



JUNE 2025

IOWA RETIRED SCHOOL PERSONNEL ASSOCIATION

From the President Beth Hieronymus

Wow, this spring has been busy! IRSPA board members traversed the state in May and learned so much from all of you. Our breakout sessions confirmed the issues we discussed at our April board meeting: how to build awareness of our association, the need to develop new ways to reach potential members, and how to increase member engagement. Every organization is facing the same challenges, so we are not unique. There is no easy fix, but know the IRSPA Executive Board is working on ways to support our units. Membership and engagement are everyone's responsibility; and I know by working together and deliberately sharing the value of belonging to IRSPA, things will improve.



President:
Beth Hieronymus
3322 Muscatine Ave.
Iowa City, IA 52240
(319) 360-4634
bhieronymus62@gmail.com

I want to give a huge shout out to the units that hosted our District meetings! Each unit provided exceptional programs and hospitality to everyone who attended. Kudos also go out to Lorraine Bowans, a volunteer from AARP, who providing extensive information to all six districts about how to our prepare homes for "Living in Place." It was an incredible two weeks that left me feeling truly blessed to lead this organization!

IRSPA is still looking for people to step up for leadership positions. Trust me when I say I never saw myself becoming President of ANYTHING, much less a state organization. But when people said to me, "I see ____ in you. Have you considered running for ____?" I brushed it off. After the third person made similar

comments, I started to pay attention. We are currently looking for people to serve as Chairs for our Membership and Health and Welfare Committees. Whether you know someone who would be a strong leader or have been told something similar, consider stepping up and contacting me ASAP. We'd love to add you to our Leadership Team.

Among the values your membership provides is Access. Access to life-long learning through our webinars. The options for this summer are included later in this newsletter and at IRSPA.org under the Events tab. I encourage you to register in advance, so you receive any materials presented. You can also watch previous webinars at your leisure. We also have access to benefits such as discounts and insurance. I encourage you to take advantage of the available options that meet your needs. For \$15, you won't find more affordable choices. I also want to thank those of you who reached out to me regarding the changes in dental and vision insurance. The % increase in reimbursement, the increased cap for dental coverage, and the additional plan options for both insurance plans made the move to Ameritas advantageous.

Finally, our Annual State Meeting is on October 1 and 2 in Mt. Pleasant. The agenda will include information to support local units and address the concerns you've shared. Plans are also underway during the social on October 1st for a human slot machine. If that doesn't pique your curiosity, I don't know what will! October feels like it's so far away, but time flies when you're having fun. Mark your calendars and grab some friends; I hope to see you in Mt. Pleasant! Until then, enjoy your summer.

Beth

Website: www.irspa.org



CRAWFORD COUNTY IRSPA

Our Crawford county ITTSPA members met on Friday, February 28 at Bella Sera in Denison. There were 13 members present as well as six guests. Judy Evers, our president opened the meeting with the pledge of allegiance and prayer.

Mary Koenig introduced her nephew-in-law, Andrew Loudon, an attorney from Lincoln, Nebraska. Mr. Loudon gave a very informative presentation on "The Top Ten Mistakes Made In Estate planning."



He is a gifted speaker and had many examples for us when we are involved in an estate planning. There were many things he made us aware of, from a legal standpoint, that we didn't know. There were many questions, and Mr. Loudon provided the answers. We were grateful that he agreed to visit with our members.

On Tuesday, May 20, 2025, the IRSPA District 1 meeting was well-attended with 70 members present. A warm thank-you goes to the Sioux City Area Retired Educators for providing morning refreshments.

The featured speaker was Maria Schultz, a retired court reporter, who shared insights from her career. She expressed special gratitude to her high school shorthand teacher, Ladonna Preston, who was present at the meeting, for equipping her with the foundational skills that contributed to her success.

A delicious meal was provided by the Redeemer Lutheran Church Mission Group. Proceeds from the meal will support educational and religious initiatives in various communities.

Judy



DEARSPA IRSPA

DEARSPA members are continuing their tours in and around Dickenson and Emmet counties. It is amazing the interesting places there are for little day tours. We recently toured the Indian Motorcycle plant in Spirit Lake. It was a very interesting tour. One fact that stood out was the way they treat their employees. If you are a veteran, fire fighter or EMS volunteer, you will get full pay if you are called to serve in an



emergency and miss work because of it! People love their Indian Motorcycles and will drive from all corners of the US to tour the plant they were made in.

We have several more trips planned for this year including the Higgins Money Museum, Oakwood Inn Gardens, the highest point in Iowa and a mini grotto.

Yes, we will find time to make plans for the District 1 meeting on May 5, 2026. We are looking forward to hosting you all.

Jean M. Hoffman



District 1

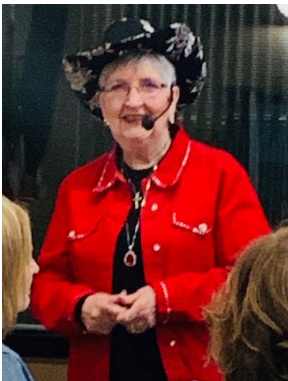
SIoux CITY AREA IRSPA

April 15 was our meeting in Sioux City for the Sioux City Area Retired Educators. We encompass surrounding towns from the tri-state area—South Sioux City, Nebraska, Dakota Dunes, SD, and Iowa towns like Hinton, Merrill, LeMars, Lawton, Merville, Salix, Sloan, Sgt. Bluff, along with Sioux City.

Our program was Elaine Peacock, a long-time area singer and entertainer. She had some members join her to entertain us.

Also joining us that day was Jeanne Handeland, current past president of IRSPA from the Estherville chapter —Deerspa (from Dickinson & Emmet counties). Jeanne is pictured with our local president Jenny Williams and IRSPA president elect Anne Cowley who is from our SCRE chapter.

Jenny Williams - President



District 2

HUMBOLDT IRSPA

Humboldt April and May, 2025

After a winter hiatus, the Humboldt IRSPA unit met on April 8th, 2025. President Anita Fagen-Miller opened the meeting with updates about the District 2 meeting our unit will host on May 21st. Anita had a lengthy "to do" list that she shared with the group. The May meeting will be devoted to assembling decorations and completing other necessary preparations. It has been seven years since we last hosted the district meeting, and our unit is excited to entertain our IRSPA guests.

Julie Larsen, the director of the Humboldt Public Library, shared information about the Seeds Program. In January of this year, the library had approximately 685 seed packets of 362 different vegetable and flower seeds. It has been a popular program; since January, 201 packets have been checked out. The seeds are acquired from seed companies and by library patrons. Julie noted that seed procurement increased in 2021 because of Covid. Gardening for many people is a rewarding hobby, and the library program is a wonderful way to support gardeners and encourage more people to explore its benefits.



Martha Schmidt, and all the April attendees, enjoyed Julie Larsen's information about Humboldt Library's Seed Program.

Toni Hood



Anita Fagen-Miller, Humboldt's unit president, created the "Cruising With IRSPA" theme and designed the decorations for the May 21st District Meeting.

District 2

WEBSTER COUNTY IRSPA

The Webster County Retired School Personnel met on March 3rd at Friendship Haven. Chaplain Denise Halvorson led us in prayer.

The Scholarship Committee announced they had reached their goal. The book committee could use books in the 11+ age group. We were reminded of the District meeting in Humboldt and to turn in volunteer hours. We welcomed a new member.

Our program was given by Deputy Tyler Holbrook and his canine dog, Stano. Stano was purchased from Poland for \$15,000. He is trained in drug detection, tracking, and search warrants among other things. Deputy Holbrook pre-hid some drug items around the room and then did a demonstration with Stano finding the hidden items. We took up a collection and donated \$403 towards a bullet proof vest for Stano.

We met on April 7th at the Corpus Christi Center.

Our program consisted of 4 high school students from the speech department. They all received "1" ratings at state. They did an outstanding job. Their areas were poetry, prose, acting and bystander effect. Everyone so enjoyed



Deputy Tyler Holbrook and his K-9 partner, Stano, from Webster County Sheriff Department. Shown here is IRSPA member, Judy Sheker, petting Stano.



Program Committee member Deb Carlson introduces the four All State Speech Contest winners.

their performances.

Nikki Adair from AMBA, was there to talk about benefits, etc.

We met on May 5th at First Covenant Church. Our scholarship chair announced the winners of the two scholarships given this year. Layla Jensen from Manson Northwest Webster was there and spoke about her future plans. Kaitlyn Folson from Fort Dodge Senior High was the other recipient.

Rose Buda Clauson and Judge Brown conducted the memorial service. We had four members pass away this year, they are Mary Martin, Larry Lee, Lynda Peterson and Ilah Sandgren.

Our next meeting will be August 25th at First Presbyterian Church.



President Janet Carlon is shown here with Layla Jensen, one of the scholarship recipients.

ATTENTION:

When submitting articles for the newsletter, please put your District name and number in the Subject line of the email.

EXAMPLE

To: tonihood@q.com (Toni Hood)

Cc:

Subject: District 6 - Clinton County

This will keep everything more organized and cut down on confusion or your email getting overlooked.

Thank you! DPI Printing Inc.

District 3

JACKSON COUNTY IRSPA

Our May 2 meeting was held at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Maquoketa. They served a delicious lunch and Nancy Johnson described and let us model many hats that belonged to her grandmother from several decades. It was a very fun meeting.

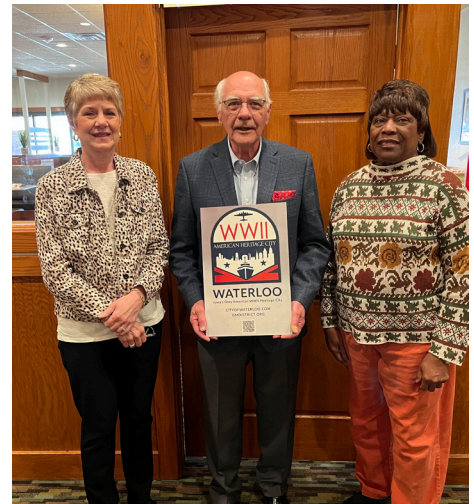
Margaret Baugh



District 3

BLACK HAWK COUNTY IRSPA

At the April 15, 2025 meeting of the Black Hawk County Retired School Personnel Association, we were so proud to learn more about Waterloo's designation as an American World War II Heritage City. We had former Waterloo Mayor Tim Hurley, who helped lead the movement for the designation, speak to our group. Waterloo is the only city in Iowa to earn this honor from the National Park Service. The American World War II Heritage Cities Program honors the contributions of local towns, cities and counties. It commemorates the stories of the men, women and children whose bravery and sacrifice helped shape the U.S. Homefront during World War II. Mayor Hurley helped complete Waterloo's 30-page application for this designation. He had many stories and examples of the contributions that Waterloo made to the war effort. For example, the John Deere Tractor Company supplied tank transmissions and airplane parts while the Rath Packing Company turned to feeding the troops. The citizens of Waterloo and Black Hawk County contributed in numerous other ways to support our troops. (Visit the city of Waterloo's website or the American World War II Heritage Cities Program website to learn more about this designation.)



Jane Brown, Tim Hurley, Shelia Bullock.

Submitted by Jane Brown

www.irspa.org

Check it out!

District 4

DALLAS COUNTY IRSPA

After our Snowbirds returned in March, the Dallas County Area Retired School Personnel Association hit the ground running with interesting programs for the remainder of the year:

- In March we welcomed Kristen Holthaus from 21st Century Rehab who educated us on pelvic floor health.
- April brought Mark Lane, superintendent of Woodward-Granger School district, who filled us in with what was happening in his district.
- Our May program always features students from one of the Perry High School art departments. This year we enjoyed Savannah Bruce and some of her students from the visual art department who wowed us with their many talented paintings.
- Elizabeth Marburger, wife of slain high school principal Dan Marburger, shared the Single Act of Heroism Award, given by the Congressional Medal of Honor Society posthumously to Dan in March in Washington, DC and recounted the ceremony.

In keeping with our tradition of giving throughout the year, we awarded \$20 in Perry Bucks to educators in the four buildings in Perry in recognition of National Education Week in May. During this past year we supported the local food pantry, Toys for Tots, Quilts of Valor, local Blessing Boxes, and the local schools with many items and donations totaling over \$2,800. Currently we are collecting volunteer hours from our members who also give generously of themselves. Last year we tallied 11,822 hours and are on track to match that number. New officers were installed at the May meeting who will take the reins for the coming year to continue that tradition, and help plan the District 4 Meeting to be held in Perry in May, 2026.



**Kristen Holthaus and
Kathy Miner-past VP**



**Sue Kimpston-President
with Mark Lane**



Our new officers: Sue Kimpston-President, Shirley Ehlers-Co-vice president, Lori Seeley-Co-vice president, Holly Daniels-Treasurer, Paula Allen-Secretary, with JoAnn Harmelink-past VP swearing them in.

District 4

COUNCIL BLUFFS IRSPA

The Council Bluffs Retired School Personnel met on March 26, 2025 at the Council Bluffs Country Club with 33 members and one guest in attendance.

Our program "Girl Power on Display" was presented by Dr. Vergarie Sanford and Geri Frederiksen from AAUW Loess Hills. AAUW Loess Hills invited thirteen area middle schools to submit a name of a girl who has displayed perseverance in overcoming obstacles. Examples have included poverty, immigration, language and hearing barriers, bullying, loss of parent, and physical or emotional handicaps. Geri shared the stories of two honorees who have overcome obstacles. Ten girls were honored at a ceremony at IWCC Loofthall on April 24th. Each girl received a certificate, goodie bag and \$50. CBRSP made a \$50 donation to this project.



CBRSP member Geri Frederiksen shares a story.

The Council Bluffs Retired Personnel met on April 16, 2025 at the Council Bluffs Country Club with 41 members in attendance. Our program for the day was our annual Scholarship Fundraiser. Once again members brought a variety of fun and unique items for the raffle.

Raffle items included eggs, baked goods, craft items, gardening items, a quilt, table runners, plants, gift cards, wreaths and a variety of Easter themed items. A good time was had by all. We raised \$802 dollars that day for



Members Sharon Spinharney, Teresa Valyer, Nancy Tangeman and Dee Engstrom look over the items they won.

out Scholarship Fund. Our Scholarship is awarded in May through Southwest Iowa Educational Foundation.

Julie Dillehay, Secretary

District 5

DES MOINES AREA IRSPA

DMARSPA members gathered at The Machine Shed Restaurant for their monthly meeting on March 27, 2025. Our speakers were Dr. Ryan Wise, Dean of Education at Drake University and Dr. Wanda Everage, Assistant Provost at Drake University. Dr. Everage told us about her life story as she became a teacher, mentor and Professor. Dr. Wise informed us of the effort that Drake University takes to ensure that teacher training stays relevant in today's rapidly changing world.



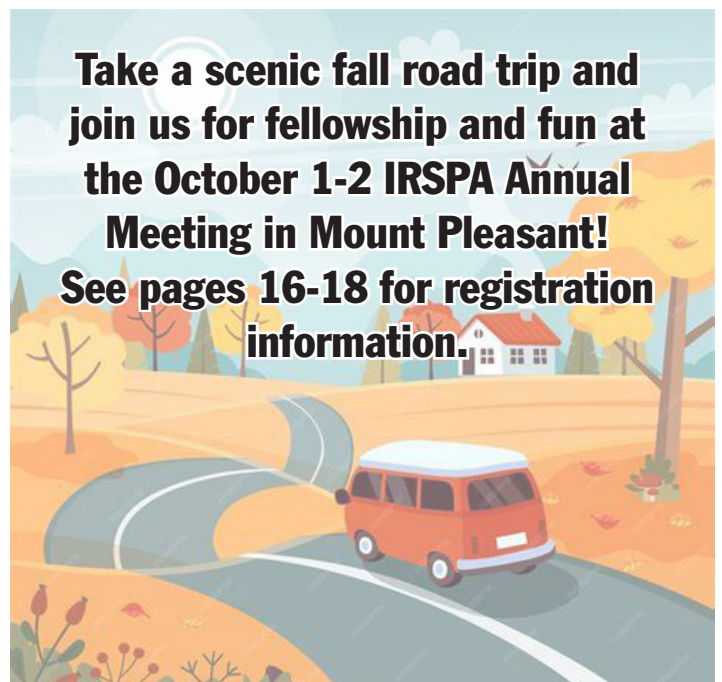
DMARSPA hosted the District 5 Annual Meeting on May 7, 2025. The meeting was held at the Crosscreek facility at Lutheran Church of the Cross in Altoona. Participants learned about organization leadership. Our AMBA representative gave an update on changes to the IRSPA insurance programs.



In April, DMARSPA met on the 24th. Our speakers were Bob and Joyce Berkenes who entertained us with the history of the sinking of the Titanic. They portrayed two passengers, one from steerage and one from first class. One interesting fact that many of us didn't know was that the Titanic left port with a fire burning in one of the coal bunkers. Firefighters had not been able to extinguish it but the engineers thought that it would burn itself out without significant damage to the ship. Unfortunately, the ship hit the iceberg exactly at the location of the burning coal bunker. The heat weakened rivets at this location let the iceberg do more damage than it would have at another location.



Take a scenic fall road trip and join us for fellowship and fun at the October 1-2 IRSPA Annual Meeting in Mount Pleasant! See pages 16-18 for registration information.





DAVIS COUNTY IRSPA

Our November meeting was held at the Davis County Historical Livery Barn. Members were entertained with tales of the Hairy Nation and a tour of the Livery Barn's historical contents.

Davis County High School Choir serenaded with Christmas carols at for our yearly Christmas holiday gathering. Our customary soup, salad and dessert luncheon included a white elephant Christmas gift exchange.

On March 4, 2025, Davis County Retired School Personnel met at the historic Iowa Theater in Bloomfield. DCRSP member and long time Iowa theater promotionalist, actress and Fine Arts supporter Gail Wortman honored the attendees with an informative overview of the Iowa Theater from its inauguration until the present day. Members also enjoyed a tour of the costume room and stage area. Lunch and our meeting followed at the Tequilla Grill.

Davis County Retired School Personnel gathered at the Dutchman's store in Cantril on April 1, 2025. Shopping, lunch and meeting wrapped up the journey.

Mimi's Cafe in Bloomfield provided a pleasant environment for Mays year end brunch. AMBA Representative Tonya DeJong presented an overview of available benefits for members. Plans for next year are underway and sure to be full of new and exciting adventures for Davis County Retired School Personnel.



JCRSPA IRSPA

Well Hello All!

As we get ready to embrace summer and wind up another year of Retired School Personnel shenanigans. We are grateful for all we have learned as a result of our compelling programs. We're equally grateful for the laughter we have shared and the friendships we have cultivated and enhanced. We are proud of the volunteer hours we've accumulated, the abundance of people we've helped and the many tasks we've accomplished. Of course, we've enjoyed the tasty snacks we've shared too! Ironically, in April our program was one of our local dietitians teaching us tips we seniors can use to eat healthier... ON our spring luncheon day when we had a delicious smorgasbord of fabulous salads, breads and desserts! Our last meeting in May was quite informative ~ albeit a tad depressing as we had a representative from AEA explaining all the updates and changes in our local AEA's. On a brighter note, we also held our biannual election of officers and we are delighted to report that ALL of officers and committee chairs (with the exception of one, who had to step back due to health issues) said they'd continue in their leadership roles. That's our THIRD TWO YEAR TERM together as a leadership team! Also, we have begun a monthly "Game Lunch" where those who choose to participate come for lunch and we play cards, dominoes, Bunco or whatever else we decide to play. We will continue that throughout the summer. We have such a great group and so enjoy being together!! Stay hopeful.

Denise and Lana
Co-presidents

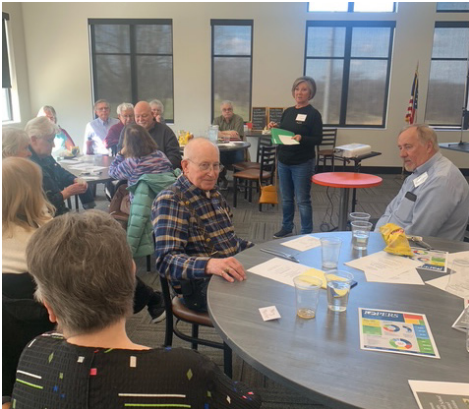


District 6

JOHNSON COUNTY JCRSPA

We are so proud Beth Hieronymus was able to serve as President of IRSPA. We couldn't have a better qualified or energetic person at the helm.

Pictured below she is giving us a rundown on how to entice new members in April. With Beth in the lead we



distributed big bowls of candy to the schools in Johnson County in May. In the picture is John Hieronymus on the right, the state Legislative Chair, and on the left is Terry Smothers. Terry has made

monthly arrangements at the Elks Club for our wonderful room and reasonably priced great lunch. Judy Nyren, Iowa City Lucas Farms was our guest speaker. She tied the historic homes to all the schools in Iowa City,

In April, Beth and the leader of the Bonsai Club presented the tricks of creating small and beautiful plants. Even Scott Allen, Iowa president is a little amazed by Beth.



In April we drove to Wilton, Iowa to visit the Candy Kitchen. What a collection of artifacts that is! The owners, Lynn and Brenda Ochiltree, have worked hard to keep Wilton and the Candy Kitchen viable. It's a colorful place to visit and the owners are there all the time making lunches and serving fantastic ice cream. Put this on your 'Bucket visit' list.



Mary Mascher, Mike Petersen, John Hieronymus, Sharon Raffensburger watch intently as the story of saving the Candy kitchen unfolds.

In May we visited a new business in the area, Pinseekers. This is a place to go for a fun time. We had lunch and planned to return.



In the meantime, Dave Ulrick was able to take a few practice swings and the four of us had a fun time for lunch. The calendar of events suggests we should return, and with a bigger group!!

In May, we have our new officer election and potluck at the Hieronymus Acres. That is always fun!! John and Beth have a big, beautiful space; it takes lots of work, but they do it! We have a full slate of officers and Mary Mascher, 2024 Distinguished Alum from the U of I and 28 year Legislator for the state of Iowa will be our new president.



Mike and Terry Finlay attend their first Hockey Game and receive a certificate. Fred Stark approves while John has seen it all.

The big thrill of the day was Beth Hieronymus riding the Zamboni. She always wanted to and now..here she is!

"Til the next time....thanks Beth, for all you've done!!





KEOKUK COUNTY IRSPA

KCRSP met on Wednesday, **March 19**, at Hope Lutheran Church in Sigourney. Seventeen members were present. Our speaker for the March Meeting was Chip Fritz, retired Building Trades teacher. He brought three students with him from Sigourney High School who are in his classes. He shared the building projects the group had been working on this school year. Students receive credits from Indian Hills Community College for their work with Mr. Fritz. A memorial will be sent to the Sigourney Public Library in memory of Sheila Clubb, a member who passed away this year. A memorial will be sent to the North English History Center in memory of Helen Bucher, a member who also passed away this year.



Chip Fritz and three of his students. They are left to right: Cole McKay, John Berg, Emily Conger, and Chip Fritz, instructor.

KCRSP met on Wednesday, **April 16**, at Hope Lutheran Church in Sigourney. Twenty three members and one guest were present. Our program was Phil Hester, an artist and cartoonist from North English. Phil has a BFA degree from the University of Iowa. He has drawn cartoons for Ghost Busters comics, Marvel Comics, and DC Comics. He still receives royalties for some of the cartoon characters he originated that are still shown on TV. Linda Crouse announced that on May 1, 2025, Ameritas will be replacing Delta Dental as our Dental Insurance Provider. AMBA representative Paul Strid or Linda Miller, District Six Coordinator, may be contacted for further information. Five applicants have applied for the \$500.00



Phil Hester who did the program at our April Meeting

Scholarship awarded by KCRSP on an annual basis. Each applicant will be majoring in education.

KCRSP met on Wednesday, **May 21**, at Hope Lutheran Church in Sigourney. Twenty members and one guest were present. The program was by Mary Husband, a retired teacher who now does sewing for the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. She makes surgical



Mary Husband who was the presenter at our May Meeting.

gowns for hospital residents, dresses for children overseas, hats for children who are having surgery at Stead Family Children's Hospital, blankets for nursing home residents and for those in Hospice Care. Treasurer Linda Crouse announced that twenty-five members have paid dues so far this year. Membership Chair Vicki Griner will be contacting school personnel in Keokuk County

who will be retiring this year to see if they would like to join KCRSP. Our Scholarship recipient this year is Grace Phillips who is graduating this year from Pekin High School. She will be majoring in Elementary Education at the University of Iowa this fall. She will receive her \$500.00 scholarship after completing one semester of college. Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, September 17, at Hope Lutheran Church in Sigourney.

Officers for KCRSP are: President-Sandy Steinke; Vice-President-Luann Eakins; Secretary-Mary Williams; and Treasurer-Linda Crouse.

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EXAMPLE

To: tonihood@q.com (Toni Hood)|

Cc:

Subject: District 6 - Clinton County

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Thank you! DPI Printing Inc.

District 6

DAVENPORT AREA IRSPA

Our local unit has had three interesting meetings since February. Our normal attendance is around 80 members...but in May, we had 103 present! We always have a rep from our Davenport Schools museum committee put together a table display....our recent ones highlighted Phoebe Sudlow, sports teams from the early days of Davenport Schools, and theater artifacts (including Robin Thede, a comedian and actress who is from Davenport and had a place on Celebrity Jeopardy!)

In May, we had seven of our members attend the District Meeting in Muscatine.

Our entertainment in March was Bill Sterba's presentation called "Bagpipes and Kilts" - we learned so much! In April, Randy Meier (a retired police officer from the Clinton area) spoke about scams...he had some VERY INTERESTING stories!

In May, we had a busy meeting...besides listening to the Handbell/Chimes group from CASI after lunch, we had our annual necrology ceremony for those members



who passed away this past year. In addition, we presented our newly established scholarships. Our members were very generous with donations and we were able to give out three this year. Two of the students were present with family members and both are head-



ed toward an education degree. The third was being given to a student going into the trades.

Our board will be busy during the summer preparing for another great year in 2025-2026.



NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Please e-mail articles & pictures if at all possible to avoid retyping.

Articles for the **September**
Newsletter are due no later than
Friday, Aug. 15th, 2025



Get info to Toni Hood, at

E-mail: tonihood@q.com

Home Telephone: 515-332-5819

Cell Phone: 515-269-3823



LEE COUNTY IRSPA

Lee County Retired School Personnel recently met at the St. Paul United Church of Christ in Keokuk. The meeting was opened with the reading of the unison prayer. Entertainment was provided by Keokuk High School Vocal Music Department. Exceptional solos, duet and group songs were sung under the direction of KHS vocal music director, Jason Woodley. Legislative Chair, Gretchen Kirchner, reported on bills being introduced/passed in Iowa: cell phones in school, chronic absenteeism and national level bills that will affect education. Jim Merritt announced that he and Mrs. Merritt will celebrate 70 years of marriage this month. The next meeting for this group will be June 4 at Meyers Courtyard, Keokuk, 12 noon. The memorial program will honor four members who have passed: Jim Vandenberg, Craig Bullis, Betty Decker, and Helen Wahl. All retired school personnel are welcome to attend: custodians, clerical, bus drivers, teachers, associates and anyone who has retired from a Lee County School. For more information, call 319-795-2811.



Lee County Retired School Personnel recently met at the Ft. Madison United Methodist Church. The UMC Women served a fabulous lunch to 25 guests. Mitzi Jessen, LCRSP Scholarship Chair, announced that three graduating Lee County Seniors will be awarded a \$500 scholarship. Gretchen Kirchner, Legislative Chair, shared information about the Trump Administration dismantling the U.S. Education Department and the possible ripple effects it may have for states and students. The program was presented by Gwen Norton, Hospice Volunteer Coordinator for EveryStep. Their team of staff and volunteers provide expert medical care, pain management, emotional support and spiritual guidance to hospice patients. Volunteers play an important role, enhancing quality of life for patients and families as well. Volunteer Veterans are paired with patients who are veterans. The Veteran-



to-Veteran program proves to be very worthwhile. EveryStep also provides support for the families who have lost their loved one. Norton, who represents the Mt. Pleasant team helps to coordinate volunteers for Des Moines, Henry, Jefferson, Keokuk, Lee, Louisa, Van Buren, and Washington Counties in Iowa. More information about volunteering can be attained by calling 319-385-4472. Judy Bartachek, LCRSP treasurer and Lee County Board of Health member added that EveryStep Hospice services mirror those that Lee County Health Department provides to their patients. It is suggested that if hospice services are needed for a loved one that the family interview more than one provider and choose the one that can provide the best fit for the patient and the family. LCRSP will meeting again May 7, 12 noon at the St. Paul United Church of Christ in Keokuk.

Lee County Retired School Personnel met in June at Meyers Courtyard in Keokuk. Linda Miller, District 6 Iowa Retired School Personnel Coordinator shared information about the secure IPERS program for retirees. She also announced that Lee County will host the district 6 meeting, May 21, 2026. Program for the meeting was a memorial necrology service recognizing members who had passed within the last two years. Jim Vandenberg, Betty Decker, Craig Bullis and Helen Wahl. Mr. Vandenberg retired from the Keokuk School district after 38 years in education having had a successful career in coaching and teaching. Jerre Vandenberg, Jim's widow and his daughter, Tammy Craine were present. Helen Wahl, taught in several rural schools and retired in 1993 from the postal service. She was also involved in Girl Scouts for 48 years. Betty Decker was a beloved teacher and recognized



as Iowa Teacher of the year. She was a 50+ member of Sweet Adelines which brought her great joy throughout her life. Craig Bullis was a U.S. Army veteran having served during the Vietnam War. Craig taught at several area schools finishing in the Keokuk School District. He was the co-founder of the Bullis-Rutter Big Band and a member of Mc-

Namara's Bank for nearly 60 years. The next meeting for this organization will be held September 2026 location to be determined.

Jill Anderson-Cox

IRSPA and REAM Webinar Series

Another value of membership in IRSPA is our Webinar Series. These informational sessions are a joint venture with Retired Educator Association of Minnesota and presented by AMBA. They start at 10:30 a.m. and run approximately 40-45 minutes. When you register in advance, you will also be emailed any documents discussed during the webinar. Can't attend? Register anyway to get the information and then watch the recording at www.irspa.org under the Events tab.

June 24 - All About Your Dental and Vision Plans

IRSPA Dental and Vision plans through AMBA are the most popular benefits for IRSAP members. Join us to find out how these plans work for you to give you excellent care and savings. We'll also compare to the other national plans.

https://ambabenefits.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_S6cdaVSUSq2Gcf717cE5Kg

July 29 - All About Long Term Care

Explore the myths and realities of what is covered when it comes to Long Term Care. Does Medicare cover anything? What about my major medical plan? Are there any options? Do I even need it? Join us to find out all the answers as we break down what Long Term Care is and how it impacts generations of your family. We'll look at many options you might not have considered.

https://ambabenefits.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_JUqFjwr2QZy-IXyvrcBfHA

August 26 - Protecting Your Nest Egg

You've worked hard all of your career and now you have a pension and a nest egg to protect. In this webinar, we'll explore what a nest egg is, what the top 5 threats are to your retirement nest egg, and some possible solutions to keep you resting easy when it comes to your financial future.

https://ambabenefits.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_D0pQB71DQAaLUNu4xpg7Kw

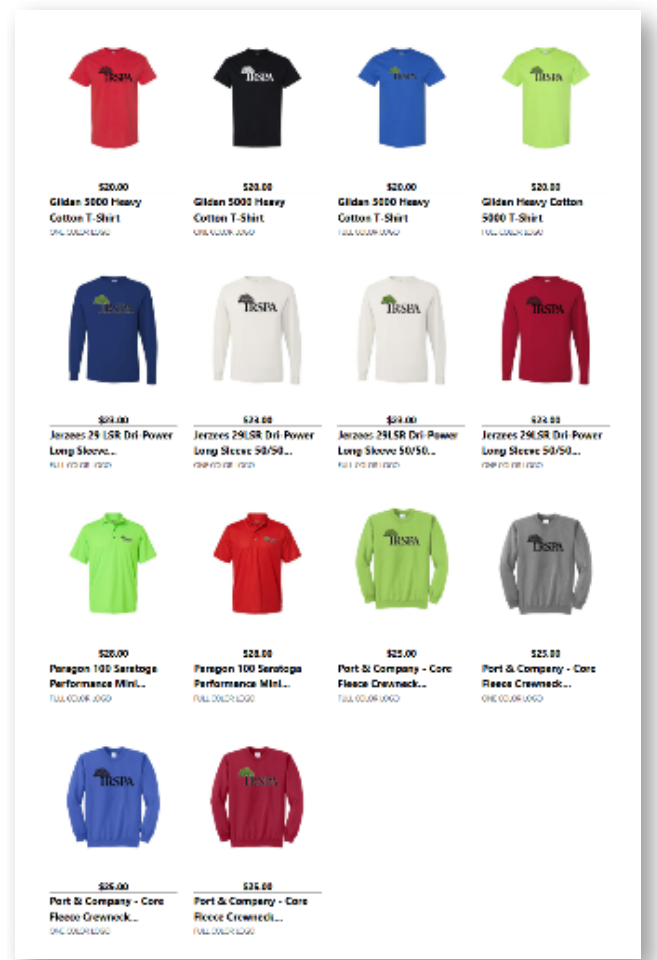
IRSPA Merchandise

Looking for a way to stand out when volunteering at community events? IRSPA has a variety of short and long sleeve T-shirts, Polos and Sweatshirts available for sale from now until September 5th to meet your needs. New red and blue colors have also been added.

By clicking on <https://www.storessimple.com/oldcapi-tolscreenprnt/34225>, you can visit our online store. Once at the store, click on of the sample photo to see the colors available. Full color and one-color logos are available for most of the products. A link will also be available on IRSPA.org at the top of the home page.

Once you have selected your items, you will need to create an online account with your email address and a password of your choosing before checking out. You will also be asked to select your method of delivery. Free delivery is available for distribution at the Annual State Meeting this October. Paid postage to your home is also available.

Sport some IRSPA merchandise at your local meeting or whenever you are out in the community. Make IRSPA visible to all as one way to grow membership. Order yours today!



It's News to Me...

by Toni Hood

District meetings provide opportunities for socializing with new and old friends, but they also provide interesting and important information for retired school personnel. Various speakers enlightened IRSPA members with pertinent and helpful material.

- There are hundreds of savings opportunities with myAMBA discounts. Companies offering discounts are Costco, Kohl's, Skechers, Sam's Club, Hertz, and many others. The website is <https://passportcorporate.com/> and the code is "ambasavers."

- Irspace.org has a variety of program ideas from organizations, institutions, and various unit ideas. Scroll down to Districts, then scroll down to possible programs, and click "view."

- IPERS is currently funded at 90.75% - one of the best pension systems in the country.
- There were 5,821 new IPERS retirees with 22 average years of service who draw an average monthly benefit of \$2,125.

- Iowa Education-related Legislation:
 - ✓ There is no longer an income limit on parents who apply for school vouchers.
 - ✓ A bill was passed that allows school districts to put chaplains in the schools.
 - ✓ A bill was passed requiring schools to administer a Citizenship exam to 9-12 students.
 - ✓ A bill passed requiring schools to show videos of a fetal ultrasound and depictions of fetal development from fertilization to birth.
 - ✓ Minor bills were passed that will not have a negative effect on IPERS funds.
 - ✓ John Hieronymus, legislative chair, urges members to stay informed and use the app "5 calls" to call lawmakers and express your concerns and opinions on national issues.



Dear AMBA,

I am a retired school personnel employee of 5 years and enjoy the camaraderie provided by attending my local unit meetings. It is great to get together with old friends and teachers. I have also enjoyed the supplemental benefits provided by AMBA as a state member with IRSPA. The benefits are great. My husband and I are both protected with the long term care plan and home health care. We also have saved a lot with the VSP vision plan. Recently my dental coverage was changed from Delta Dental to Ameritas. I have had Delta Dental forever, even back when I was teaching, so I am familiar with the name. Can you explain to me why the change and a little about Ameritas?

Sincerely,
Pearl White

Dear Pearl,

Glad to hear you are taking advantage of the great benefits provided by AMBA. It is not all about insurance, though. Remember to check out myambadiscounts.com for all kinds of savings on traditional shopping, to travel, dining, and electronics. You name it.

We are excited to roll out the new dental coverage with Ameritas. Ameritas was founded back in 1887 out of Lincoln, NA. They are rated A+ by Standard and Poor's and A by AM Best, for financial strength. The new plan is about the same in terms of premiums but here are some added benefits. The annual maximum coverage is now \$1500 instead of \$1200. Type A and B services were covered at 80% with the old plan but are now covered at 90% for the remainder of the year and 100% beginning in 2026. Your one-time \$100 deductible automatically rolled over to the new plan.

If your dentists are not in network, there is a way to have them nominated, so they can be. You can just go to <https://www.ameritas.com/employee-benefits/nominate-a-provider/>. Fill out your dentist's information. Fill out your information and hit 'submit'. Ameritas will contact the dentist and see if he/she will join the Ameritas network. Also, the more retirees who communicate with their dentist that their insurance is now with Ameritas, the more likelihood those dentists may consider Ameritas as an insurance carrier.

By the way, you now have 4 different options for the VSP vision plan ranging from \$12.72 – \$21.95 per month.

If you have questions, AMBA has set up a call center to help you. The number is 1-800-258-7041.

Sincerely,

Paul Strid

AMBA Senior Benefits Representative

PH. 708-347-7081 • email: paul.strid@amba.info

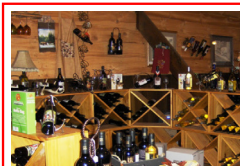
Little Swan Lake Winery



Little Swan Lake Winery is a family owned and operated business located 1-1/2 miles north of the small town of Superior in Northwest Iowa. In May of 2002 our doors opened to the public. The tasting room, our remodeled 1920's barn, features 35 different wines all produced on site, a selection of gourmet cheeses, and buffalo meat from our own herd which roams nearby. Our vineyard consists of two acres of northern cold hardy grapes. The gift shop features clothing and wine related items. We are dedicated to producing the finest and most enjoyable wines and invite you to spend an hour or an afternoon with us.

Our newest addition, our bed and breakfast, opened in September of 2011. This renovated grain elevator is a great place to relax and enjoy the beauty that is Little Swan Lake!

Scott and Diane Benjamin and Family



Little Swan Lake Winery offers a 10% discount on bottled wine to IRSPA members when you show your membership card or the ad from the newsletter. Offer good at the winery only.

[Lslwinery.com](http://lslwinery.com) • Phone: (712) 858 - 4592

IRSPA CONTACTS

Past President:

Jeanne Handeland
4181 230th St., Wallingford, IA 51365
(712) 260-0943 - jhandy@rvtc.net

President:

Beth Hieronymus
3322 Muscatine Ave., Iowa City, IA 52240
(319) 360-4634 - bhieronymus62@gmail.com

President Elect:

Anne Cowley
413 Eton Court, Sioux City, IA 51104
712-204-5182 - amusicwest@aol.com

Co-Vice President:

Chryss Hartman
2114 Belle Ave., Davenport, IA 52803
563-320-0603 - candm61877@aol.com

Laurie Marple, 1220 Rustic View Ct.
Eldridge, IA 52748
563-320-3708 - marple854@aol.com

Secretary/Historian:

Mary Jo O'Connell
1700 Avoca Street, Dubuque, IA 52201
(563) 557-1451 - moconnell12@msn.com

Treasurer:

Robert Swanson
3221 Cheyenne Blvd., Sioux City, IA 51104
(712) 252-1446 - rmswanson1936@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor:

Toni Hood
1006 6th Ave. N., Humboldt, IA 50548
515-332-5819 Home; 515-269-3823 Cell

Hawkeye Buffalo & Cattle Ranch



<https://www.facebook.com/hawkeyebuffaloranch/>

Hawkeye Buffalo & Cattle Ranch is a family farm in northeast Iowa. Our heritage dates back to 1854 when my great-great-grandparents settled in a sod house just a mile from our farm. The bison have returned, and we invite you to connect with the land, our family, and our farm.

Tours include an informative lesson on the history of buffalo in Iowa and a chance to feed the buffalo. Tours are \$15 for adults and \$10 for children. With an IRSPA membership card or showing your copy of the IRSPA newsletter with the Hawkeye Buffalo advertisement, the **cost is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children.** Tours are set up on an as needed basis so you must call in advance to set up your tour. The Buffalo Ranch is southwest of Fredericksburg next to Split Rock Park and Campgrounds at 3034 Pembroke Ave. Visitors often get a chance to see other wildlife too - deer, sandhill cranes, hawks, songbirds, and occasionally eagles. Buffalo meat is also sold on location.

Check us out at Hawkeyebuffalo.com
Phone: 641-229-6701

**Iowa Retired School Personnel Association
2025 Annual Meeting & Conference
October 1-2, 2025**

Conference Registration

Member Name _____

Address _____

Email _____ Phone _____ IRSPA Unit _____

The Annual State Meeting & Conference will be held at the First United Methodist Church, 309 N Main Street, Mount Pleasant, IA 52641.

There are no fees for the Conference except for meals.

Banquet – 6:00 pm – Wednesday Evening, October 1

Buffet Menu: Chicken Wild Rice Casserole, Chicken/Ham Wild Rice Casserole, Meatless Rice Dish, Hot Vegetables, Spinach Salad, Veggie Tray, two fruit salads, Bread Sticks, Pumpkin Roll, iced tea, coffee, and water. (This price includes tax and gratuity.)

_____ reservation(s) @ \$18 per guest = \$ _____ Vegetarian and gluten-free options are available

Lunch – Noon – Thursday, October 2

Buffet Menu: Beefburger, Vegetable Salad, Pasta Salad, two fruit salads, Veggie Tray, assorted bars, iced tea, coffee, and water. (This price includes tax and gratuity.)

_____ reservation(s) @ \$12 per guest = \$ _____ Vegetarian and gluten-free options are available

TOTAL PAYMENT = \$ _____

Please return your Conference Registration with your meal reservation and a check made out to IRSPA by Sept. 15, 2025, to Diana Juntunen, 700 S. Pine St., Mount Pleasant, Iowa 52641

ROOMS: Contact Quality Inn & Suites, 1200 East Baker Street, Mount Pleasant, Iowa at qualityinnmountpleasant@gmail.com or 319-385-0571. Ask for the Iowa Retired School Personnel Association block to receive the special rate of \$92.63 per night.

Iowa Retired School Personnel Association

2025 Annual Meeting & Conference

October 1-2, 2025

Tentative Agenda

Wednesday, October 1, 2025

- 1:00 - 3:00 **Registration at Quality Inn & Suites, 1200 East Baker St., Mount Pleasant**
- 2:00 - 4:30 **Visit County sites**
- 5:00 **Registration at the United Methodist Church, 309 N Main St.**
Social Hour
- 6:00 **Dinner**
- 7:00 **Musical Entertainment**
Reminder of Silent Auction - Jean Hoffman

Thursday, October 2, 2025

7 am to 11 am Checkout at Quality Inn & /Suites

- 8:30 **Memorial for deceased members**
Registration and Morning Refreshments (compliments of IRSPA)
- 9:00 **Welcome / Pledge / Introductions**
Legislative / IPERS - John Hieronymus
AMBA - Paul Strid, Garrett Mowery
- 10:00 - 10:15 **Break**
- 10:15 **Elevating Engagement - Beth Hieronymus**
"Daggs vs Frazier, Early Iowa Civil Rights Case" - Dave Helman
- 11:45 **Group Pictures by District**
- Noon **Luncheon**
- 1:00 **Annual Meeting**
Invitation to October 7- 8, 2026 Annual State Meeting in District One
Please leave badge holders on the table

Places of Interest to Visit Wednesday 2:00 to 4:30 in Henry County Area

Pleasant Lawn Schoolhouse at Threshers (staffed by HCRSPA members during Old Threshers)

Heritage Trust: Saunders Museum and the Van Allen home (4 famous brothers)

George Van Allen - lawyer, mayor, and a judge in Mt. Pleasant

James Van Allen - discovered the Van Allen Radiation Belts around the Earth

Served as main scientific investigator for 24 space missions from 1958 - 2000

Maurice Van Allen - Neurology Clinic of the U of I named in his honor

William Van Allen - handled hundreds of millions of dollars of military equipment by the governments of NATO countries while at Hughes Aircraft

Harlan - Lincoln Home - Abraham Lincoln's son Robert married James Harlan's daughter, Mary. They brought their three children to Mt. Pleasant to spend summers with her parents.

Lewelling Quaker Home in Salem - Underground Railroad, Apple Orchard, Quaker settlement.

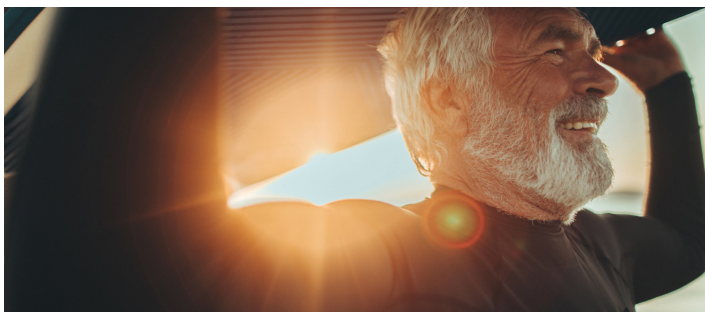
Oakland Mills Nature Center, Mt. Pleasant

Dover Museum, New London

Anne Frank Exhibit, Danville Library

Freedom Rock, Museum in Winfield

Swedish Museum in Swedesburg



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KEEP LIVING YOUR WAY.

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myambabenefits.info/irspa

Iowa Retired School Personnel Association



NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

*Please e-mail articles & pictures if
at all possible to avoid retyping.*

Articles for the **September**
Newsletter are due no later than
Friday, Aug. 15th, 2025



Get info to Toni Hood, at

E-mail: **tonihood@q.com**

Home Telephone: **515-332-5819**

Cell Phone: **515-269-3823**

IRSPA PRESENTS THREE PH BALANCE SCHOLARSHIPS

IRSPA was honored to present three PH Balance Scholarships this year to very deserving students. The PH Balance Scholarship is a voluntarily funded scholarship that goes to a student who has lost a parent before high school graduation. These young ladies and gentlemen are strong, resilient, hopeful students wishing to continue their education beyond high school. We proudly presented two in Sioux City at the District 1 meeting on May 20th. Khloe Hanson from the Graettinger-Terril Community School District will be attending Des Moines Area Community College majoring in Health Sciences. She feels that through this scholarship she is honoring her mother and will be working as an advocate for others that struggle as she did. Ronnie Vedin from Bishop Heelan Catholic School in Sioux City was also a recipient. His major will be mass communications at Augustana College in Sioux Falls this fall. Ronnie lost his father, grandfather, and mother in a span of eleven months between his junior year and senior year of high school all from natural causes. In order for him to remain in Sioux City to complete his senior year, he was taken under the wing of the high school principal and his wife so that he could complete his senior year at Heelan bringing the philosophy of this scholarship full circle. from Iowa Falls was the recipient of the PH Balance Scholarship at the District two meeting in Humboldt. Olivia lost her father when she was a small child, but carries his memories in her heart. She has felt the profound loss at every of life's memory markers in life. By receiving this scholarship she feels that her dad is helping her move forward as she uses her talents in art and photography in pursuing a degree in grief counseling at Iowa State this fall. These three young students are well deserving and we wish them the best as they move into adulthood. IRSPA has had a long standing relationship with Security National Bank in Sioux City. They shared their support of the PH Balance Scholarship with a donation of \$500.00. From the bottom of our hearts, we humbly thank you for your donation and for the support it gives to these fine young adults. **THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF THE PH BALANCE SCHOLARSHIP.**



**SECURITY
NATIONAL
BANK**



Ronnie Vedin



Khloe Hanson



Olivia Brogden

GUIDE TO YOUR IRSPA MEMBER BENEFITS



Dental & Vision Plans

Flexibility and Freedom are the words best described when it comes to your Dental and Vision plans. Easy-to-use, broad coverage and discounts with a wide range of providers.



Long-Term Care

A Long-Term Care insurance policy can ease the financial burden on your loved ones helping to protect your life savings and reduce the stress on your spouse and children.



Cancer, Heart, Stroke, and Accident Insurance

Benefits paid directly to you. You select the benefit level that best suits your needs.



Emergency Air and Ground Transportation

Medical Air Services Association (MASA) provides plans for lifesaving emergency transportation services. Services are paid in full, with no deductibles, co-pays, or dollar limits.



Hospital Indemnity

A supplemental hospital indemnity insurance policy could be a smart financial decision for other hospital expenses including extended hospital stays, emergency room visits, ambulance transportation and more.



Short-Term Care/Home Health Care

A Home Care policy can allow you to choose where you recover and offset the costs of care not covered by traditional health care. The choice of your home, assisted living facility, or the nursing home should be yours.



Medicare Solutions

Medicare Supplement plans not only help pay for additional eligible expenses not paid by Original Medicare, they provide the freedom for you to use your own physician, specialist, and medical facility.



Whole Life

With no premium increases, or reduced coverage due to age or health once issued, this policy can help protect your family from the high cost of final expenses.



Tax-Deferred Asset Protection

Tax-deferred accumulation of interest for qualified or non-qualified funds with the ability to participate in market gains. No underwriting required.

GET YOUR BENEFITS NOW!

With Iowa Retired School Personnel Association (IRSPA), you have access to exceptional member benefits. Are you wondering if certain benefits are right for you?

Contact us for a free benefits review!

866.619.6463 | myAMBAbenefits.info/IRSPA

Constitution and By Laws

Update-April 4th, 2025

The IRSPA Executive Board met April 1st and 2nd. The following changes were approved to update the IRSPA Constitution. These Amendments will be voted upon by the members present at the Annual Meeting in October.

ARTICLE III, Section 2- ASSOCIATE MEMBER

Current Language: Associate Membership shall be open to spouses of above and any person who supports education and who wishes to affiliate with Iowa Retired School Personnel Association.

New Amendment: Associate Membership may be offered to non-retired school personnel and spouses/ or significant others who are interested in and support the objectives of IRSPA. They may become Associate Members upon payment of stipulated dues as set forth in the Standing Rules and shall be eligible to assume active membership with all rights and privileges except the right to vote, or hold state office.

Rationale: We have always encouraged Associate Membership but not clarified their rights.

ARTICLE IV-DUES –Section 1. Annual Dues

Current Language: The annual dues of members and Associate members of the Association shall be fifteen dollars. (\$15.00)

New Amendment: The annual dues of members and associate members of the Association shall be determined by the Executive Board and approved by a majority vote of members present at the Annual Meeting. Members will be notified of any proposed changes in the newsletter. Members will be notified of any proposed change in the newsletter just prior to the Annual Meeting.

Rationale: The dollar amount of the dues was eliminated so that it is not necessary to change the Constitution each time the dues amount is changed.

Section 2-TERMINATED MEMBERSHIP

Current Language: A member whose dues remain unpaid after October 1st shall be dropped from membership.

New Amendment: A member whose dues remain unpaid after two years shall be dropped from membership.

Rationale: We have had members return to our Association after a significant life event. We are offering that period of grace.



Solve the "what to wear" to IRSPA meetings dilemma by sporting an **IRSPA shirt! See page 13 for selections and purchasing information.**



The executive board met in April, and Paul Strid entertained Beth and John Hieronymus with what we think was a "Paul the Dog" impersonation.

Submitted by Barb Bielenberg

District 1 Annual Meeting

On Tuesday, May 20, 2025, the IRSPA District 1 meeting was well-attended with 70 members present. A warm thank-you goes to the Sioux City Area Retired Educators for providing morning refreshments.

The featured speaker was Maria Schultz, a retired court reporter, who shared insights from her career. She expressed special gratitude to her high school shorthand teacher, Ladonna Preston, who was present at the meeting, for equipping her with the foundational skills that contributed to her success.

A delicious meal was provided by the Redeemer Lutheran Church Mission Group. Proceeds from the meal will support educational and religious initiatives in various communities.

Two PH Balance Scholarships, presented by Jean Hoffman, were awarded to students Khloe Hanson and Ronnie Vedin.

Are you curious or confused by the dental coverage change? Read page 14 for Paul Strid's explanation OR call 1-800-258-7041 to reach AMBA's Help Center.



District 2 Annual Meeting

Humboldt's IRSPA unit hosted the District 2 meeting on May 21, 2025. President Anita Fagen-Miller and Humboldt members hosted 48 guests at the Zion Lutheran Church. President Elect Anne Cowley, District 2 Representative Judge Brown, and President Beth Hieronymus graciously led the preliminary activities before the focus groups were formed.

The focus groups discussed executive duties, membership issues, and program ideas. Each of the six district meetings allot time for focus groups because this is one of many ways the executive board supports local units. These discussions are always productive, informative, and motivational.

Before the church ladies served a delicious lunch, Humboldt's Library Director Julie Larsen Seed Program presentation illustrated one of the varied services the modern library provides. Julie's background makes her uniquely qualified to initiate this new library program. She has a passion for growing fruits, vegetables, herbs, and flowers as she notes,



Toni Hood and Shirley Bakken are ready to dig in the dirt after listening to Julie Larsen's Seeds Program.

"I guess it was passed down through the genes. I like to dig in the dirt." At her home, Julie's efforts begin in the fall with seed selection and she starts seedlings in January. Grow lights, a greenhouse, and a large garden plot complete the warm weather cycle. Julie is also a farmer's market vendor who shares her produce and passion with others.

This personal commitment to gardening extends into her professional life. Humboldt Library's Seed Program began in 2024. She stocks a seed packet library with over 625 seed choices. By the end of the year, the seed stock is almost depleted. Patrons can take as few as 5 seeds if they want to try new varieties. Julie's efforts inspire experienced and new gardeners, provide access to healthy food choices, and help save on grocery costs.

During lunch, Melinda's school of dance provided us with 7 young dancers who totally captivated their audience of former teachers with a variety of performances. It was a tug-of-war between enjoying the de-

District 2 Annual Meeting (cont'd)



Melinda's School of Dance performers entertained us during lunch-a mini dinner theater enjoyed by all.

licious lunch and watching the energetic show.

After lunch, The Biz's owner Renae Dryer spoke about Humboldt's "100 Women Who Care" project. This group makes a huge impact in the community and is perfect for women who care but do not have large amounts of time to give. Renae stressed that there are few meetings, and the agenda is simple, and the goals are quickly reached. Humboldt's chapter has 365 members; that number consists of 65 teams and 98 single donors. Any number of women can form a team; for example, 4 women would each contribute \$25 each. The recipient can be a family, an individual, or a charitable group that is experiencing hardships. Members choose from worthy nominations; last year's choice received \$16,000.



Anita Fagen-Miller with "100 Women Who Care" speaker Renae Dreyer

The day concluded after AARP volunteer Lorraine Bowans' Home Fit program.

IRSPA president Beth Hieronymus concluded the meeting by inviting the attendees to attend the Mount Pleasant State Meeting in the fall.



President Beth Hieronymus motivated the audience by sharing IRSPA's goals and initiatives.



Mary Jo O'Connell, John and Beth Hieronymus, and Laurie Marple solved the "what to wear" dilemma by wearing IRSPA shirts.

District 3 Annual Meeting

The Cedar Rapids Area Unit in Linn County hosted the District 3 Meeting in Marion at the American Legion Hall on May 22.



The day started with good food and conversation. President Bob Gilcrist welcomed about 58 members from across the District and introduced Cindy Monroe who was responsible for organizing the entire day. Everyone received new and updated information from the Executive Board members.

Augie Bergstrom from the Monarch Research Project presented us with a history of the Monarch butterfly. He stressed the importance of maintaining and keeping the appropriate habitat by planting common milkweed and butterfly milkweed in our gardens.



Lorraine Bowans also spoke about Home Fit. This is an AARP presentation.

Everyone went home with a plant. There was a drawing for special items including birdhouses built and donated by a person in Cedar Rapids.

We would like to thank Cindy Monroe for organizing a delightful and relaxing evening on Wednesday, May 21. She cooked an excellent supper for us at the Hotel where we were staying.

Next year the District 3 Meeting will be May 7, 2026. The Dubuque Unit will be the host and invites all members to attend.

District 4 Annual Meeting

The Council Bluffs unit hosted the District 4 Spring Meeting on May 6th at the Broadway United Methodist Church. Forty-seven people in attendance were welcomed by refreshments of coffee cake and donuts supplied by members of our group.

CBRSPA President Beverly Fletcher welcomed everyone to the meeting. District 4 coordinator, Venita Escher, led us in the Pledge of Allegiance. IRSPA President, Beth Hieronymus, welcomed everyone and introduced the state officers and committee chairs.

Jean Hoffman gave an update on the PH Balance Scholarship. This year's recipient has been chosen but has not been notified yet. The Box was passed around for those who chose to make a donation to the scholarship fund.

John Hieronymus gave an update on IPERS, which is still in good shape. He also gave an update on pending legislation on this year's budget. John encouraged everyone to keep in contact with their representatives and voice their concerns. The 5 Call app is one way you can contact your representatives.

Paul Strid, AMBA representative, gave an update on member benefits available through AMBA. He focused on Short-Term Care/Home Health Care and Dental & Vision Plans. AMBA's dental coverage changed on May 1st from Delta Dental to Ameritas. Those who still have questions and concerns about the new plans can contact the corporate office. Paul also reminded everyone to check out AMBA saving opportunities available to members. AMBA IRSPA Field Reps Nikki Adair and Ben Kucera were available to answer questions.

Diane Johnson, CBRSPA Vice-president, introduced our morning speaker, a local artist, Cait Irwin of Irwin Artworks. One of Cait's early projects was painting "jazz cats" on her bedroom ceiling when she was 12



Cait Irwin

years old. At a young age Cait struggled with depression. She found that art helped her express her feelings. At age 14 Cait wrote her first book "Conquering the Beast Within: How I Fought Depression and Won and How You Can, Too!" The art in her book

shows how she felt being trapped in a box with beasts. She soon was able to control the beast through medica-

tion and her art. Cait has republished her book, "Conquering the Beast Within" adding an addendum on her life now 30 years later. Some of Cait adventures have included traveling by car to Alaska and learning how to weld in Montana. Cait has painted many murals in the community at schools, in homes, hospitals, on buildings, for businesses and even on a bike/walking trail where she used her welding skills. She also creates paintings, prints, magnets and ornaments. Copies of Cait's book were for sale.

Pastor Brian Kemp-Schlemmer, BUMC, welcomed everyone and led us in prayer before lunch. He invited everyone to visit the church's sanctuary during breaks to view the beautiful stained-glass windows.

Our afternoon began with four focus groups. President/ President-Elect led by Beth Hieronymus and Anne Cowley, Secretaries/Treasurers led by Mary Jo O'Connell and Robert Swanson, Membership/Retention/Recruitment led by Barb Bielenberg and Program Ideas led by Chryss Hartman and Laurie Marple. Focus groups then gave a short summary of their discussions. Several groups had concerns about how to grow and retain membership and what the state IRSPA might do to help. District 4 has lost two units, Clarke and Decatur Counties so we are down to three active units-Pottawattamie (Council Bluffs), Dallas (Perry) and Union (Creston) Counties. The Program group gave ideas for great meetings. Ideas for programs can be found on the IRSPA website. The membership group gave ideas of how to let new retirees learn about IRSPA.

Our afternoon speaker, Lorraine Bowans AARP representative, gave a presentation on "Home Fit." She shared many things that can be done around the home to make it safer as we age. A Home Fit Guide was available to pick up.

Beverly Fletcher concluded our day with reminders that the State Meeting is Oct. 1-2 in Mount Pleasant; the 2026 District 4 meeting is May 21 hosted by Dallas County. Drawings for door prizes were held and members were given treats to take on their journey.



Laurie Marple reports from her Program Ideas focus group.

District 5 Annual Meeting

May 7, 2025 was a beautiful day. The Des Moines Area Retired School Personnel Association (DMARSPA) hosted the IRSPA District 5 meeting. 48 individuals met at the Cross Creek Center at the Lutheran Church of the Cross in Altoona, Iowa. Welcome bags were given with items from Altoona businesses and a Des Moines business catalog. The tables were decorated with vintage Scott Foresman readers, old time school bells, and spring flowers.

DMARSPA President Fran Ganoe welcomed everyone to the meeting. One of the highlights of the day was the Focus Groups. Many great ideas were shared and several commented they were sad when time was up.

Judy Goshorn, a master gardener, gave a wonderful presentation on a hidden gem in Altoona, The Altoona Enabling Gardens. Everyone enjoyed her presentation and was told to try and stop by when in town.

After lunch humor was present when Jeff Hanna, The Fungi, entertained. Many fun memories from the past were presented, real challenging activities that seniors face were laughed about, and Jeff had everyone smiling, snickering, and giggling when education and teaching practices were discussed.

At the end of the day evaluation forms were filled out and suggestions were noted and appreciated. Marcia Fenton from Lucas County won the door prize, a beautiful hanging planter. It was a great day.



District 6 Annual Meeting

The members of the Muscatine Area Retired School Personnel Association hosted the District 6 annual meeting on May 8, 2025 the Rendezvous Banquet Facility & Catering venue in Muscatine, Iowa. Fifty four members from District 6 and state officials attended.

Cindy Meister, past Co-Secretary of MARSPA, welcomed the group. Beth Hieronymus, State IRSPA President, introduced State Officers. Beth gave an informative talk on the “7 Touches Membership.” Ways to recruit and hold on to retired members of IRSPA. The group then broke into focus groups for President/Vice President; Secretary/Treasurer; Programs; and Membership and Recruitment. Ideas and summaries from each group were shared.

Entertainment was provided by Anne Carroll, ambassador for the Muscatine Chamber of Commerce. Her talk was entitled “About Muscatine.” It traced Muscatine’s history and founding from lumber and fur trading, clamming, which led to Muscatine becoming the “Pearl Button Capital of the World” to the present day industries of Stanley Consultants and Stanley Center for Peace and Security, HNI, Bridge Stone Bandag and Grain Processing. This included such renowned and historical residents as Alexander Clark, Samuel Clemmons, better known as Mark Twain and Norman Baker.

Jean Hoffman spoke about the PH Balance Scholarship. Beth Hieronymus gave a rousing and helpful talk on ways to “Publicize Your Unit.”

During a delicious lunch provided by the Rendezvous the group was entertained by Linda Buchelle, a former MCSD elementary music teacher and member of MARSPA.

After lunch the group learned about how to stay safe in our homes, from a talk given by Lorraine Bowans, AARP. Reports were given on IPERS updates, IPERS legislation and the IRPSA Newsletter.

An invitation to the State IRSPA meeting was given for the October 1, 2025 meeting in Mount Pleasant, Iowa. The 2026 District 6 meeting will be hosted by the Lee County Unit. Door prizes were awarded.

Everyone went home with a spring plant and a big smile! It was an enjoyable day full of information, meeting new friends and catching up with old friends and pumped full of good cheer and inspiration!!!

Cindy Meister
Muscatine Area Unit



Karen Molyneux, Linda Fritchen, Mary Williams, Colleen Deitrich, and Becky Morris



Becka Jones, Mary Spratt, Gina Harper Reception table at District 6 IRSPA meeting



Beth Hieronymus State IRSPA President talks about “7 Touches Membership”



It was wonderful meeting new IRSPA members and connecting with friends across the state during the six district meetings. Thank you to the new followers on Facebook. You may access our Facebook account two ways. Log into the IRSPA website irspa.org and the link is at the top of the page. Like and follow and then you will always get new posts on your personal Facebook page. While on your own Facebook account you can search IRSPA, like and follow to have all new posts show up on your account. The webpage is kind of like kindergarten - everything you need to know is there somewhere. It is as good as the information that is sent in. Contact information for the state board members is under leadership so call one of them and they will be glad to help you. Please check your unit's information on the directory page and update as necessary. You will find a unit update form on the directory page that shows just the units in your district. Just fill out the things that need to change and hit submit. It will be sent to Jean Hoffman to finish the update. Also make sure there is an up to date constitution and program for each unit. If not, contact Jean Hoffman at 42teacher@gmail.com.

AARP Lorraine Bowans - Home Fit

AARP volunteer Lorraine Bowans spoke at all 6 of the IRSPA District meetings. Lorraine's program, Home Fit, is part of the "Aging in Place" initiative. There are many programs and resources that can help older adults live independently despite changing abilities or evolving needs.



Lorraine is uniquely qualified to discuss the problems and solutions of aging safely and gracefully. She is a realtor who is also a Certified Aging-in-Place (CAPS) specialist. CAPS certification is earned by completing a curriculum designed by the National Association of Home Builders. On a personal level, Lorraine was a 15-year caregiver for parents who lived 4 hours from her Iowa City home. Lorraine's topic addresses a serious and timely subject; however, Lorraine's informal, humorous tone gave the audience important and practical information. Her message is for everybody because as Lorraine advised, "You're aging the minute you are born."

AARP provides speakers and printed guides that help people live safely and comfortably in their home by utilizing ideas that are suitable for themselves and others regardless of a person's age or life stage. Additionally, Lorraine spoke about how elected officials, policymakers, and local leaders can advocate for the types of housing and designs that communities need so their residents can live safely and comfortably. One interesting example of community involvement is changing building codes to allow for "accessory dwelling units" that would enable seniors to live in proximity to helpful adults. Many states have made these units legal.

Lorraine's program highlighted topics such as how to make homes safe, do-it-yourself fixes, and professional upgrades. She also spoke about common sense tips such as removing area rugs, utilizing more indoor and outdoor lighting, maintaining smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, decluttering, the use of levers instead of knobs, and ensuring that the home has easy access for the residents and other visitors.

Caring for a home and a yard is work. Sturdy steps, handrails, clean pathways, lighting, entrance benches, simple landscaping, and safe snow removal are precautions that residents should monitor. Lorraine admonished the audience. "Just because you can do it doesn't mean you should do it!"

<http://aarp.org/livable> has a wealth of information for residents and community leaders

<http://aarp.org/homefit> has a copy of the HomeFitGuide

<http://aarpfoundation.org/heretostay> has tips for manageable home maintenance

Newsletter

Iowa Retired School Personnel Association

3221 Cheyenne Blvd.
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Black, Don	Newton, IA	Jasper County Unit
Bucher, Helen	New English, IA	Keokuk County Unit
Burken, Rosemary	Davenport, IA	Davenport Area Unit
Burnstedt, Judith	Ottumwa, IA	Wapello County Unit
Butler, Barbara	Boone, IA	Boone County Unit
Carroll, Janice	Waterloo, IA	Blackhawk County Unit
Clubb, Sheila	New English, IA	Keokuk County Unit
Delzell, Doug	Sioux City, IA	Sioux City Retired Educators
Dodge, Larry	Waterloo, IA	Blackhawk County Unit
Foland, Linda	Osceola, IA	Clark County Unit
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Gaulke, Maurice	Ackley, IA	Harden County Unit
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Hammack, Mary	Sioux City, IA	Sioux City Retired Educators
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Sweet, Joe	Knoxville, IA	Marion County Unit
Thompson, Paul	Marshalltown, IA	Marshall County Unit
Warnstadt, Steve	Sioux City, IA	Sioux City Retired Educators
Webber, Doris	Waterloo, IA	Blackhawk County Unit
Whitmer, Collene	Eden Prairie, MN	Dallas County Unit
Williams, Audra (Bud)	Iowa City, IA	Johnson County Unit
Williams, Donna J	Marshalltown, IA	No Unit
Wilson, JoAnn	Lincoln, NE	Clark County Unit

PLEASE NOTE: Send relevant notices, change of address, and/or subscription cancellations to rmswanson1936@gmail.com

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