



Region II leads in membership growth

Under the leadership of Regional Director Arlene Decker and Regional Membership Chairmen John Puffenbarger, Region II, at this time, shows the greatest growth in membership this year as county units continue to Grow for the Green to earn cash awards.

As WVARSE watches membership increase, it is exciting to announce

that nine associations in Region II have grown with the Upshur County unit leading having achieved 80 percent of its potential. Following close behind are Randolph County with 77 percent and Taylor with 75 percent of their potential.

Membership growth is also reported in Region V and Region VI. Eight units have increased membership in Region V with

Summers County reporting 65 percent of potential. In Region VI, Morgan County with 57 percent of potential leads six other units in the eastern panhandle that have grown since last year.

Cash awards of \$100 will be given to the unit in each region having the greatest percentage of potential and \$50 incentive awards will be presented to counties who get 50 or

more new members this year ending May 15.

Membership Clerk Joann Beer reports that the association is getting many new members, but there is a need to follow-up on members who have forgotten to pay dues for the past year or two. "We need to have a Bring 'Em Back campaign this spring," Loretta Thomp

See Membership, Page 6

Leadership Conference to be held May 5 and 6

Our Annual Leadership Conference will be held on May 5 and 6, 2004 at the Days Inn, 2000 Sutton Lane, Flatwoods, West Virginia.

The purpose of the conference is to provide training for local unit presidents and regional

chairmen.

Registration will be from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesday May 5. Region V will handle registration for the conference. Mary Riner is the Region V director.

The first general session will begin at 1 p.m.

A Regional Caucus

for each of the regions will follow the general session.

Each regional director will be the leader for his/her region.

Nancy Aronson will be our banquet speaker.

She is the Senior Legislative Representative for NRTA. We are looking

forward to her visit.

On Thursday concurrent training sessions will be conducted for committee chairmen and unit presidents.

A second general session will follow.

The conference will conclude at noon.

Success at the Legislature, Stay involved, We are making progress!

W V A R S E members were very active at the Legislature this past session. And as a result we have had some successes. Our victories were made possible because members, such as you, were involved in process all year long.

Many of you wrote letters, post cards and greeting cards to Legislators. Others called

and/or visited Legislators. We invited Legislators to our monthly meetings. We told them our concerns and they heard us loud and clear.

Most legislators want to do the "right thing." We need to thank our friends in the primary and general elections. They understand the gratitude.

We also came to Charleston for our an-

nual Legislative Breakfast, and our Regional Legislative days. We wore red. We wore our COLA buttons.

We talked to our legislators and to the leaders of the House and the Senate. Many of you also came down for the last day of session. Everyone was helpful.

We are making ourselves heard over the usual Legislative roar. We must keep

up the good work. The effort must continue as long as we are able to fight for a better life for all citizens, especially for our youth and our seniors. Most members have a telephone and most of us know how to talk to Legislators in plain English. WVARSE members

See Success, Page 4

The President's Message

Greetings:

Our members have been involved in several activities since we last communicated through the Newsletter.

First, I want to thank you for your hard work in collecting signatures for our petition drive. Approximately 24,000 signatures were secured. That is a great accomplishment.

The petitions were presented both to the House and Senate on the day that each region was assigned to visit the Legislature.

Some have said that petitions do not carry much weight with the Legislature. I guess that is a matter of debate.

However, I know that we benefited as an organization because of our efforts. The citizens that we contacted could see that as a group that we are committed to the task of securing better living standards for our members.

Our membership is more cohesive because we worked together toward securing improved benefits for our retired school employees.

I am convinced that through your efforts we are a stronger organization.

The "Day at the Leg-



Charles Akers
WVARSE president

islature" was a success. As you know, the weather was terrible on January 28. This did have an effect on the number of participants on January 29.

Many legislators from both the House and the Senate visited with us. Most were receptive to our message. However, you know the old story that we hear every year, "Where's the Money?" (sounds like the 'Where's the Beef' commercial)

The executive director and the legislative committee worked diligently to make the day a success.

I am writing this article prior to the adjournment of the 2004 Legislature.

At this point in time it does not look promising for our COLA bill.

We may have a chance to get legislation enacted that will combine the Teachers Retirement System and the Defined Contribu

See President, Page 6

From the Executive Director

WVARSE Day at the Legislature was Jan. 29, 2004. Despite the unfavorable weather, attendance was good.

One hundred thirty-four members from 26 counties were present to mingle with the 38 Delegates and 17 Senators who made our event their priority.

A new concept was used this year to encourage members to attend the activities at the Legislature and talk with their legislative representatives. Rather than having days for county units to attend, regional days were utilized.

We were pleased to be able to experience these days without the unfavorable weather we experienced on WVARSE Day. Region VI day was Jan. 9, Region V day was Feb. 10, Region III and IV chose to use the same day on Feb. 18, Region II was Feb. 25 and Region I finished the cycle on March 2.

It has been suggested that planning for the event be completed at an earlier date for next year so that more people can plan to attend.

Attendance on some of the days was sparse, but there were members representing each region on those days.

During these days members took advantage of being able to visit with their legislative representatives either in their office, in a committee meeting or ap-



**William G.
'Bill' Milam
Executive Director**

proaching them in the hallways or at the "well." The petitions collected from each region were presented by either a Delegate in the House or a Senator in the Senate on these days.

A total of 50 counties participated in the petition drive. A total of 24,715 signatures were collected and presented to the Legislature. Eighteen counties worked extra hard by obtaining more than 500 signatures. Wood County collected the most signatures (2,082) followed by Kanawha County (1,965) and Lincoln County (1,637).

All three of these counties did an outstanding job and we congratulate you. Our congratulations to Cabell County (1,293) and Raleigh County (1,148) for doing a great job. The preceding five counties had a total of 8125 signatures or 32.87 percent of the total signatures.

This is a tremendous effort. Thirteen counties (listed in alphabetical or-

der) - Braxton, Brooke, Doddridge, Fayette, Hancock, Harrison, Mason, McDowell, Mercer, Pendleton, Putnam, Taylor, and Wayne - are congratulated for making a notable effort in obtaining between 500 and 999 signatures for a total of 8957 or 36.24 percent of the total signatures.

We are pleased to have succeeded in the passage of HB 4008, which will allow the appointment of a retiree to the PEIA Board of Finance, but we were disappointed that we were not successful in the passage of a COLA for retirees.

Another Legislation, which would have merged the two retirement systems back into the Defined Benefit System was not passed, but may still be accomplished in the near future. There are many advantages to retirees for this to take place. The benefits for retirees will not be affected by this merger. It will only serve to enhance the Defined Benefit system.

The State will save money by the merger. By placing new hires into the TRS the employer's contribution will be reduced from the present 7.5 percent in the TDC to 4.34 percent making a 3.16 percent reduction and a savings of \$18 million in General Revenue expenses next year.

Under the current actuarial assumptions the state

will save \$1.8 billion over the next 30 years. Under the low inflation rate assumption the savings during the same time period will be \$75 million. This will also be an advantage to present employees who will have the opportunity to transfer from the TDC in which many have experienced unfavorable returns.

The funded percentage of TRS is now 19 percent. Over the 30-year period related to in the actuarial study, under TRS assumption this will rise to 95.92 percent and under low inflation rate it will rise to 78.56 percent. In order for us to expect a COLA, the funded percentage of TRS will have to improve. The one percent COLA, which was passed by the House, (not by the Senate) was on the condition that the funded percentage would rise to 30 percent.

Another concern, which could be beneficial to our membership, is the outcome of the lawsuit concerning the "Pension Liability Redemption Act (West Virginia Code, Chapter 12, Article 8).

This case has been presented to the Kanawha County Circuit Court and adjudicated in favor the Governor who by Executive Order No. 13-03 set in motion the re-financing of bonds. This is presently being prepared for appeal to the State Supreme Court by the plaintiffs.

WVARSE has joined WVEA as a party to this suit on the side of the defendants.

Many of you have been concerned about dental and optical insurance. The WVARSE Board approved a package (addressed in a separate article) of benefits offered by AMBA of Austin, Texas (the company that offers our Long Term Insurance). Also PEIA will soon be offering a dental and optical package. Each of these benefits will have a premium, which is to be paid by the retiree. I suggest that you review each product and make the wisest decision for your needs.

We are proud to have among our membership David L. Thompson, the author of River of Memories: and Appalachian Boyhood. Details of this book are addressed in a separate article.

Please visit the Web site at www.WVARSE.org. You can find the name, address, and phone number of the officials of WVARSE on the Website.

Many of the officials also have e-mail addresses. Some back issues of the Newsletter can be viewed on this site. An up-to-date calendar is maintained on the Web. If you click on the e-mail address info@wvvarse.org on the Web site, it will connect you to my office e-mail. Your comments are appreciated.

Student teachers get scholarships for fall and spring semesters.

2004 Scholarships granted to student teachers

Twenty-six future teachers applied for the WVARSE scholarships and most are already assigned to supervising teachers near their campuses.

The Scholarship Committee was very pleased with the first application cycle and was impressed by the qualifications and

dedication of the applicants.

Scholarship grants have been given to four students for the spring term and two will begin their student teaching in the fall term.

Winners for the spring semester are: Wayne L. Bennett, Belington, Alderson-Broadus College, secondary science; Marlene M. Vassar, Mt. Clare, WV Wesleyan College, elementary; Michael

A. Hanna, Asbury, Bluefield College, elementary; and Crystal Jude, Matewan, Concord College, K-6.

Winners for the fall term: Shawna Kay DeFazio, Stonewood, WV University, Pre-K, K and Special Ed; and Joella Anne Ruddy, New Milton, Salem Int. College, K-6.

Responding to the scholarships, Wayne Bennett replied that he was

now teaching at Philippi Middle School under teacher Glen Righman and will be placed in Harrison County teaching ninth grade science under Jonathan Griffith.

He stated, "I want you to know that I truly appreciate the support of your organization."

Joella Ann (Austin) Ruddy and her husband own a home in the woods of Doddridge County,

where they raise and milk dairy goats, quilts, weaves and speaks French fluently.

"I love art, reading, my animals and my children," she writes. "I especially look forward to becoming certified as a classroom teacher and do what I do best. WVARSE has made me very proud and more determined in becoming a fine West Virginia teacher."

Officers

President Charles Akers

304-465-1550
19261@earthlink.net

President-elect Roscoe Keeney Jr.

304-346-2036
govc@wv-cis.net

Recording Secretary Wanda Simpkins

304-252-5858
csimpkins@wvdsi.net

Treasurer Geraldine Hawkinberry

304-782-1575
Hawkinber3@aol.com

Immediate Past President Nancy Trotter

304-346-3161
Ntrot116@aol.com

Executive Director William G. Milam

304-346-6079
bmilam@kcs.kana.k12.wv.us

Dates to Remember

WVARSE Executive Committee Meeting
Tues., May 4, 2004

Leadership Training Conference
Wednesday and Thurs., May 4 and 5, 2004.

Deadline for next newsletter
Thurs., July 15, 2004

WVARSE Web site:
www.WVARSE.org

WVARSE Membership Report

As of 3/16/04

Region I	Last Yr	Current	Potential
Brooke	201	180	314
Fairmont	23	24	168
Hancock	198	194	385
Marion	216	202	647
Marshall	157	167	403
Monongalia	203	185	580
Ohio	190	205	466
Pleasants	85	85	115
Tyler	48	42	100
W. Liberty	0	1	68
Wetzel	66	87	227
WVU	36	33	976
Total	1423	1405	4449
Region II	Last Yr	Current	Potential
Barbour	99	97	201
Braxton	68	113	228
Doddridge	8	23	112
Gilmer	67	63	98
Glenville	21	16	112
Harrison	335	347	768
Lewis	114	116	206
Preston	161	164	379
Randolph	238	248	319
Taylor	115	120	159
Tucker	11	38	102
Upshur	205	222	276
Webster	87	79	164
Total	1529	1646	3124
Region III	Last Yr	Current	Potential
Boone	149	160	342
Calhoun	48	41	124
Clay	53	49	159
Jackson	111	109	328
Kanawha	633	614	2758
Ritchie	55	48	127
Roane	39	42	191
State Dept	26	24	199
Wirt	37	37	76
Wood	358	363	951
WVS	9	10	117
Total	1518	1497	5372
Region IV	Last Yr	Current	Potential
Cabell	161	150	1107
Lincoln	102	103	309
Logan	30	111	674
Mason	55	42	298
Mingo	73	77	535
MU	10	11	137
Putnam	38	31	447
Wayne	194	163	544
Total	663	688	4051
Region V	Last Yr	Current	Potential
Bluefield	2	3	34
Concord	6	11	85
Fayette	231	235	689
Greenbrier	250	184	426
McDowell	183	201	639
Mercer	291	352	848
Monroe	75	76	164
Nicholas	91	102	325
Pocahontas	26	44	116
Raleigh	254	234	966
Summers	132	128	194
WVIT	5	5	91
Wyoming	160	156	486
Total	1706	1731	5063
Region VI	Last Yr	Current	Potential
Berkeley	120	131	476
Deaf & Blind	62	65	132
Grant	39	58	141
Hampshire	64	65	159
Hardy	37	30	128
Jefferson	104	107	244
Mineral	136	125	314
Morgan	79	78	137
Pendleton	45	40	117
Potomac	12	11	34
Shepherd	8	10	53
Total	706	721	1935
Total Members	Last Yr	Current	Potential



~ In Memoriam ~



Boone
Lloyd Orland Banks,
Gaye D. Brown, Nellie Irene Peale

Braxton
Alvin H. Allen, Mary C. Chenoweth, Earl Dorsey Jr., Cleva Linger, Ora May Rogers

Brooke
Joan A. Megahan

Cabell
Lillian E. Jones, Juanita S, White

Deaf and Blind
Frances G. Haines,
Margaret M. Haines

Doddridge
Dayra C. Downs

Fayette
Anna Lee Szuch, Conrad Raymond Wriston

Greenbrier
Ashby C. Bennett, David L. Hall, Clarence A. Hinkle

Hancock
Alma Helen Frangos,
Mary Catherine Minges,
Mary A. Teagarden

Harrison
Ira Gherke, Betty E. Richards

Jefferson
Anna Macoughtry

Kanawha
Dorothy R. Bell, Rebecca M. Bowling, Fae S.

Chenoweth, Mary B.
Eastone, Hurston Foster,
Beatrice Herron, Cornlia T. Jenkins, Barbara Ann Joachim, Samuel A. Lerose,
Kathryn H. Maddox,
Emmett M. Shafer, Pauline G. Sisson, Dorothy Dale Williamson

Lewis
Dorothy M. Peterson

Lincoln
kermit Adkins, Faye Williams Chinn, Gerald K. Watts

Marion
William Victor Booth,
Grace Darnell, Barbara F. Varner

Marshall
Mary Frances Cox,
Deemy Ingole Dick, Hilda Jane Gamble

Mercer
Norma C. Fredrick,
Barbara L. Hood, Lillian C. Kanode, Beatrice C. Rakestraw, Nora Bea Williams, Elhanier Willis,
Ashley W. Woodroof Jr.

McDowell
Robert Brownfield,
Kathleen Johnson, Sallie C. Moore, Frank J. Wingfield

Mineral
Irene M. Batchelor

Mingo

Pauline Mills Damron,
Madge C. Hatfield

Monongalia
Majorie B. Cox, George Felton, Lucile J. Madera,
Howard Price

Nicholas
Aurelia O. Phillips

Ohio
Harry W. Gaus

Pendleton
Elsie M. Blizzard,
Lorraine T. Phares

Pleasants
Lila Lamm, Ruth Pickens

Potomac
Raymond H. Tasker

Preston
Gary A. Livengood,
Dennis J. White, Ruby V. Wolfe

Raleigh
Vera A. Feazell, Lillian M. Griffith, Sarah L. Humphrey, Jesse Lacy,
Pearl A. Wade, Jessie Edria Worley

Randolph
Stanley Croston, Mary Jane Presseau

Roane
Eunice C. Wilson

Shepherd
Margaret H. Swann

State Dept.
J. Jackson Townsend

Summers

Janet A. Kounse
Taylor
Charles R. Cather
Stephen F. Simon

Tyler
Julie B. Sellers

Upshur
Maxine V. Phillips, Lynn E. Westfall

Wayne
Mona R. Janes

Webster
Glenn Barbe, Cecil Cogar

Wetzel
Vera May Snyder

Wood
Patricia J. Brannon,
Gladys H. Brown, Mary Louise Somerville, Mary F. Winans

WVS
Angie T. King

Wyoming
Luther Green, Lucy J. Harvery, Julia Z. McGraw,
Paul C. Ritchie, U.J. Shannon

Regretfully, because of identical names within the state retiree system, deceased names are sometimes identified in the wrong county. We apologize for any undue stress caused by this circumstance.

In memory: Deemy Ingole Dick

Longtime MCARSE member Deemy Ingole Dick died Friday, Dec. 19, 2003, at her home in Moundsville.

Born in 1913 in McDowell County, educated at Welch High School and Concord College. Mrs. Dick began her service as an educator in Southern West Virginia.

During a career that spanned 44 years, she taught in McDowell, Mercer, Kanawha, and Marshall Counties, retiring from Marshall County schools in 1970.

She served as Region I Director and Assistant State Director of WVARSE, maintaining active membership for more than 25 years.

Always active in her community, she served as co-chairman of the West Virginia Centennial committee in 1963 and co-chairman of the Marshall County Bicentennial Com-

mittee in 1976. She belonged to the Moundsville Landmark Commission and the Marshall County Historical Society.

In 1976 Mrs. Dick compiled, edited and published Echoes from the West Virginia Hills, a book of poems and stories of West Virginia schools.

Throughout her lengthy career and active retirement, Deemy Dick exemplified those characteristics that define excellence: commitment, dedication, and compassion.

Her service to youth was continual throughout her life as she worked as a vacation Bible school director, Mother Advisor, District Mother Advisor and Director of the Grand Cross of Color for the Order of the Rainbow for Girls in W.Va.

She is survived by her husband, Thomas F. Dick, her daughter Denise and her husband Larry



Deemy Ingole Dick

Freeland (both educators), and two grandchildren, all of Moundsville.

Rarely, if ever, has anyone truly lived 90 years to

the extent our colleague and member Deemy Dick did. We applaud her life and share her story with you with pride.

GOOD NEWS! New Benefits for WVARSE Members and Spouses

The West Virginia Association of Retired School Employees (WVARSE) has endorsed Association Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA) to provide supplemental insurance benefits for its membership.

AMBA currently works with active and retired educators' organizations in 22 other states.

AMBA will work hand-in-hand with WVARSE to provide a full menu of products so that the members can access affordable benefits, financial security, and peace of mind.

Benefits to be offered to WVARSE members are as follows:

* Medical Air Ambulance Association (MASA)

Medical Air Services Association - Over the past 29 years Medical Air Ser-

vices (MASA) has become an international company dedicated to providing life saving emergency assistance from home, while traveling, on-or-off the job. The coverage is designed to protect members against catastrophic financial loss when emergencies arise. The Platinum Membership offered through AMBA offers the following 13 services: Emergency Air Transportation, Helicopter Transportation, Ground Ambulance Transportation, Organ Retrieval, Organ Recipient Transportation, Recuperation/Repatriation, Return Transportation, Escort Transportation, Non-injury Transportation, Minor children/grandchildren Return, Mortal Remains, Vehicle Return, and World Wide Coverage. More information about these services

offered through your membership may be obtained by registering online at www.ambainfo.com or by contacting AMBA at 800-258-7041 ext 2234.

* Hearing Planet

Hearing Planet - Hearing Planet Inc. provides "One Point Of Access" to all major brands of hearing devices at an average of 40 percent off MSRP. The company has licensed audiologists on staff to provide free phone consults, price checks, and hearing test reviews. Their network includes 1,000 plus clinics throughout the country. Hearing Planet has maintained one of the highest satisfaction rates in the country. Their return for credit rate is about 10 percent while the industry wide average is 28 percent. The entire process of hearing evaluation, ear

mold impressions, payment (flexible plans), and manufacturing of hearing aids, fittings, and follow-up services are all done through one company, Hearing Planet Inc. For more information about this program, please call 800-432-7669 or www.hearingplanet.com.

* Cendant Government Employee Travel Opportunities (GETO)

Cendant-Government Employee Travel opportunities (GETO) - This is a unique "Space-A" vacation condominium and hotel, resort, program exclusively for current and retired government employees. Condos normally sit empty when not in use by the owners. GETO and AMBA want to make these empty hotel and condos available to AMBA association members for a flat

rate of \$249 per week. It only requires a Web site search for the area of interest and a telephone call to make the reservation. Spaces are available from Alaska to Maine and in most foreign countries. For full details and samples of resort availability, visit the Web site

www.getravelop.com or call the reservation center at 877-867-3639. Association Members supported by AMBA uses eligibility number 823.

* Careington International Dental Network see www.ambadental.co

Careington International Dental Network Discount Dental - Careington maintains a nationwide provider plan of over 20,000 participating dentists. The plan is an affordable discount program that allows members to receive

high quality dental service at participating provider's office. For the low monthly fee, members can receive dentist search services and a staff of member services specialists to respond to all calls about the service. To receive full details about this plan, check the Careington link at www.ambadental.com

* Dental Insurance

Dental Insurance-Guardian/First Commonwealth - AMBA's insurance plan offers reasonable single and family rates, one \$75 annual deductible per insured, and an annual maximum benefit of \$1,500 per insured. For individuals who prefer their present dentist to a network dentist, dental insurance may be your best

See Benefits, Page 5

Success

From Page 1

called Legislators and asked for their support. The Legislature provides a toll free number for leaving messages for legislators.

The toll free number is 877-565-3447. Keep using it. It all helps.

Our big victory this year was the passage of the Governor's bill granting him authority to appoint a person to represent retiree interests on the PEIA Finance Board. We hope the appointee will be a WVARSE member.

Although WVARSE has not formally endorsed anyone for the appointment, several members have asked the Governor to appoint the chair of the Legislative committee to the board.

It is early to tell what the Governor will do, but we hope he will elect a WVARSE member for

the board.

Our second victory was that WVARSE members made COLA a topic discussion this session.

As you recall, WVARSE members circulated petitions throughout the state asking citizens to show their support for a COLA for retirees.

We collected a lot of signatures on our petitions- perhaps as many as 25,000 signatures.

We educated retirees, active education employees and legislators about our just need for a COLA. The petitions were read and introduced in the House and Senate by friendly legislators and sent to the Pensions Committee.

Because of the poor national and state economy, the Senate chose not to provide and pay raises or increases in pensions for active and retired public employees.

However, a bill did pass, in the final hours

of the session, to increase the pensions of a few legislators. Many people have asked the Governor to veto that piece of legislation.

A few legislators tried once again to receive PEIA coverage at the same rate as full time employees, which would have cost the system about \$800,000 a year. But, their effort failed again.

Many legislators told us that they will take up pay raises and pension increases after the primary and/or general elections.

Several other issues remain to be resolved, including the tobacco securitization bill.

Another bill (HB 4545) will enable active school employees to rejoin, and thereby strengthen the STRS Defined Benefit plan.

Additional employee contributions and the transfer of funds accumulated in the current Defined

Contribution plan will raise the STRS unfounded liability from 19 percent to perhaps 26 percent.

Additionally, the Legislature passed a compromise pharmaceutical bill.

The bill will provide some limited benefit, a drug discount card, to about 200,000 low income West Virginians. The bill also contains a trigger provision, which may enable the stat to negotiate with drug manufacturers to purchase drugs at greatly reduced prices.

This bill, if fully implemented, could be a tremendous benefit to all West Virginians, and especially PEIA members.

When the cost of prescription drugs is lowered to the level paid by veterans, in Canada or in Europe, about 50 percent lower, the savings on drugs may be used to reduce the premiums, deductibles and co-

pays currently charged to active and retired PEIA members.

Finally, we have received notice that Judge Irene C. Berger, circuit court judge in Kanawha County, has ruled that the governor may sell bonds to pay off STRS unfounded liability.

Her decision was very good news for all retirees. Speaker Kiss told WVARSE members at the Annual Council that he would work to fund COLA using the savings generated by the sale of these bonds. Treasurer Perdue and Auditor Gainer intend to appeal Judge Berger's decision.

The court members are judges Starcher, McGraw, Albright, Davis and Maynard.

All of these judges attended public schools in West Virginia.

Hopefully, they will remember all the

helpful teachers, cooks, custodians, bus drivers, secretaries and administrators who helped each of the judges along their way. Now the retirees are in need of inflation proof annual COLA.

Fortunately, in West Virginia, we the people elect our judges. They are answerable to us.

Without a doubt, our judges want to do the "right thing" for all West Virginians. Legislators, the governor and the judges read the newspapers and their mail.

They also come to the Capitol to plead their case for a pay raise and a pension increase.

The pensions of retired judges and their spouses are adjusted with every pay increase that active judges receive.

We need to remind them of the righteousness of the COLA retirees as well.

State membership grows...slowly

In the past four years state membership has increased each year with a total growth of almost 12 percent.

At press time the total number of member was 7724 with more memberships expected before the May 15 deadline, according to Joann Beer, membership clerk.

*Requests for the number of enrollment forms your unit will need for the 2004-05 membership campaign should be sent to the membership clerk prior to April 15. The 3x5 record cards are available.

You may pick up your supplies at the Leadership

Conference on May 5-6 at the Days Inn in Flatwoods.

If you have forms from a previous year, you may continue to use them.

Also, if you must have forms prior to this time, they can be mailed; however, it is desirable to avoid the mailing expense.

Send request to Joann Beer, Membership Clerk, Route 1, Box 228, French Creek, WV 26218.

A review of the growth follows: **June 1, 2001** - 6800 members. **June 1, 2002** - 7362 members. **June 1, 2003** - 7545 members. **March 15, 2004** - 7724 members.

"Although a growth of

more than 800 members is noteworthy," Membership Chairman Loretta Thompson said.

"WVARSE must be diligent to obtain more of the potential 24,000 members."

We have less than one-third of the potential as members and the potential number has been growing about 200 persons per year," she said.

"If WVARSE wants to have a louder voice, membership must continue to grow," Thompson added.

"There is definitely strength in numbers, especially during an election year," she concluded.

Benefits

From Page 4

or only choice for dental coverage. Contact AMBA at 800-258-7041 ext. 2224 for more information.

* Bank One Vehicle Service Protection Plan

Bank One Vehicle Service Protection Plan-RMC - Bank One offers our members four different auto warranty plans, interest free payment plans, 60-day full refund if dissatisfied, and many additional road services.

This program operates across the U.S. and Canada. The flexibilities of plans and deductibles

make this program very attractive.

The rates are among the best in the warranty industry. The vehicle protection plans include the following benefits in all plans: substitute transportation, towing/road service, lost key/lockout, and trip interruption protection.

If you are interested in learning more about the WVARSE endorsed AMBA products, please call 800.258.7041, or check the AMBA web site at www.amba-info.com.

If local WVARSE presidents would like to schedule someone from AMBA to speak to their members about any of the

AMBA products, please contact Jeanie Coffey at 800.258.7041 ext. 2242.

AMBA is now seeking to employ WVARSE members as AMBA representatives to educate members on the benefits found in the WVARSE benefit package.

If you are interested in learning more about this position or would like to recommend someone, please call Rick Billeaud at 800.254.7041 ext. 2901.

This outstanding warranty program is available to all AMBA members. Call Resource Marketing Consultants (RMC) at 800-849-4249 for details about this exclusive offer.

Expense Reimbursement Guidelines for Leadership Conference

The Leadership Conference will be held May 5 and 6 at Days Inn in Flatwoods. Their phone is 304-765-5055.

Here are the expense reimbursement guidelines:

1. WVARSE Board Members - State will reimburse these members for meals, travel and lodging
2. Current Regional Chairmen (five from each region) - State will reimburse lodging (2 per room or 1/2 room), breakfast, (not banquet) and travel.
3. Incoming presidents or vice-presidents - State will reimburse these members for lodging (2 per room or 1/2), breakfast (not banquet), and travel. (Counties should reimburse the cost of the banquet).
4. Others as invited by the president - expenses will be paid by state. Travel is based on one (1) car per county at .30 cents per mile.

CALENDAR 2004

(Regional Meetings listed below calendar)

This calendar can be viewed on the Website www.wvarse.org

April 1	County Officer lists due to WVARSE President, President-elect, Regional Directors and Executive Director
May 4	Executive Committee Meeting, Flatwoods
May 5-6	Leadership Training Conference, Flatwoods
May 15	Membership determination for Annual Council delegates
June 15	Deadline for sending Volunteer Hours to Regional Directors
June 15	List of Deceased due to I & P Chairman
July 1	Delegate letters mailed to County Presidents
July 8	Executive Committee Meeting, Flatwoods
July 15	Deadline for items to the Newsletter
July 15	Honor Points Checklist due to President, President-elect, Regional Directors and Executive Director
July 15	Annual Council Delegates list due to Membership Clerk, Regional Directors and Executive Director
September 7	Executive Board Meeting, Flatwoods
September 8-9	Annual Council, Flatwoods

REGIONAL MEETINGS

Region I	June 1	Morgantown
Region II	June 9	Phillippi (AB College)
Region III	June 2	Cedar Lakes
Region IV	June 3	Huntington YWCA
Region V	June 8	Beckley (Methodist Temple)
Region VI	June 10	Martinsburg

Reimbursement for Regional Workshops

A. Regional Directors, Current Regional Chairmen and President or President Elect of WVARSE. WVARSE executive board must approve of others.

Meals paid by AARP
State will reimburse for travel.

B. Incoming County Chairmen, President and Vice-President
Meals paid by AARP

OHIO COUNTY UNIT



While many were putting valentines into decorated boxes this winter, Ohio County Association of Retired School Employee members were placing clean, used medicine bottles into their collection box for a Health Right agency. The group is also collecting pop tabs as a community service project, Lila Blankenship reported. Pictured from left, Angela Moore, Betty Seidler, Velma Jones and Jane Mumper.

WOOD COUNTY UNIT

The Wood County Association of Retired School Employees has been awarded a \$500 "Focus on Youth" program grant from AARP.

WCRSE volunteers will work in conjunction with the Gustke Shelter for Youth to provide tutorial and remedial assistance. They will also offer exposure to job, career, and vocational opportunities through job fairs visits and field trips.

The Wood County Board of Education continues to be a leader in

West Virginia in providing complete health insurance for its employees.

At the January 13, 2004 meeting, the school board voted to make dental insurance available to all retired school personnel effective February 2, 2004.

The plan duplicates the dental insurance coverage offered to current school employees.

Wood County is one of only two County school systems in West Virginia offering dental insurance to retired school employees.

PUTNAM COUNTY UNIT

The Putnam County Association has made passage of bills to benefit retirees the major focus this year.

Association members, with help of our superintendent and active employees, collected 590 signatures on the petition supporting COLA legislation.

Membership

From Page 1

son, membership chairman suggested.

Congratulations to the following counties and college units reporting growth:

Region I - Fairmont, Marshall, Ohio, and Wetzel; Region II - Braxton, Doddridge, Har-

Six members attended the "Day at the Legislature and two attended the "Region IV Lobby Day". Several of our members stayed in touch with legislators. We hope that by keeping our legislators informed of our needs, we will be more successful next year.

rison, Lewis, Preston, Randolph, Taylor, Tucker, and Upshur; Region III - Boone, Roane, Wood and West Virginia State; Region IV - Lincoln, Logan, and Mingo; Region V - Bluefield, Concord, Fayette, McDowell, Mercer, Monroe, Nicholas, and Pocahontas; Region VI - Berkeley, Deaf and Blind School, Hampshire, Jefferson, and Shepherd.



Iris Jennings, left, presents three containers of pop tabs to Rita Maxwell, asst. manager for Kingwood McDonalds.

Preston County WVARSE donates pop tabs to McDonalds

Iris Jennings, representing the Preston County unit of the West Virginia Association of Retired School Employees, recently presented three containers of pop tabs to the Kingwood McDonalds. The donation was presented to Assistant Manager Rita Maxwell. The tabs will be taken to Morgantown along with others that have been received and sold as recycled aluminum.

Jennings said the approximately seven gallons of tabs were donated in conjunction with the organization's efforts on behalf of county youth and the community. She noted the largest jug shown here was collected by David and Wilma Teets, of Horse Shoe Run, both retired school personnel. She stressed the project is not only a fundraiser for Ronald McDonald, but also allows the members to do their part to help recycle materials that would otherwise end up as garbage.

The Ronald McDonald House Charities provide children with a home away from home and compassionate support for children with life threatening illnesses. Volunteers at the site focus on the needs of a family so they can focus on their sick child. Families also support each other and a warm and nurturing environment is provided for patients who stay at the site during treatment periods.

Nominating Committee Activated

President Akers appointed a committee to prepare a slate of officers for the year 2004-05.

Officers to be elected at the Annual Council in September are: President Elect, Recording Secretary, and Regional Directors for Regions II, IV, and VI.

WVARSE members wishing to be considered or desiring to present a candidate for office are urged to communicate with a member of the committee.

They are Joann Beer of Upshur County, Chairman; Sherrill Shuman of Grant County; and Tonia

Russell of Mercer County.

Joann Beer can be contacted at 304-924-6698, by emailing cjbeer@wvcentral.com, or by mail: Rt. 1, Box 228, French Creek, WV 26218.

Sherill Shuman can be contacted at 304-257-4361, or by mail: HC 33 Box 270, Petersburg, WV 26847.

Tonia Russell can be contacted at 304-325-7759, email at We2hokies@frontiernet.net, or mail: 108 Christie Manor Dr, Bluefield, WV 24701.

Nominations will be accepted from the floor at the time the slate is presented.

2004 Legislature Report

During this legislative session WVARSE sponsored two COLA bills and a bill, which would place a retiree on the PEIA Finance Board. Unfortunately, none of our bills were passed by either house.

Other legislation became of interest to our concerns as the session winded down to the end.

HB 4668- Would have provided a one percent COLA to all retirees after the funded percentage improved from 19 percent to 30 percent. This was dependant on HB 4036, which related to the legislative appropriation of tobacco settlement funds. A portion of these funds were to be appropriated to fund the TRS.

HB 4545 Teachers' Retirement Equity Act, which would have merged Defined contri-

bution system with the TRS and would have over the next 30 years saved the State \$1.8 billion as well as to improve the funded percentage from 19 percent to about 78 percent.

The House passed all these measures, but the Senate did not. The House tried to send the same text over to the Senate as an amendment to SB 502, but the Senate failed to act on it.

HB 4008 did contain the language to place a retiree on the PEIA Finance Board. It was passed by both houses and became effective on passage. This will allow the Governor to appoint a retiree (not necessarily a WVARSE member to the PEIA Finance Board).

Your support in these endeavors is deeply appreciated.

Grow For the Green WVARSE Memberships are due May 15. Time is Running Out!

President

From Page 1

tions System. The unfunded liability in our pension system will decrease should this legislation pass.

We are still hopeful that legislation, which will place a retired person on the PEIA financial board, may be enacted.

Finally, we changed the method for awarding scholarships to persons interested in becoming teachers.

We sought applications from individuals who will be doing student teaching in the spring semester of 2004 and in the fall semester of 2004.

The committee received more than 25 applications from students attending colleges and universities located in West Virginia. The applications were excellent. The scholarship committee had a difficult task selecting the winners. Four scholarships were granted to students doing student teaching in the spring semester of 2004 and two scholarships were granted to students doing student teaching during the fall semester of 2004.

Remember; don't forget to check our web site at www.WVARSE.org. Also, remember that "Together We Can." Until next time, take care.

WVARSE Governor Candidate Profile:

West Virginia public school retirees, despite ever increasing cost of living (utilities, taxes, rent, insurance, medicines, etc.) receive the same monthly benefit year after year and, as a result, must annually reduce their standard of living to the reality of their retirement annuity.

Except for selected groups, these annuitants in many cases have never received a raise in benefits.

WVARSE has had bills introduced year after year to provide for a COLA, which would guarantee a raise in annuities equal to the percentage rate of inflation or 3 percent (whichever is less). Each year we face the same reply:

The Unfunded Liability in the retirement system is overwhelming and a raise in benefits would be

an astronomical cost, which would increase year after year.

We can't believe that you would want this situation to continue.

Therefore, we ask for your careful answers to the following proposals.

Your answers will be shared with our leaders before the Primary Election in May.

WVARSE is organized statewide, with local affiliates in each county, as well as county legislative committees who could assist you as we deal with this growing problem.

Please indicate what you would be willing to do as Governor by responding to these possibilities:

1. I would support a COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) for all retirees (education and public employees) based on the annual rate of inflation or 3 percent (whichever

is lower).

2. I would support a COLA based on the inflation rate for retirement annuities up to \$18,000 a year for those who have been retired five or more years.

3. I would support a short-term COLA of two years, subject to renewal, based of annuities up to \$18,000 for those retirees 62 years of age or older and have been retired for five years.

4. I would support a raise in annuities that would raise the benefit level to \$1,000 a month for those receiving less than this.

5. I would support legislation that would guarantee members of the retirement system 62 years of age or older and have been a retirement annuity of \$1,200 a month for those now receiving less than this.

Hopeful Signs Emerge As Candidates for Governor Pledge Their Support for COLA

If candidates for Governor of West Virginia can be believed on their candidate profiles, West Virginia's retired school employees may find a friendly face at the State Capitol after January 2005, according to Roscoe Keeney, president-elect of WVARSE.

All candidates for governor were asked to give their views on cost of living adjustments and, except for those who declined to respond, there was strong support from several candidates from both parties.

Here are summaries of views expressed:

Jerry Baker (D-Alderson) Yes on all COLA questions; "I plan to work with you; it's up to you if you want another politician or a person who will do what's best for you." Rob Capehart (R-Wheeling) pledged support for a three percent COLA.

Lloyd Jackson (D-Hamlin) said "I support the efforts of your organization to gain a COLA and to enhance retirement benefits. I am committed to put-

ting the unfounded liability of the TRS behind us as soon as possible."

Jim Lees (D-Scott Depot) "I categorically support cost of living adjustment/increases for retirees of pension funds; without a specific solution any candidate can tell you that he favors your position."

Joe Manchin (D-Charleston) "My top priority for pension plans will be to provide a financially sound method to address the unfounded liability that does not harm in any way the existing or retired employees."

Douglas E. McKinney, M.D. (R-Bridgeport) "A COLA is long overdue; West Virginia must meet its commitments to retirees. Receiving \$1,000 or less a month is disgraceful. I have listened, I understand, I will uphold all promises made to you."

Dan Moore (R-Charleston) "My administration would be committed to keeping the promises made to state employees and re-

tirees. We must stop spending more than we take in. Our first order of business must be job creation. We must tame our budget and grow our economy."

Charles G. (Bud) Railey (R-Bridgeport) "You have come to the right place for help. What if we all joined hands and establish a basis for retired school employees?"

Richie Robb (R-South Charleston) "I believe it is important to support those on fixed and lower income who have served us in the past. My record as mayor of South Charleston for 29 years supports this principle."

Lacy Wright Jr. (D-Welch) "I plan as governor of West Virginia to achieve the impossible. My six point program includes reduced cost of health care, focus on three R's with computer and vocational skills, a moratorium on all new state programs, to be a one-term governor, and to trim our work force, with a freeze on hiring, and eliminate 'dead weight'."

Newsletter Editor resigns

Mary Snow, long time editor of the Newsletter recently submitted her letter of resignation.

Newsletter committee member Joann Beer, agreed to edit this issue.

The president/president elect will make a replacement appointment subject to the approval of the Executive Board.

Annual Council Delegates

Most County units do not meet in the summer, therefore delegates and alternates to Annual Council should be chosen prior to your final meeting of this year. You will be asked to report the names and addressed to the membership clerk by July 15.

WEST VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED SCHOOL EMPLOYEES ENROLLMENT FORM

DUES FOR FISCAL YEAR: JULY 1, 20____ - JULY 1, 20____

1.) ANNUAL STATE DUES \$7.50 PLUS COUNTY DUES \$_____ = TOTAL \$_____

2.) or ONE-TIME-STATE LIFE MEMBERSHIP DUES \$100 + COUNTY DUES \$_____ = TOTAL \$_____

OR 3.) OR LIFE MEMBER PAYING COUNTY DUES ONLY = TOTAL \$_____

PLEASE PRINT: (Use name as it appears on your retirement check) Renewal () New () Life ()

NAME _____ DATE _____
FIRST MIDDLE LAST

ADDRESS _____ OLD ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

RETIRED FROM _____ TELEPHONE _____
(COUNTY, COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY, OTHER)

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO YOUR COUNTY UNIT - RETURN BOTH COPIES TO:
Members receive Newsletters, Insurance and Travel Opportunities

Your county treasurer or Joann Beer
Rt. 1, Box 228
French Creek, WV 26218

Colorful scenes from Legislature Day



The Harrison County Delegation speaks with legislators Barbara Warner and Mike Oliverio II.



The Monongalia County delegation smiles for the camera at a recent meeting, clad for the day in their best red attire.



WVARSE members feverishly take notes as Senator Joe Hunter and Delegate Mary Poling lead a discussion group recently.



Charles Akers, president of WVARSE, speaks to friends and colleagues about one of the many subjects of which he has knowledgeable.

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
CUSTOM
PACK 'N' SHIP LTD.

WVARSE Newsletter
200 Elizabeth Street
Charleston, WV 25311