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SSURA news

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

"When the economy sank, so did Ohio's five public pension funds. Now, to make up lost ground, the state's public workers might have to contribute more, and retirees could see benefits cut."
Steve Wartenbert, Columbus Dispatch, September 1, 2009

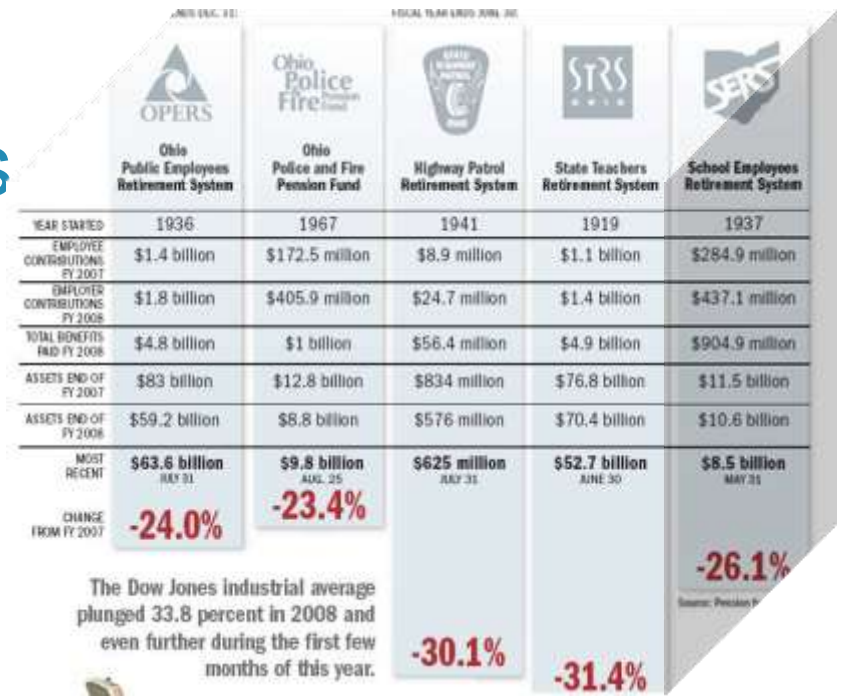
Health care crisis for retirees

In an article in the Columbus Dispatch on 9/1/09 by Steve Wartenberg noted that the Ohio Retirement Study Council will meet on September 9th to discuss changes proposed by each of the five retirement boards. Some of the recommended changes include:

- Increase employee & employer contributions;
- Increase minimum retirement age;
- Eliminate, reduce or delay annual cost-of-living adjustments.

Any contribution or benefit changes recommended by the five pension funds' boards must be approved by the legislature, according to Aristotle Hutras, Executive Director of the council.

Folks, it's time to get in touch with your legislators!



Graphic from the Columbus Dispatch, September 1, 2009



STRS Proposes Changes

Having lost so much money with the stock market crisis, STRS Board members met and proposed changes to the retirement system to try and balance their income and expenditures. The requirement is to balance liabilities and expenditures so they can pay current liabilities within a 30-year period. With the proposed changes they reduced their funding liability to 33.4 years. Proposed changes include reducing the cost-of-living adjustment in 2011 from 3% to 2% for current members and 1.5% for those who retire on or after 7/1/11. Employee contributions will increase in 2011 and employer contributions will increase in 2016, each by 2.5%. The plan would also push back the age at which members can retire with full benefits and change the calculation for final average salary.



SSURA Fall Meeting set for October 19th

Meeting to coincide with OPERS and STRS local seminars to discuss upcoming changes in health coverage for retirees

The SSURA Executive Board has set the **Fall 2009 meeting** for **Monday, October 19th, from 11:30am to 1:00pm**, in the campus deli room on the Mercy Campus of SOMC. This meeting falls between the 10am and 1pm open enrollment education seminars for OPERS members just across the street at the Friends Center. SSURA has also invited John Buch from STRS to hold a health care meeting on SSU campus in ATC132 at 10:00am. Members are encouraged to attend either the OPERS or STRS

Seminars and then meet together in the Campus Deli room in the Mercy building (will post signs). Bring your own lunch and attend the Fall business meeting which will include a discussion about the health care crisis and legislative action for Ohio pensions.

At this meeting there will also be an election of officers for the 2009-10 year and committees may be re-established. The slate of officers for the 2009-10 year include the following:

Steve Midkiff, President
Jackie Evans, Vice President
Mary Tomlin, Treasurer
Judy Nolfi, Secretary
Marcia Tackett, Communications

Kathleen Simon will continue to serve on the Executive Board as Past President.

Committees:

- Constitution & Bylaws
- Activities
- Membership
- Newsletter/Web Page

JOIN THE LIFE CENTER FOR FREE?



As part of a program called Silver Sneakers, Medicare eligible retirees can join the Life Center for free. Interested? Attend the October 19th SSURA meeting as a representative from the Life Center will be on hand to discuss how you can join for free.



(Angela Henderson with Kathleen Simon, SSURA President)

Angela Henderson addresses SSURA members at the May meeting. SSURA is now officially housed in Alumni and Retiree Affairs Office, through the SSU Foundation. Angela is the Assistant Director of Alumni/Retiree Affairs.

Picture courtesy of Gary Gemmer.

SSURA Fall 2009 Picnic



On June 6, 2009, approximately 20 SSURA members and their guests met at Sharon Scott's home on Tipton Lane. Attendees spent the afternoon catching up on the activities of former co-workers and enjoying a wide variety of picnic foods including a cake for former bookstore manager Goldie Weddinton, who was about to celebrate her 91st birthday.

Several people worked hard to make this day a success, especially the Activities Committee, Shirley Crothers-Marley, Cathy Chaffin, Jackie Evans, and Betty Forbes, who organized the event and Gary Gemmer, who took the pictures.

A very special thank you goes to Sharon Scott for allowing us to meet at her beautiful home on the Ohio River. Her hospitality made the first SSURA social event a great success.

Ramblin' Retirees

Each newsletter we'll take a look at how some of our retirees are enjoying life after work at SSU. In this edition Tess & Steve Midkiff take us to England.



After retiring in June of 2008, we decided our first trip out of the country would be to London. We left on May 16, 2009. The drive to our hotel was our first experience in driving/riding on the “wrong” side of the road – a little unnerving. Following breakfast on Monday morning, we took a tour to get our bearings and walk past Big Ben, Westminster Cathedral, and Buckingham Palace (no we didn't see the Queen). In the afternoon, we went off on our own and took a “flight” on the London Eye. It's a huge, ferris wheel with pods which hold 25 people. It has 32 egg shaped pods and the ride takes 30 minutes allowing you a view 25 miles in the distance.

Following, the Eye and dinner - I will admit the food in London was unremarkable - we saw a production of Billy Elliott at the Victoria Palace Theatre near our hotel. The production was wonderful not surprisingly since the show had just been nominated for several Tony Awards. Steve and I both enjoyed it and that is a surprise since musicals are not usually his thing.

On Tuesday we were off on a bus trip to Kent to see Leeds Castle. It was absolutely beautiful! It is a small castle build in 1119 and totally surrounded by a moat. It became the property of the Queen of England in 1278 and was associated with several medieval Queens of England including Queen Isabella, Anne of Bohemia, Joan of Navarre, Catherine de Valois. King Henry VIII transformed the castle into a Royal palace in honour of his first wife, Katherine of Aragon. After building a major expansion, he only spent one night in the castle.



We were then off to Canterbury Cathedral. When we arrived I was a bit surprised. I was expecting the Cathedral to be in a grassy glade, instead we were dropped in an open air shopping mall and followed our guide to the Cathedral passing the Gap, Esprit, etc. and numerous restaurants such as Pizza Hut. The biggest surprise was that immediately adjacent to the very old and historic carved Cathedral archway, was a MacDonald's. Steve reminded me that “pilgrims” were always offered places to buy food and drink when they came to Canterbury Cathedral so I guess it was not so unusual.



On Tuesday we found a Starbucks, and sat across from the British Museum until it opened.. It was immense and would have taken days to see even a portion of the treasures. We did see, the Rosetta Stone, a Statue from Easter Island, effigy pipes from Tremper Mound here in Scioto County oddly enough, the Elgin Marbles, and my favorite the huge Assyrian winged bull statues.



Thursday we took a bus trip to Bath and Stonehenge. Steve had been waiting for this part of the trip. The weather was perfect. In fact we had only had a slight drizzle one afternoon during our entire trip. Stonehenge was positioned on an open plane. During our visit, there were while fluffy clouds, a blue sky, and a warm breeze. You could not ask for more. We walked slowly around the monument and were amazed at the feeling of history and time which surrounded it. It was definitely worth seeing!

On Friday - our last day in London - we got back on the Tube and went off to the Tower of London. The exhibits were wonderful. We saw the Royal jewels – crowns, scepters, etc. We also saw a special exhibit of King Henry the VIII's armor – including armor for his horses. It was educational to see the interesting carvings and flourishes and to see how the size of his armor grew as his girth increased over the years. After the tour of the Tower and the grounds, we got lunch and took it on board a riverboat and ate while traveling up the Thames.

Our last night in town, we went to the Shakespeare Pub and had John Smith beer (quite good), fish and chips and “bangers and mash” - sausages and mashed potatoes. Steve's fish came with “mushy peas” which were actually dried peas which had been cooked and mashed like potatoes. The food was definitely an experience.

While in London, I was able to offer email and Facebook updates on our travel as it occurred. No need for a phone. I just dropped by restaurants called Pret A Manger each day and synched my IPOD Touch to get and send emails. Neat! We were even able to hear that we would be able to close on our new house in McDermott while we were in London. Two weeks after our return we moved 26 years worth of treasures to our new home. Whew!