



POLISHING OUR HISTORY

ARTA

2023-2024
ARTA Annual Report

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ARTA TURNS 85

ARTA turned 85 in 2023-24. We acknowledged this milestone all year long, beginning with the announcement of the ARTA president's theme for the year—ARTA Shines. We spent the year focused on each of ARTA's many facets—our advocacy for a safe, stable secure retirement; our continuing support for public education and active public-education personnel; our commitment to the interests of public-education retirees and other older citizens; and most importantly our members. We celebrated by premiering a commemorative video that tells the ARTA story.

View the ARTA Commemorative video at www.artanow.com/video

THEN

The Arkansas Teacher Retirement System was established in 1937, following the passage of the Social Security Act in 1935.

Teachers in Arkansas had been advocating for such a plan for years, but were unsuccessful because the needs of schools took priority.

Following the establishment of ATRS, advocates began educating fellow teachers and encouraging them to join the system.

They also began advocating with elected officials to ensure the long-term viability of the system.

NOW



ARTA members from Johnson County met with local district personnel at a back-to-school staff development meeting, where they shared information about the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System, ARTA, and their local unit.

ARTA members from Little River County hosted a retirement reception for local district personnel. The celebration was preceded by a seminar, where members shared information about ATRS, ARTA and their local unit.



THEN

As ARTA membership grew, education retirees began gathering in their own communities. They enjoyed fellowship with each other while sharing information of interest. Topics included the pension system, maximizing benefits, health insurance, and resources for older citizens.

Now

Fifty six local units around the state offer fellowship, programs, and service opportunities for members in their own communities. ARTA supports these units with speakers, materials and recognition.

In 2024, ARTA members in Perry County began meeting together for the first time. Their informal bi-monthly meetings provide an important connection for members who did not previously have a local group nearby.



ARTA MEMBERS SHINE

Local units are encouraged to report their activity for the year to the ARTA state office. This information is compiled to show the impact that ARTA members have on their communities. From those units that submitted a report:

\$61,191

The dollar value of cash and in-kind donations to support local schools, projects and community organizations.



\$5,504,333

The dollar value of volunteer hours reported by local units. *

- Adopt-a-Family/Angel Tree
- Backpack Programs
- Blankets/Quilts
- Book/Dictionary Donations
- Coats/Clothing
- Community Heroes
- Community Organizations
- Food & Personal Products
- Holiday Meals
- Hospitals/Health
- Libraries/Museums
- Music Programs
- Nursing Homes/Shut-Ins
- Shelters
- Scholarships
- School Supplies
- Spelling Bee
- Summer Cereal Drives
- Teacher Appreciation
- Tutoring/Reading
- Veterans' Programs

* (155,003 community volunteer hours + 9354.5 youth volunteer hours) x \$33.49 (the 2024 value of volunteer time) = \$5,504,333

THEN

ARTA began as an exploratory committee of the Arkansas Education Association.

ARTA served for a time as a state affiliate of AARP, which was modeled after the National Retired Teachers Association

ARTA has always maintained cooperative relationships with other organizations based on mutual goals and interests.

NOW

In 2023-24, ARTA members actively lobbied against legislation believed to be harmful to public schools, public school personnel, and the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System. Following the legislative session, ARTA joined a grassroots coalition to address Arkansas education through the ballot amendment process. This effort was unsuccessful, but will remain a priority in 2024-25.

In 2023-24, the ARTA Grants Program funded 10 grants for practicing educators to continue their education. Nine recipients were certified teachers who will use the funds for advanced degrees or certifications. One was a paraprofessional who is working to become a licensed teacher.

View the grant recipients in the Fall 2024 issue of the INTERLINK.

ARTA LIGHTS THE WAY

THEN

ARTA was started by a small group of people who advocated for a retirement system that would reward educators for a lifetime of service.

They lobbied for the Revenue Stabilization Act, the Cost of Living Adjustment, and for a retiree to be a member of the ATRS Board of Trustees.

They communicated via mail and telephone. Membership was \$1.

By 1968, they claimed members from every county in the state.

NOW

- ARTA has more than 11, 650 members. More than 15% of them live outside of Arkansas.
- Five members joined online using the new credit card option.
- Membership dues support the ARTA office, where three part-time staff carry out the administrative functions of the organization as well as the directives of the ARTA board (which includes four members of the ATRS Board of Trustees).
- Additional contributions help support the ARTA Grants Program.
- ARTA communicates with members via newsletter, email, and social media. We communicate with them in person on trips, at local and area meetings, at the Capitol, and at the Annual ARTA State Convention.
- ARTA works regularly with the Arkansas Education Association, the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System, the National Retired Teachers Association, elected officials and other organizations to accomplish the purposes of the association.

As ARTA turns 86, we will build on our history to continue our mission—working together to make public education a priority in Arkansas; supporting active public school personnel; and connecting members by providing both an effective voice and a beneficial forum for public education retirees.