

After School...

The Newsletter of Minneapolis Retired Teachers Inc.

Website
www.mrti.org

Board of Directors

President

Janet Kujat - 612-269-5784
heartladyk@yahoo.com

President - Elect

Lorraine Spies - 612-345-4997
lcspies323@yahoo.com

Recording Secretary

Christine Poppe - 612-588-8722
chpop001@gmail.com

Corresponding Secretary

Roma Lee Rasmussen - 612-861-6654
rl.rasmussen@comcast.net

Asst. Recording Secretary

Deborah Smith - 612-721-1109
debcottonsmith@gmail.com

Asst. Corresponding Secretary

Diane Penn - 651-32-4675
penndiane@hotmail.com

Treasurer - Jennifer Schneider

651-247-1173
jennlynnsch@gmail.com

Asst. Treasurer / Scholarship Chair

Sylvia Farrells - 952-888-8771
angelseyf@gmail.com

Legislative Chair -

Ed Andersen 763-577-9699
ea5377@gmail.com

Membership Chair -

Denny Lander 612-718-2564
dlander222@gmail.com

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Lunch with Humphrey



Susan Smith, Director of Helping Paws with her Assistance dog, Humphrey

Luncheons are learning times at MRTI! The guest speaker(s) at our December luncheon were Susan Smith and her Golden Retriever, Humphrey, showing and telling us about Helping Paws.

A nationally-recognized local non-profit organization, Helping Paws breeds, trains and places assistance dogs in the homes of individuals with

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Spotlight On Our New President

Janet Kujat



After earning a double major in Elementary Education and Scandinavian Area Studies (Norwegian) at Augsburg University (and a license to teach Norwegian K-6!), Janet earned a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education from the University of Minnesota. In 2000, she was Nationally Board Certified as an Early Childhood Generalist. Needless to say, Janet loved working with young children. She was a Kindergarten teacher in the Minneapolis Public Schools for 41 years.

Another of Janet's passions was working with student teachers.

During her career, she hosted 40 student teachers - striving to provide a safe learning environment for teacher candidates to hone their skills. Janet even attended the high school graduation party of a student whose father she had taught in kindergarten early on in her career! What fun!

For most of her career, Janet was actively involved with the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers, Education Minnesota and the

American Federation of Teachers. She served as an officer at her Local for 30 years as well as a Governing Board member for Education Minnesota. A National Trainer for the AFT for 23 years, she taught Effective Classroom Management to teachers all over the United States. In 2017, Janet was sent to Israel to teach kindergarten teachers in Ramallah for a week. That was an experience of a lifetime!

In retirement, Janet is an officer of Local 59's Retired Teacher Chapter, serves on the Education Minnesota Retired Governing Board and now she's the incoming President of MRTI!

Janet's Ramallah teachers

In her free time, Janet likes to knit, read, go to movies, walk and travel. A widow for nearly 3 years, her fur baby, Laila, greets her at the door when she gets home at night!

Welcome this busy and interesting lady to the Presidency of MRTI!



Mark your Calendars for our End-of-the-Year Field Trip

When: Tuesday, June 16th 12:15pm

Where: Plymouth Congregational Church, 1900 Nicolette Avenue, Minneapolis

What: A play, "Nobody's Perfect", buffet lunch starts at 12:15

Cost: \$50 per person; Reservations will be taken at April & May MRTI meetings or send a check made out to MRTI to Denny Lander 7500 York Avenue So, Apt 349, Edina, MN 55435

Bill of Fare

Jan 20- Meatloaf w/mashed potatoes and gravy, corn and assorted cheese-cakes for dessert

Feb. 17- Chili w/ Fritos scoops, coleslaw & marble cake for dessert

Mar. 17 - Corned beef & cabbage w/ boiled potatoes, carrots and apple pie

Apr.21 - Tacos w/ black beans, Spanish rice and all the “fixins,” fresh fruit bowl and assorted cookies

May 19 - Sloppy Joes w/potato salad and cherry pie

The dining room opens at 11:30

A vegetarian option is available; include the request when making your reservation. No other options are possible.

The lunch price is \$25.00 which includes the lunch, tax, tip and the entertainment. We happily accept cash or checks.

Phone callers record both names and phone numbers for reservations, which will be checked off at the ticket table. Should you need to cancel your reservation, call **Gayle Marko** by the Sunday prior to the meeting or be billed for your non-attendance.

If you have **NOT** been called by **Monday, a week before the luncheon**, and you wish to attend, please **call Gayle Marko** to make a reservation.

If you make your reservations by **email** with Jan Wahl, **please do not make one with a caller.**

Any questions or concerns, please call Gayle at 612-205-4130.

This month's MRTI Luncheon email reservations will come to you from the following address:

Janwahl@comcast.net

If you requested an email contact for lunch but did not receive one, please do the following **BEFORE January 11:**

1. Check your spam folder
2. Send an email to the above address
3. Call Gayle Marco at 612-205-4130 to reserve a spot at the upcoming luncheon.

It's Never Too Late...



Betty Reid Soskin - the oldest-ever Park Ranger

When she died at age 104 on December 22, 2025, Betty Reid Soskin had led a remarkable, “multi-faceted” life.

Growing up in Oakland, California, she worked as a file clerk during WWII - in a segregated union hall.

She and her husband founded one of the first Black-owned music stores in California, Reid's Records.

Serving as a field representative for a California state Assembly member, she participated in planning meetings for the Rosie the Riveter/WWII Home Front National Historical Park in Richmond, as result of which she was persuaded to become a park ranger. Ranger Betty served full time until her 100th birthday. When she retired, Soskin said, “...Giving shape to a new national park has been exciting and fulfilling. It has proven to bring meaning to my final years.”

Winter - Spring Program Schedule



MRTI's 100th Anniversary



January 20, 2026

"School-House

Memories"

presented by Doug Ohman



February 17, 2026

"The Lincoln Assass-
ination: A Fragile
Time"

presented by David Jones



March 17, 2026

"Ready, Set, Read"

Magic & Comedy

presented by The Amazing
Mr. Norm



April 21, 2026

"Bango! Bingo! Bango!"

Play free games and win
cash prizes



May 19, 2026
Roosevelt High School
Choir



June 16, 2026
Field Trip Lunch & play

It's Never Too Late....

One month before her
95th birthday, Dame
Patricia Routledge
wrote this:



"I'll be turning 95 this
coming Monday. In my
younger years, I was often filled with worry — worry
that I wasn't quite good enough, that no one would cast
me again, that I wouldn't live up to my mother's hopes.
But these days begin in peace, and end in gratitude."
My life didn't quite take shape until my forties. I had
worked steadily — on provincial stages, in radio plays, in
West End productions — but I often felt adrift, as though
I was searching for a home within myself that I hadn't
quite found.

At 50, I accepted a television role that many would later
associate me with — Hyacinth Bucket, of *Keeping Up
Appearances*. I thought it would be a small part in a little
series. I never imagined that it would take me into
people's living rooms and hearts around the world. And
truthfully, that role taught me to accept my own quirks. It
healed something in me.

At 60, I began learning Italian — not for work, but so I
could sing opera in its native language. I also learned
how to live alone without feeling lonely. I read poetry
aloud each evening, not to perfect my diction, but to quiet
my soul.

At 70, I returned to the Shakespearean stage —
something I once believed I had aged out of. But this
time, I had nothing to prove. I stood on those boards with
stillness, and audiences felt that. I was no longer
performing. I was simply being.

At 80, I took up watercolor painting. I painted flowers
from my garden, old hats from my youth, and faces I
remembered from the London Underground. Each
painting was a quiet memory made visible.

Now, at 95, I write letters by hand. I'm learning to bake
rye bread. I still breathe deeply every morning. I still
adore laughter — though I no longer try to make anyone
laugh. I love the quiet more than ever.

I'm writing this to tell you something simple:

Growing older is not the closing act. It can be the most
exquisite chapter — if you let yourself bloom again.

Let these years ahead be your "treasure
years" You don't need to be famous. You don't
need to be flawless. You only need to show up
— fully — for the life that is still yours.

With love and gentleness,

— Patricia Routledge



physical disabilities, with veterans and first-responders suffering from service-related PTSD and facility dogs to assist people in courthouse, education and mental health settings.

Founded in 1988, Helping Paws staff stays abreast of industry trends, unique opportunities, and community developments to ensure they best meet the needs of the people they serve and the dogs they respect and love.

Begun in 1985 as a pilot project of the University of Minnesota's Center for the Study of Human-Animal Relationships and Environment (CENSHARE). Helping Paws became an independent nonprofit in 1988. Early experiences showed that for successful service dog training, they needed to start with puppies to begin shaping behaviors early in each dog's life.



The first dog to complete such training and be placed was Alpha, a Golden Retriever who went on to serve his partner for many years.

Humphrey at work

Helping Paws relies on the dedication and compassion of volunteers to fulfill their mission—and serve as ambassadors for their work in the community. Each year, more than 400 volunteers give their time and talents to support dogs and the people they'll go on to serve.

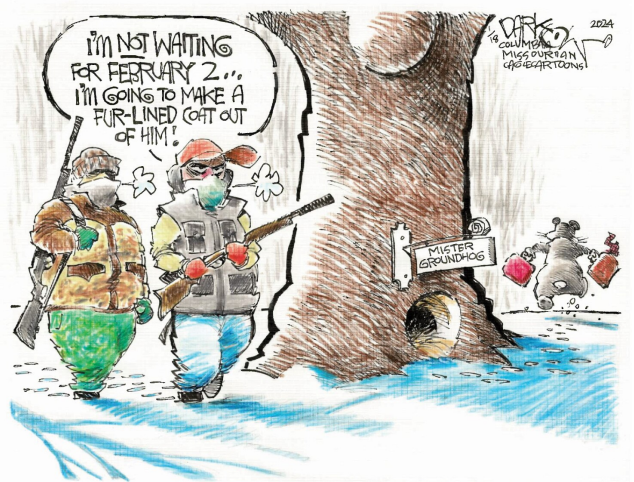
picking up gloves, keys and other objects (metal objects are especially hard for dogs to pick up) and sensing when Susan needs support.

When Susan takes Humphrey's insignia off, he gets to enjoy dog - time: wandering around the room, being petted by all the MRTI members, playing with his toys and enjoying all the treats that come his way. But insignia on, it's back to business - a business that both Susan and Humphrey love - a love and freedom made possible by Helping Paws.



Barb showers attention on Humphrey
Susan throughout the day: opening doors, finding and

That's where Susan and Humphrey come in. A person's disability is not always obvious to an observer. You wouldn't think that Susan has a disability, but she spent 25 years in a wheelchair until a group of innovative doctors got her standing and walking. Humphrey is Susan's third assistance dog and he demonstrated some of the many tasks he does to help



How MRTI Got Started

On January 12, 1926, twenty-six Minneapolis teachers (all women) got together for the first meeting of MRTI. After three planning meetings during the previous Fall, the women wrote a set of bylaws for the new organization they were forming. The following is the section dealing with the Committees.

Article IV - Committees

Section I. There shall be five standing committees as follows: Press, Social, Shut-in, Occupations, New Members, and any others found necessary.

Section II. The Press Committee shall consist of two members, whose duty shall be to attend to any necessary newspaper publicity.

Section III. The Social Committee shall consist of three to five members, whose duty shall be to arrange for special programs and entertainment.

Section IV. The Shut-in Committee shall consist of at least five members, whose duty shall be to visit those who, on account of illness, are unable to attend the meetings.

Section V. The Occupational Committee shall consist of two members whose duty shall be to look into ways and means of aiding members of the Association desiring employment.

Section VI. The Committee on New Members shall consist of three members, whose duty shall be to be on the look-out for teachers eligible as members of the Association.

Look How We've Grown!

MRTI has over 700 members who live all over the United States.

Our Board has 19 members.

We have 10 standing committees: Scholarships, Grants, Membership, Legislative & Pensions, Luncheons, Budget, Contributions, Newsletter, Nominations, Programs.

MRTI makes annual donations to 8 different local organizations which support Minneapolis students.

Between 60 - 100 members attend our monthly luncheons

MRTI has 225 members who have attained Honorary status - after age 85, they are no longer required to pay yearly dues.

Welcome back, Dave Rolek



Long-time Board member, Dave Rolek, was able to join us for the December luncheon after suffering a serious fall. Dave will be moving to Palm Springs next month, but he will still be part of the lunch-calling team.

Good to have you back, Dave!

Time to Celebrate!

MRTI is 100 years old!

Join us for our January meeting - cake, photos, memorabilia and memories to share!



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Program Chair

Deb Smith - 612-721-1109

debcottsmith@gmail.com

Email Lunch Coordinator

Jan Wahl

612-718-7218

janwahl@comcast.net

Investments Chair & Grants

Committee Chair

Larry Risser - 952-567-3298

lerisser10@gmail.com

Past President -

Becky Grover 61-498-2284

rlgrover14@gmail.com

Lunch Coordinator- Gayle Marko

612-205-4130

Newsletter - Chris Poppe

612-588-8722

chpop001@gmail.com

Directors at Large:

Bruce Hansen

218-728-1308

bruce.hansen060@gmail.com

Barbara Kuenne

763-542-9890

BGKWOW1@gmail.com

Joanne Lambrecht -

952-212-2255

joanne.lambrecht@yahoo.com

Mitchell Trockman -

763-545-7500

mitch.trockman@comcast.net

Interested in political activity?

Retired Teachers Council 59

(RTC 59) 10 AM through lunch

Jan. 27 & Feb 24 (Zoom)

"Gathering, Learning and Action"

Mar 22, April 26, May 24

meetings will be in- person at the

Local 59 office 67-8th Avenue NE.

Watch for notices in your email

Did You Know...

MRTI contributes to many programs that support Minneapolis children? Your dues support annual contributions to:

- The Assistance League
- Mary's Place
- Boys and Girls Clubs of Minneapolis
- Jeremiah Program
- Harriet Tubman Center
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Twin Cities
- People Serving People
- Minneapolis Recreation Development



I'll phone the office and tell them you'll be late.

Visit the MRTI Website

One of the services for MRTI members is our website:

www.mrti.org

Check it out for information on our luncheon programs, the grant and scholarship programs, Committee of 13 updates, lists of Board Members, Limited Medical Assistance Fund, lists of deceased members and more.

Use this resource...it's for you!

Funds are available for medical reimbursement.

Give TRA a call to request an application

651-296-2409



Limited Medical Assistance Fund (LMAF) administered by the Teachers Retirement Association

Overview	Medical Expenses	Health Insurance Premium Expenses
<p>The Limited Medical Assistance Fund (LMAF) was established in the 1930s through a bequest of a retired Minneapolis teacher.</p> <p>A trust was established to reimburse certain medical costs of retired Minneapolis teachers, and is administered by the Teachers Retirement Association.</p> <p>To qualify for reimbursement, a retiree must have been a Minneapolis Special School District #1 teacher</p> <p>Reimbursements</p> <p>Eligible retirees may request reimbursement for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allowable medical expenses• Health insurance premiums (when funds permit)	<p>Allowable medical expenses, if these expenses are not covered by Medicare or any other form of insurance, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• inpatient or outpatient procedures performed at hospitals, clinics or surgery centers;• licensed nursing care or prosthetic devices. <p>Expenses that are not eligible include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• dental care, nursing home care, medication, therapy, glasses, outpatient services, non-medical items. <p>Reimbursements are reviewed and disbursements made twice a year.</p> <p>How To Apply:</p> <p>Call TRA to request information. If expenses are determined to be eligible, an application will be mailed to you.</p> <p>Complete and return the application to TRA, along with expense receipts.</p>	<p>(when funds permit)</p> <p>To be eligible for health insurance premium reimbursement, a retiree must meet all of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• be age 65 or older;• have retired after May 1, 1974, but before July 1, 1999; and• not be eligible for free Medicare Part A coverage. <p>Reimbursements are reviewed and disbursements made twice a year.</p> <p>Contact us at:</p> <p>Teachers Retirement Association 60 Empire Drive, Suite 400 St. Paul, MN 55103-4000</p> <p>651.296.2409 or 800.657.3669 651.297.5999 (FAX)</p>

MRTI Newsletter January, 2026
Chris Poppe, editor

Articles, opinion essays and
comments are welcome and
should be directed to:

Chris Poppe

3851 Queen Ave. N
Minneapolis, MN 55412
chpop001@gmail.com

Our meeting location

Eagles Club #34 American Legion
(On the corner of E. 25th St. & 25th Ave. S)
2507 E. 25th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55406



Plenty of Free parking

Minneapolis Retired Teachers, Inc.
P.O. Box 24034
Minneapolis, MN 55424-0034