



SSU Retiree Association NEWS

Working for the wellbeing of SSU retirees by providing and promoting social, recreational, and lifelong learning activities.

 Shawnee State University
Retiree Association

Retirement . . . is when you stop living at work and begin working at living.

— Unknown wise person

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Issue 4
Volume 3
May 2011

SSURA Spring Meeting Wednesday, June 8th University Center Room 214 Guest speaker: Dr. Rita Rice Morris



Take Me Out to the Ballgame! Retirees Honored at SSU Baseball Game

As part of the 25th anniversary celebration, **SSU retirees were honored at a men's baseball game** on Saturday, April 9th. Retirees and family members were treated to lunch under a tent next to the ball field. Billy Graham (retired 2005) threw out the first pitch (pictured left).

Lunch consisted of typical stadium food including hot dogs, hamburgers, potato salad chips and soda as well as cookies. Thanks to the Development Foundation for providing the lunch as well as the tent to keep us dry as it started to rain early in the second inning. They also had students there to serve. Parents and fans in the stands were invited to partake.

The Bears won their game against UVA-Wise in five innings with a run rule score of 18-8. SSU went on to become the Mid-South Conference Tournament Champions in this, their first season in the conference. Conference championship gave them an automatic bid to the NAIA National Tournament. Unfortunately they were eliminated in the opening round. They ended their season with a 36-26 record. Go Bears!

Celebrate the Past. Educate the Future.

SSU is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, and you are invited to join us for a look at the accomplishments of the past, spotlight the unique role that higher education plays in our society, and look forward to the future.

Many people in our state and our region made an investment in higher education 25 years ago by supporting the creation of Shawnee State University. We thank you and we hope you share in our pride as we continue to grow.

A special web site was created to track the year-long celebration. This site is a place where we plan to share 25th anniversary news and updates with you. Please visit often and share your stories and memories with us: <http://www.shawnee.edu/25/index.html>

Take a look at the historical timeline (with some photos), send SSU a birthday greeting or review the calendar of events.



Gary Gemmer and John Lorentz Awarded Professor Emeritus Status

At the January 2011 meeting of the SSU Board of Trustees, retired professors Gary Gemmer and Dr. John Lorentz were awarded Professor Emeritus status.

It was noted that Gary served the University for 27 years, had been president of SEA and was founder of the Celebration of Scholarship Conference.

John taught 16 years and served as Director for the Center of International Programs and Activities and was instrumental in building the program and recruiting international students. He was awarded the Board of Trustees' Distinguished Teaching award in 2002.

Welcome new retirees for 2011:
Meredith Glaze (custodial)
Teresa Redoutey (Success Center)
Dennis Litz (custodial)
Loretta Jenkins (faculty)

Retiring June 2011:
Denise Brockett (Success Center)



7th Annual
**Celebration
of Scholarship**
Undergraduate Conference

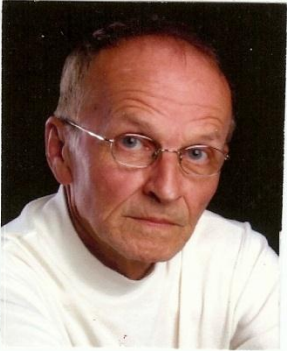
The Celebration of Scholarship was a vision of retired physics professor, Gary Gemmer (retired 2005). In the spring of 2004, Professor Gemmer gathered a group of faculty together to propose an undergraduate conference for 2005. Under his leadership as Conference Director, a Coordinating Committee organized a day-long event held on May 26, 2005. The day was called "A Celebration of Scholarship," a name that has stayed with the event for the last six years. The day included reports on the scholarly, creative, and research activities of undergraduates presented both orally and as poster sessions. This conference has fostered an academic culture of discovery and inquiry on campus. The presenters have the rewarding and valuable experience of presenting their scholarship or creative endeavors to student peers and faculty.

In honor of Professor Gemmer's service to the University through the Celebration of Scholarship conference, this year SSURA provided \$100 to create The Gary Gemmer Outstanding Poster Presentation Award. Dr. James Flavin (retired 2006) represented the retiree association by serving as judge for the poster session prize. After a grueling judging period that extended beyond the end of the conference, finally the winners were announced. They included mother & daughter Haley & Lori Castle, Keri Kuhn, and Helen Scherer. Because it was a group presentation each won \$25.

Ramblin' Retirees

Each newsletter we'll take a look at how some of our retirees are enjoying life after work at SSU. In this edition we hear from Dr. Robert Wilson, Professor Emeritus.

GREETINGS FROM ARKANSAS



Soon after I decided to retire, I became fearful that I would not know what to do with my time. As it turned out, I have never wanted for something to do. As I look back, I think the secret was having enough interests to keep myself occupied.

Poetry has been such an integral part of my life over the years, I did not want to give it up. Besides playing an active role in the Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas and the River Market Poets of Little Rock, I manage to

continue writing and winning a few contests along the way. Most recently, I was awarded the Honor Scroll Award from the Senior Poets' Laureate out of California. And this past summer, I was invited to do a dramatic rendition of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" at the National Poetry Convention held in Memphis.

This past summer, I was invited to participate in the inaugural event of the new Baxter County Library in Mountain Home. I agreed to attend and had the privilege of reading some of my own work and serving on a panel of judges for the oral poetry competition. Their new facility was beautiful, and the magic of the poetry bash is something I will long treasure.

More recently, in the 2010 Poetry Day competition, my poem "Trailing the Blood to Redfield" placed third in the state in the Sybil Nash Abrams contest, the most prestigious poetry award in the State of Arkansas.

The summer before the Clinton Library opened, I received a letter from a complete stranger, asking if I would consider being a volunteer there. My initial reaction was: That's all I need, to take on one more thing. In time, I agreed to go through three months of training to prepare me for the assignment. I have always overseen the Orientation Theatre there and have met some of the world's nicest human beings. And, yes, I have met President Clinton there on several occasions. On the day the Library was dedicated, I was assigned to meet dignitaries arriving on commercial flights. That morning, I met Lynda Bird and Lucie Baines Johnson, James Carville, and Hank Aaron along with several ambassadors from other countries.

Playing the piano at the Mayflower United Methodist Church these past 2+ years has been a great joy. The regular pianist resigned her position shortly after my arrival, and I was asked to take over her duties.

As some of you know, I was diagnosed with incurable lymphoma during the first week of January, 2006. The diagnosis was followed by six months of chemotherapy. Nasty stuff, I might add. That cancer was followed by actinic keratosis, then squamous cell carcinoma. Then, of all things, prostate cancer came calling in 2009, and I spent three months taking radiation therapy. Currently, all of these are in remission, and I hope they will stay that way. I want to take some more motor coach tours.

Arkansas has been good to me. I am a heat freak and enjoy the summers here. My apartment overlooks Lake Willastein, and I can enjoy all kinds of waterfowl year-round.

NO ONE TO BARK MY NAME TONIGHT

He must wonder where I am tonight
in his new digs...and with his new master.
I am lost without him.

Today, I gave him extra time
and hugs to remember me by.
He begged for me to hold him,
which I did, and carried home
the fur he shed for me.

I hope in his new setting
he will make quick friends
with other dogs and learn
to run and play some canine games.

Above all else, I want him
to be accepted by the Malamute.
I want the two to share dog tales at dusk.

If ever he wants to come home,
I want him to howl my name
against a lonely moon
and I will come.

--
Harding Stedler

Legislative Updates

OPERS: The Ohio Retirement Study Council plans to conduct an independent, actuarial review of the effects of pension reform proposals by the state's five state public pension systems. The review is expected to delay pension reform for several months. This review is independent of the actuary already on retainer by the ORSC. The council's chairman, Sen. Keith Faber (R-Celina), indicated last week in media reports that the review was necessary so that the council would have "solid, reliable actuarial advice" preceding the passage of pending pension reform bills in the Ohio House and Ohio Senate. The council advises members of the Ohio General Assembly on benefits, funding, investment, and administration of the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System and the state's four other public pension systems.

The OPERS Board of Trustees approved making significant changes to our benefits structure in November 2009. The reform measures are intended to strengthen the pension system and maintain adequate funding for retiree health care. Meanwhile, the senator also indicated that it was likely the Ohio Senate will re-insert language in the state's biennial budget bill to require public workers to pay an additional 2 percent of their wages toward their pensions. That change could take effect immediately after the budget bill is signed by Gov. John Kasich, which is expected to take place at the end of June. The Ohio House removed the contribution language from its version of the budget bill, which has been under review by the Senate since late April.

As OPERS Interim Executive Director Karen Carraher stated in [testimony to the Ohio House Finance Committee](#), requiring employees to pay 2 percentage points more, and employers to pay 2 percentage points less, toward public pensions would increase our unfunded liabilities beyond limits required by state law. Public pension systems are limited by law in the way they can use the funds they collect from public workers and their employers.

As STRS Ohio has noted in many of its communications to members, the pensions Ohio's public educators earn:

- Provide retired teachers a reasonable and reliable pension they won't outlive.
- Save taxpayers billions of additional dollars in potential public assistance expenditures now spent to help individuals whose savings accounts, such as 401(k) plans, do not provide enough to keep them out of poverty in retirement.
- Provide a stable source of revenue, including tax revenue, for Ohio's local economies.
- Are both efficient and economical, as a defined benefit pension can deliver the same retirement income at almost half the cost of a defined contribution savings accounts due to pooling of investment risk, continual diversification of assets and professional investment management.
- Help Ohio's schools, colleges and universities recruit and retain quality educators.

With legislators spending more time in their home districts during the summer, STRS Ohio members have an opportunity to talk face-to-face with their representatives and senators about the importance of preserving pensions. Phone calls, letters and e-mails are also effective. Although there is a lag in the pension discussion at the Statehouse, it is still important to stress the importance of changes being approved in a timely manner that preserve pensions for all STRS Ohio members.

When Gov. John Kasich presented his proposed state budget in March, it included a shift in employer/employee contributions for the five statewide pension systems. Employers would pay 2% less based on payroll and employees would pay 2% more. Requiring employers to pay less was being recommended as a way to help offset the proposed cutbacks in state funding to state and local governments.

For STRS Ohio, this could mean an increase in member contributions to 12% from the current 10%, and a decrease in employer contributions to 12% from 14%. However, STRS Ohio is already proposing a 3% increase in member contributions and no change in the 14% employer contribution in its January 2011 plan as a way to help the pension fund meet the 30-year funding requirement.

A 12%-12% contribution arrangement, without additional contributions, puts the pension fund at a 45.6-year funding period, assuming the other changes the board has proposed are made. Implementing the board's plan without any changes in contributions puts the fund at a similar funding period. To achieve a 30-year funding period, the board's plan needs 3% additional member contributions plus the 14% from employers. The 12%-12% proposal plus an additional 3% from members — a 50% increase — results in a funding period of 30.5 years. In short, a reduction in employer contributions means employees would pay even more or benefit cuts would have to be more significant to achieve a 30-year funding period.

STRS Ohio Executive Director Michael Nehf and other system associates, as well as many STRS Ohio members, voiced their concerns with legislators about this budget bill language. In subsequent action, the contribution change was removed from Substitute House Bill 153 before it was sent to the Senate Finance Committee for hearings in that chamber.

However, Sen. Keith Faber, who is a member of the Finance Committee, has been quoted by the media as saying the Senate will be giving strong consideration to restoring the contribution shift in the budget bill. Executive Director Michael Nehf reiterated STRS Ohio's position during the May 12 committee meeting, advocating that any discussion of contributions should be held within the context of the pension reform package proposed by the five Ohio statewide public pension systems. This would help allow any proposed changes to STRS Ohio's plan to be discussed and their actuarial impact analyzed in conjunction with the other plan components. STRS Ohio members who have an opinion on this topic should contact the members of the Senate Finance Committee. Contact information can be found on the STRS Ohio Web site at: https://www.strsoh.org/legislation/Finance_contacts.html.