared that AMBA promotes and validates aging in place safely. He added that AMBA provides SDRSP members thousands of saving opportunities for dining, event tickets, clothes, health, travel and numerous other valuable discounts nationwide.

LUNCH:

Our noon banquet was a party for the Sioux Falls Unit celebrating its 60th birthday complete with colorful party blowers and frosted cupcakes.

Donna Fischer, Grandparent Essay Chair, was unable to attend the convention this year as she is recovering from surgery. In her place, Jacque Sly introduced Gabriel Isakson, the fifth grader that had been chosen from 730 entries as the 2025 South Dakota Grandparent Essay winner. Gabby is from Hill City and took home the \$250 first place prize. Her essay was creative, heartwarming and brought many SDRSP members to tears.

The Unity Choir from Roosevelt High School performed numerous choreographed songs directed by Robyn Starks-Holcomb, Sydney Duncan and Kendra Hemmelman. Their joyful singing and lively dancing were a delight to watch. The students' enthusiasm was contagious and added to the festiveness of the convention and 60th birthday celebration.

The two-day event concluded with President Cathy Anderson thanking everyone for attending the "Hats Off to You!" Sioux Falls Convention. Anderson warmly invited all to the 2026 SDRSP Convention which will be held in Pierre on May 4th and May 5th.



- **AARP** for convention expenses and their financial support of the Grandparent Essay Winners.
- **LAUREN VASKE** for displaying her Sharing the Dream items during the Sioux Falls Convention.
- **ANITA MANNING** for being the official SDRSP Convention photographer. She captured the many activities of the two-day event. Through her photos, the 2025 Sioux Falls Convention shall be commemorated for many years!



FLORENCE KRIEGER AWARD

Jacque Sly - *Black Hills*

PRESIDENT'S AWARD

Jacque Sly - *Black Hills*
Marlene Eimers - *Redfield*

COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS

GOLD

Watertown
Black Hills
Milbank
Redfield
Sioux Falls
Sisseton

SILVER

Northern Hills
Oahe Area
Aberdeen

GRANDPARENT ESSAY CONTEST

1st place • Gabriella Isakson
Black Hills (Hill City)

2nd place • Karsan Hensler - *Yankton*

3rd place • Vince Xyrrille Frace - *Sisseton*

SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Grace Shavedra - *Sioux Falls*
Rubylinn Harrington - *Wagner*

Sioux Falls State Convention Evaluation Summary

We are pleased to share the positive feedback received from this year's Retired School Personnel State Convention. Attendees expressed deep appreciation for the event's organization content, and community spirit, making it a well-received gathering.

Survey results indicate that participants found the convention to be both meaningful and enjoyable. Many highlighted the quality of the guest speakers and other organization's speakers who were relevant, engaging, and thoughtfully presented. The sessions addressing retirement wellness, advocacy, and education policy were especially well-received, with several attendees expressing gratitude for the practical takeaways and up-to-date information.

The sense of camaraderie and connection was another recurring theme in the feedback. Retired educators relished the opportunity to reconnect with former colleagues, make new friends, and share stories and experiences from their years of service. The presence of so many students from the Sioux Falls School district was especially appreciated and enjoyed by the attendees.

Logistics and hospitality also earned high praise. Attendees appreciated the smooth registration process, welcoming atmosphere, and comfortable facilities. The efforts of the organizing committee and volunteers did not go unnoticed.

In summary, the evaluation sheets reflected a strong sense of satisfaction and gratitude. We thank everyone who participated and contributed to making this event a memorable and uplifting experience.

Suggestions for Future Conventions

Respondents shared several ideas to enhance future conventions:

- Continue popular service projects like the sock collection and consider new ones like food pantry donations.
- Maintain a book exchange, though a few suggested replacing it with a game exchange.
- Encourage the hosts to have local student involvement.
- Keep moving the convention around the state and encouraging those who have not had one in their area to host a convention.
- Consider a one-day convention format.
- Expand fundraising efforts such as raffle baskets for Educators Rising.

Greetings from President Anderson

by Cathy Anderson
SDRSP President

CONVENTION NEWS

This newsletter is devoted to highlighting the SDRSP Convention held in Sioux Falls in May of 2025. HATS OFF to YOU was the theme and I want to thank the Sioux Falls convention committee for all their hard work putting the convention together. Lots of hands go into making a convention a success and they were great to work with. The speakers were great and the students that were involved throughout the convention were wonderful. A big thank you to all who attended the convention as YOU make the convention worthwhile, meaningful and fun.

BOARD MEETING

The Board members met at the Pizza Ranch in Fort Pierre on July 30. There were the usual reports, review of the convention, and a discussion on the location of the 2026 convention.

AUGUST LEADERSHIP MEETINGS

Thank you to the leaders who have stepped up again to be leaders in our units. Leadership meetings are held each year to help our units thrive and grow. We get together to share ideas, make suggestions for improvement and to support each other. One of the biggest concerns with all units is the recruitment of new members, so it is great to share ideas. The Leadership meetings were held on August 4 in Rapid City and on August 13 in Brookings.

2026 CONVENTION

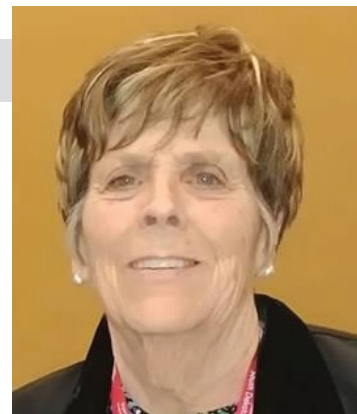
I am excited to announce that the next convention will

be in Pierre on May 4-5. You will notice the change from a Tuesday-Wednesday to a Monday-Tuesday convention.

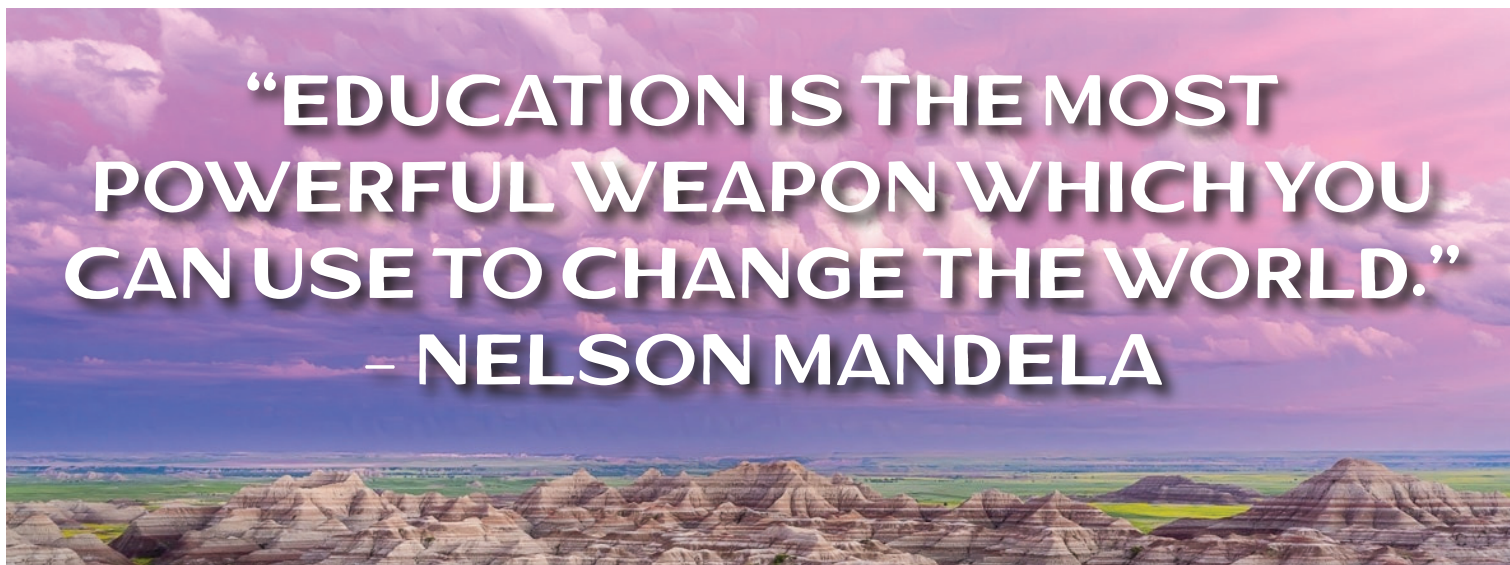
This is because of the availability of the Ramkota Inn. Please put those dates on your calendar and join us as we will be “CELEBRATING AMERICA” and its 250th BIRTHDAY!!! What an appropriate place for our convention in our state capital. There is a lot of history in Pierre/Ft. Pierre to be celebrated: the Capitol Building and lake, Oahe Dam, the Verendryes Monument, Casey Tibbs Museum, and those yet to be discovered. There is no SDRSP unit in Pierre, so I may be asking units in the area to be involved in some way and help us out.

“HATS OFF TO ALL OF YOU.”

- Thank you to AARP for their financial support of the Grandparents’ Essay contest and convention expenses.
- Thank you to AMBA, the Association Member Benefits Advisors, for their financial support of the convention and to Garrett Mowery who spoke on the benefits of AMBA.
- Thank you to Rhonda Preller and Carm Tobin for the Memorial Service program, which highlighted each of those memorialized with a special tribute with personal information about each. It was a very special memorial service.
- Last, but not least, I want to thank the member of your SDRSP Board, who work tirelessly for you AND are always willing to help me in areas that I am not so familiar because of their long involvement with SDRSP. Thank you.



**“EDUCATION IS THE MOST
POWERFUL WEAPON WHICH YOU
CAN USE TO CHANGE THE WORLD.”
– NELSON MANDELA**





Sioux Falls members helping with registration. They know the work that goes on behind the scenes to have a successful convention.



Erik Gaikowski, state director for AARP, spoke about the opportunities members have through AARP. NRTA, the National Retired Teachers Association, is part of AARP.



As Vice-President, Rhonda Preller organizes the Memorial service. Assisting her was Carm Tobin. This year they had an appropriate hat for each person whose name was read. Notice a veteran's hat on the table. Bill Zubke has been involved with the Memorial Service for years. He solemnly reads off the names of the members who have passed away during the year.



Conventi HATS OFF SDRSP Sioux Falls May 6-



Dr. Jane Stavem - superintendent of Sioux Falls public schools



Jeff Gould - Wisdom Project



Cathy Anderson presented Jacquie Sly with the Florence Krieger Award. She was president of SDRSP from 2022-2024.



Gabrielle Isakson, her mother and Erik Gaikowski. Gabby won the Grandparents Essay contest.



on Recap F TO YOU alls Convention 7, 2025



Steve Hildebrand - founder and chair of the Promising Futures Fund



Jacque Storm - South Dakota Retirement System



The evening keynote speaker, Phyllis Schrage, presented "Mirror, Mirror on the wall, I guess I'm my mother after all."



Rubylinn Harrington from Wagner was awarded a \$1000 scholarship.



Grace Saaverdra was awarded the SDRSP \$1000 scholarship. Cathy Anderson, Anita Manning and Gretchen Tweet join in celebrating with her.



Garrett Mowery from Association Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA) shared options for member benefits such as vision or dental insurance.



Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus started the National Retired Teachers Association over 75 years ago. A cutout at the convention shows her donning a fancy hat to go with the theme of Hats Off to You.



Officer Reports: Executive Director



by Gerri Larson
SDRSP Executive Director

SUMMARY FOR THE YEAR:

1. Mini-grants have been completed. With agreement from NRTA/AARP, if there happens to be a small amount of money left, it is to be used at the discretion of the organization for the good of the members.
2. Postcards were distributed at the Conference for units to use to increase membership, etc. For those

four units that were not at the conference, I sent them each a packet of postcards.

3. There are more postcards available when units need them. They are not dated so will work for a couple years. Again, these were printed with leftover funds in collaboration with AARP. I continue to have monthly Zoom meetings with Lindsey/SD AARP and Adam/NRTA-AARP. There is nothing new in the future at this time. They do ask if there is anything they can do to help us, etc.

Officer Reports: Treasurer's Report



by Myron Fuerst
SDRSP Treasurer

I would like to review the Horace Mann account. Back in 2013, SDRSP had some extra funds. They were invested in a fixed annuity with Horace Mann Insurance Company. Over the years, that annuity has generated some income. The income has been accumulating. The original investment in 2013 was \$36,350. On May 23, 2025, the balance was \$44,164.11. At the spring board meeting, the board voted to take \$750.00 of the income and send it to Educator's Rising. On June 30, \$118.38 was added, so the balance now is \$43,532.49.

I would like to get the names and email addresses of all the treasurers, current and new. I would like to send the treasurers a copy of the membership reporting form. It is very helpful for Anita, the membership person, if they are all in the same format. When we get some other form or handwritten copies, Anita needs to transfer that information into a standard format. If the membership information is on the standard form, she can just cut and paste. Therefore, I would like to have the president or treasurer send the name of the 2025-2026 treasurer to myronfuerst@sio.midco.net.

Thank you very much.

Officer Reports: Treasurer's Report



by Anita Manning
SDRSP Membership

FALL IS IN THE AIR – A SEASON OF WELCOME AND RENEWAL WITH SDRSP

As the crisp air of fall approaches and the leaves begin to change, there's a sense of excitement and anticipation in the air. For the South Dakota Retired School Personnel (SDRSP), autumn marks more than just a new season—it's a time of reconnection, renewal, and new beginnings.

Our SDRSP units across the state are preparing to welcome members back after a well-earned summer break. It's always a joy to gather again, to share stories, laughter, and friendship. Even more exciting is the opportunity to introduce new members into our community, those who have recently retired or moved to the area, and who are ready to stay connected to the profession and people they love.

WHY BECOME A MEMBER? THE REASONS ARE MANY.

Joining SDRSP isn't just about attending meetings, it's about staying engaged, informed, and inspired in

retirement. Our members enjoy:

- Fellowship and Connection – Share experiences and build lasting friendships with others who understand the value of a life spent in education.
- Lifelong Learning – Stay sharp through educational programs, guest speakers, and enrichment opportunities tailored to your interests.
- Recognition and Celebration – Be part of honoring the contributions and achievements of retired educators and school staff.
-

Whether you've been a member for years or are considering joining for the first time, now is the perfect

time to be part of SDRSP. This fall let's embrace the season of change by inviting others to experience the warmth and strength of our organization.

Let's grow together, support one another, and continue to make a difference.

Welcome back, and here's to a vibrant and fulfilling season ahead! I will be looking forward to receiving your unit's membership information and compiling on the state excel spreadsheet.

Officer Reports: Community Service Fall Report

by Diane Odland
SDRSP Community Health Services

Hope everyone has had a GREAT Summer!! How can it be August already? Here are some updates from Community Health Services.

Again, thank you to all of the units who did a GREAT JOB with Community Service this year. We had 9 units reporting this year for a total of 26,582 hours in our communities and organizations. We continue to make an impact on those around us with the wide array of activities that we as retired teachers continue to make an impact on!! Watertown Area Retired School Personnel was the Unit with the MOST Volunteer Hours for 2024-2025 year with 5,354.5 Hours!!

Based on an increased \$25 an hour for an hourly wage, our units donated \$664,550 for 2024-2025 year! This is always remarkable to see! Congrats to all!

Last year, I increased the hours needed to achieve our Award Levels and this will be carried over to this coming year of 2025-2026. The new levels include–

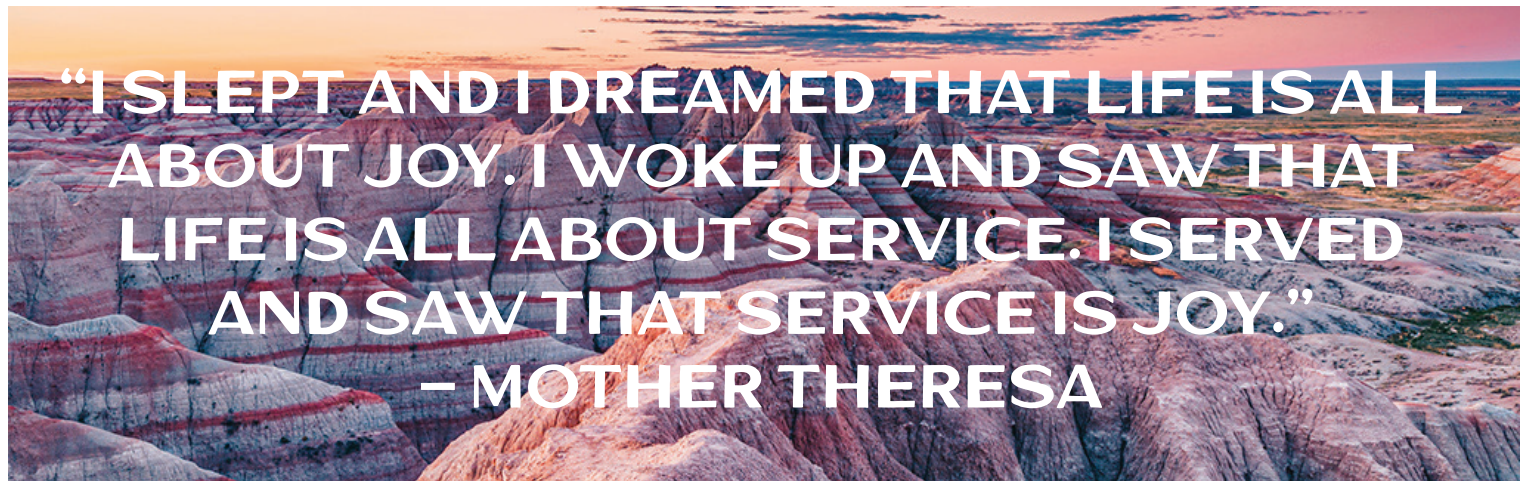
GOLD Level • Above 2000 Hours

SILVER Level • 1000-1999 Hours

BRONZE Level • Below 999 Hours

Here is a quote by Winston Churchill as we enter a New Season with New Goals and Activities for 2025-2026!

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give!"



Officer Reports: Facebook



by Gayle Bortnem
Facebook

Our “SD Retired School Personnel” Facebook page has 217 friends at this time. I would love to have members share pictures and comments of what they

are doing all over the state. Just send them to me at **bortnemg@gmail.com** and I will share on FB.

If you are not a member yet, just go to the SD Retired School Personnel page and click on the “invite” button.

You’ll be approved soon. Let’s keep up together!

OTHER NEWS: Educators Rising

There’s power in teaching. Educators Rising teacher leaders and administrators are passionate, skilled teachers who have joined the Educators Rising network and are paying forward their expertise to the next generation of teachers. According to the SD Educator Rising website “We are on a mission to help our schools grow their own educators.”

Our local units have risen to the challenge of helping with donating money for scholarships. Thank you to all of you for donating to Educators Rising & other Scholarships to benefit students going into the teaching profession.

SDRSP UNIT SCHOLARSHIPS AND DONATIONS TO EDUCATORS RISING

Aberdeen Unit - The unit met for a luncheon on the first day of school and collected donations to state an endowment at the Aberdeen Public Schools. It will be used to give scholarship for future teachers with priorities to students that are in the local Educators

Rising group. We need to raise \$10,000 in 5 years and they already have over \$6,000.

Black Hills Unit - Donated \$510 to Educators Rising

Madison Unit - Donated \$50 to Educators Rising

Milbank Unit - \$350 for Educators Rising and \$50 to the state scholarship fund

Sioux Falls Unit - \$180 in previous donations, plus many individuals support them on an annual basis

Sisseton Unit -They have scholarships of their own. \$250 each for two high school graduates.

Watertown Unit -They gave \$250 to their local Educators’ Rising group and also gave other money raised during the year from 50/50 raffles each month to two other scholarships.

OTHER NEWS: Association Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA)

by Jacque Sly

Recently you may have received a letter from AMBA inviting you to participate in the vision and dental insurance they offer. When employed by a school district one often has the option of dental or vision insurance. Those options are no longer available after retirement. In addition, Medicare does not cover many of the expenses associated with dental and vision care. Several years ago, SDRSP partnered with AMBA to have supplemental benefits available to our members. As a member of SDRSP you can access them. According to

the SDRSP bylaws an associate membership may be offered to non-retired school personnel and spouses/ or significant others who are interested in and support the objectives of SDRSP. This change allows others to access the benefits, too.

Personally, I have the vision insurance (VSP) and have been satisfied with the benefit of exams and new glasses for a low premium. The SDRSP website (www.sdrsp.org) has links to AMBA if you are interested.

OTHER NEWS: Scholarship Donations 2024-2025

Each year SDRSP awards two \$1000 scholarships to current educators. In 2011, SDRSP began offering a \$1000 scholarship available to any South Dakota K-12 teacher with at least 5 years of experience. We now offer two scholarships a year. To qualify for this scholarship, the teacher must be working on an advanced degree or national board certification. To help keep the account viable, local units and

individuals can make donations to the scholarship fund.

Thank you to the following for donations made this past year.

\$75 • Black Hills Retired School Personnel,
in memory of members passed during the year.
\$25 • LaRee Mayes

Looking Back
Minutes from the first meeting organizing SD Retired Teachers in 1966

October 1966-- October 1967

State Officers:

President	Florence Krieger	Rapid City
Vice Pres.	Lydia Leistikow	Aberdeen
Secretary	Gertie Belle Rogers	Mitchell
Treasurer	Walter Vaughn	Hot Springs

State Committee Chairmen:

Public Relations	Nan Nelson	Sioux Falls
Membership	Mrs. Amy Eastman	Black Hawk
Nominating	O.O. Christiansen	Huron

Term of office --two years. Dues \$1.00 per year

Bienium Objectives: 1. Organize more Units 2. Improvement of Retirement Laws.

State Director and Newsletter Editor: Miss Harrietta Bach, Sioux Falls
The June 1967 Newsletter listed the names and addresses of the officers of the five Units: Aberdeen, Sioux Falls, Huron, Mitchell, Black Hills.

Units Organized by State Director, Harrietta Bach:
Huron RTA, February 1967; Mitchell RTA April, 1967

State Affiliation with NRTA --February 13, 1967. (See telegram on following page.)

State Annual Retired Teachers Meetings:

Since SEDA held Regional meetings this year the Retired Teachers Association held two luncheon meetings, the one at Rapid City, Oct. 12, 1967, the other one at Huron, Oct. 13. The guest speaker at both meetings was Mr. Ernest Giddings, NRTA Legislative Representative, from Washington, D. C. He discussed legislation as affects retired teachers on the state and national level. He also announced that Florence Krieger had been appointed a member of the NRTA-AARP Legislative Council, which meets annually in Washington, D. C. Her term was for three years.

NRTA-AARP Area VI Conference, St. Louis, May 17-20, 1967 attended by Harrietta Bach and Florence Krieger--with expenses paid by NRTA.

State Legislative Activities:

Worked with SDEA to improve Retirement Laws:

Bills passed: 1. Raise base on which premiums are paid from \$4800 to \$6000.

2. More diversification of investment of Retirement Funds.

Bills tabled or Killed: 1. Every retired teacher in the state with 20 years experience & 60 yrs. of age receive a pension of at least \$60.00 per mo
2. Raise credit for prior service from .2 of 1% to 1%.

Members from the various Units journeyed to Pierre at their own expense to attend the Legislative Committee Hearings of these bills.



Jacqueline Sly
22560 Potter Road
Rapid City, SD 57702

SDRSP.org

CHECK MEMBERSHIP ADDRESSES!

It is important for all unit officers to check with each member for their correct address.

Not having correct addresses costs the organization a great deal of money.

Send all address changes, as well as names and dates of deaths, to

Anita Manning, 719 N Shepherd Ave, Sioux Falls SD 57103

Email: manning310@sio.midco.net • Phone: 605-351-3112

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



I want to join South Dakota Retired School Personnel!



Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Mail the above information and \$15 (annual state dues) to:

SDRSP Treasurer, Myron Fuerst

504 E Alder Lane

Sioux Falls, SD 57105