

# Voices of Experience

## Newsletter for OEA-Retired

Omaha Education Association–Retired is an affiliate of NSEA-Retired and NEA-Retired  
Roger Rea, Editor – email: rrea68154@yahoo.com [www.OEAretired.org](http://www.OEAretired.org) October 2022

### Oct. 20 meeting to hear concerns on OSERS transition to NPERS

LB 147 mandated that the management and governance of the Omaha School Employees' Retirement System (OSERS) be transferred to the Nebraska Public Employee Retirement Systems (NPERS), with the transfer to be completed by September 1, 2024. The bill created an interim board of trustees to facilitate the transfer, and charged the OPS Board of Education with making all final decisions regarding OSERS during the transfer process. A steering committee has been established to manage the transfer. The steering committee has representatives from OPS, OSERS and NPERS.

Jane Erdenberger, the current OPS Board of Education Vice President and a retired OPS teacher, has been appointed as one of the OSERS Transition Trustees. Jane has volunteered to attend the October 20 meeting of OEA-Retired to collect any questions and hear any concerns or feedback on the transition.

There are several items that will need to be

addressed as the transition to management of the retirement system by the state is completed. Among them: *When will retirement checks be sent to retirees?* Currently OSERS pays benefits on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the month for the prior month; NPERS pays benefits on the last working day of the month for that month. *How will the COLA adjustments be handled?* Currently OSERS pays the general COLA on a different schedule and using a different calculation method than does NPERS. *How will the Medical COLA be addressed?* NPERS does not have a Medical COLA benefit.

The Thursday, October 20<sup>th</sup> meeting will be an in-person meeting at the OEA Office, 4202 S. 57<sup>th</sup> Street, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Following CDC guidelines, face masks are optional for this meeting. If you need driving directions, please call the OEA office at 402-346-0400. Mark your calendars for the meeting, and bring your questions!

## President's Message

By: Walta Sue Dodd, OEA-Retired President

*"As a retired educator, I have seen first-hand the impact a great education can have on a young person's life. I will always be a champion for public schools, our teachers, and our children."* **Alma Adams**

I am sorry to announce that Cecelia Carter retired as OSERS executive director, effective September 16, 2022. She has returned to Kansas City. We invite the OSERS Director to speak at our October meeting each year, but Cecelia will not be at our October 20 meeting. Instead, a representative from the OPS School Board/OPS Transition Team will attend to answer questions.

The Nebraska Public Employees Retirement Systems (NPERS) Board met on September 19, 2022. The meeting contained a status report on transferring management of OSERS to NPERS. No final transition team has been formed, pending approval of a third-

party vendor to manage the transition. Possible candidates to manage the transition have until October 19<sup>th</sup> to submit their bids.

The Steering Committee did make one important recommendation. The Steering Committee affirmed that OSERS retirees will receive their annuity payments on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the month in order to minimize the impact on members once the transition is complete.

If you have any questions concerning the transition of OSERS management, please attend our October 20, 2022, membership meeting, 10:00 am at the OEA office, 4202 South 57<sup>th</sup> Street.

## Changes underway at OSERS

Long-time OSERS benefits manager Jim Ellis retired at the end of the 2021-22 school year. NPERS

has named Tyler Cumings to shadow Jim to become better acquainted with the job of managing the unique

benefits that OSERS offers its members. Tyler is the Benefits Manager and former Board Secretary for NPERS. He spends two days a week in Omaha, and has full access to the computer system used by both OSERS and OPS.

At the January 2022 meeting of the OSERS Board, a decision was made to change to quarterly meetings for the OSERS Board. The quarterly meetings are scheduled for March, June, September, and December. The OSERS Board reserved the right to modify the meeting schedule and/or schedule additional meetings if necessary. Since all final decisions on retirement are now vested with the OPS Board of Education, the traditional work of the OSERS Board is now being handled by the OPS Board of Education. Information about OSERS can be found at:

Good afternoon all,

It is with mixed emotions that I say goodbye as I transition into my "Third Chapter," that is my retirement. I want to thank the [active-member and retiree] Associations for all the warm greetings I received when I arrived in Omaha back in March 2016. We have had some challenging times over the years with navigating through the legislative process and the pandemic, and I thank you for your support when facing these challenges.

If you have never read "*The Third Chapter: Passion, Risk, and Adventure in the 25 Years After 50*" by Dr. Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (Harvard), I highly recommend the read. So ... know that I am off to a new adventure and taking a bit of risk to follow my passion.

Hugs to all ... until our paths cross again!

Best Regards,

**Cecelia M. Carter**, OSERS Chief Administrative Officer

[www.ops.org/retirement](http://www.ops.org/retirement). OSERS now has 5,251 annuitant members.

Cecelia Carter, OSERS Director, retired on September 16, 2022. Before leaving office, Cecelia wrote an open letter to members of OSERS. She asked that the letter (see box above) be shared with OEA-Retired members.

## OEA-Retired welcomes Brodkey to Board

OEA-Retired officers are elected at the annual meeting each spring. This year's annual meeting was held on May 12<sup>th</sup>. Walta Sue Dodd was re-elected as OEA-Retired President; Cheryl Richardson was re-elected as OEA-Retired Vice President, and Deborah Pauley was re-elected as one of the OEA-Retired At-Large Directors. There were no nominations for the second At-Large Director position prior to the meeting, so the Board declared that position vacant and asked the members attending the annual meeting to submit letters of interest if they wished to be a candidate for that position. OEA-Retired Bylaws state that vacancies on the Board are to be filled by appointment for the remainder of any unexpired term.

Sherry Brodkey submitted a letter of interest after the general meeting. After discussion and consideration of the qualifications for the position, the Board unanimously appointed Sherry to the at-large position. OEA-Retired officers serve three-year terms, with a maximum of two consecutive terms in any one position.

Sherry has a long history of involvement with OEA and is recently retired. She is a 28-year veteran teacher with OPS, having taught 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade at various schools. She retired in 2020, and was looking to continue her involvement in a leadership role.

Sherry served as an OEA Building Association Representative (AR) while actively teaching. She was one of the Elementary Representatives on the OEA Board of Directors and served as Chair of the OEA Instructional Advocacy Committee and the OEA Retirement Committee. She has attended both NSEA Delegate Assembly and NEA Representative Assembly

for several years. She completed the NSEA Leadership Institute and related conference and workshops.

When asked why she wanted to serve on the OEA-Retired Board, Sherry said, "*Over the years, I have developed an appreciation for the importance of serving our members, and have a vested interest in the retirement system.*" She enjoys reading many types of literature, especially historical fiction. She is a member of an educators' book club, which meets monthly. Welcome aboard, Sherry Brodkey!

The OEA-Retired officers for 2022-2023, and their terms of office, are:

**President** = Walta Sue Dodd (2022-2025)

**Vice President** = Cheryl Richardson (2022-2025)

**Secretary** = Ruby M. Davis (2020-2023)

**At-large Directors** = Sue Kalina (2020-2023); Doreen Jankovich (2020-2023); Deborah Pauley (2022-2025); Sherry Brodkey (2022-2025)

**Bookkeeper and Newsletter** = Roger Rea

## OEA-Retired meeting calendar set

OEA-Retired will have four general meetings this year. The meetings will be held either via Zoom or in-person at the OEA office, 4202 South 57<sup>th</sup> Street, from 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. The type of meeting (Zoom or in-person) will be announced in *Voices of Experience* prior to each meeting. The meeting dates and tentative programs as well as NSEA-Retired meetings of note are:

**Oct. 20, Thurs.** – OSERS update

**Oct. 18, Tues.** NSEA-Retired Fall Conference in Grand Island

**Dec. 1, Thurs.** – Tax Tips and Tips on Wills and Estate Planning (Bridget O'Malley)

**March 16, Thurs.** – NEA Member Benefits; Legislative Update

**April 27, Thurs.** – NSEA-Retired Spring Conference, Lauritzen Gardens

**April 28-29, Fri. and Sat.** – NSEA Delegate Assembly (Lincoln)

**May 18, Thurs.** – Technology for Seniors; OEA-Retired elections

If OPS schools are closed or delayed due to inclement weather on the date of our meeting, the OEA-Retired in-person meeting will be canceled. OEA-Retired will not meet in person if OPS schools are closed for health reasons. Notice will be sent out if the session is re-scheduled for a later date.

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## UNL Osher Lifelong Learning awaits adults this fall

By: Patricia Saldana, Communications Associate, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI)

Insights into the Nebraska State Prison System, archaeological excavations to uncover ancient Rome and the founders of the American Republic, why public health matters, and a conversation about the Ukraine. These are among the varied courses to be offered by the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (OLLI at UNL) during its second term this fall beginning in October. There are 125 OLLI programs across the country – all are affiliated with an institution of higher learning in their state.

OLLI at UNL is a membership-based program specifically designed for adults age 50 years and older who appreciate that curiosity never retires. In addition to noncredit courses and events, OLLI offers travel opportunities to places across the United States and internationally. OLLI is about the love of learning. No tests. No grades. No problem.

The ability to connect via Zoom has expanded the OLLI at UNL program. *“For the last couple of years, we have been delivering programs online through live Zoom stream and on demand through a platform called Canvas,”* said Bob Michl, director of the OLLI at UNL program. *“We strive to deliver programming which meets the needs of older adults in Nebraska no matter where they live.”*

OLLI at UNL has members in 62 communities

across Nebraska, many of whom live in Omaha. OLLI offers courses in-person in a classroom, via live-stream on Zoom, and on-demand. Programmed, on-demand classes are recorded courses where you watch on your own time and at your convenience.

Registration for the second term begins October 11 with classes starting October 24. Annual membership is \$75. Each OLLI class has a one-time charge of \$10. Courses that are longer than one session have an additional \$5 per session charge. Programmed, on-demand classes are offered as a package of several courses for a single fee of \$30.

*“Fall is a great time for lifelong learners to reconnect for stimulating lectures and conversation,”* said Michl. *“Our fall symposium this year is focused on global food security. We have speakers from the World Food Bank in Africa, a senior researcher from the International Food Policy Research Institute in Washington, D.C. and the past president of Bread for the World who will be our speakers.”* Participants can attend in-person or live on Zoom. The symposium takes place on Saturday, October 22, at UNL’s East Campus Union in Lincoln.

To learn more, view a catalog, or register, visit <https://olli.unl.edu>. If you have questions, send an email to [olli@unl.edu](mailto:olli@unl.edu), or call the OLLI office at 402-472-6265.

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## Omaha Medicare information sessions on Nov. 10

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska will once again host Medicare information seminars around the state. Four in-person seminars will be held in Omaha, Lincoln, Norfolk and Kearney. The Omaha in-person seminars, which will last about 90 minutes, will be held at the OPS TAC Building, 3215 Cuming Street, on Thursday, November 10 at 9:30 a.m. with a repeat at 1:30 p.m. On-site registration will begin 30 minutes prior to the start of the session.

Four virtual seminars will be held on: Tues., Oct. 25 (2 pm); Thurs., Nov. 3 (9 am); Mon., Nov. 7 (2 pm); and Wed., Nov. 9 (9 am). The virtual seminars will last about an hour. To help facilitate questions, the virtual seminars will be limited to about 30 participants per session.

The seminars will cover Medicare eligibility and coverage as well as details on Educators’ Medicare Supplement, the Medicare supplement endorsed by NSEA-Retired and underwritten by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska. Educators’ Medicare Supplement has both Plan F and Plan G supplements. It is only available to EHA subscribers and/or NSEA-Retired members and their spouses when they turn 65. Educators’ Medicare supplement pays for medical costs that Medicare does not cover, and it has an optional dental plan that is superior to any individual dental plan offered to Medicare subscribers.

The same information will be provided at all of the seminars, whether in-person or virtual, so you only need to attend one of the seminars to get full

*Reminder: Oct. 15 – Dec. 7 is open enrollment for Part D, drug coverage. Visit: [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov)*

information. Registration for the seminars is required. To register for any of the seminars, visit [nebraskablue.com/NSEAseminars](http://nebraskablue.com/NSEAseminars). You will need a valid email address to register, and you will get a confirmation email when you register. You need to register at least one week prior to the date of the seminar you choose. You may call Blue Cross at 877-721-2583 for assistance.

## OEA-Retired

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### OPS Bond Update

By: Cheryl Richardson

WOW! Thanks to the 2018 Bond Program, the Omaha Public Schools opened four new schools this school year. I was able to attend all four Dedication Programs. These programs were attended by many parents, students that would be attending these schools, as well as interested citizens who voted yes for the Bond Program. Each school has its own unique design, lots of windows for natural lighting, brilliant technology, bright colors, and modern furniture to meet the needs of every student. I could go on and on about how these schools will meet the needs of the future. If you can, take time to visit one of the new schools.

Buena Vista High School, located at 60<sup>th</sup> and L, has a 1500 student capacity. It will also be home to a YMCA Express outfitted with outstanding exercise equipment. One World Clinic is also located on campus. Westview High School, located at 156<sup>th</sup> and Ida Street, has a 1500 student capacity. A YMCA is located on this campus through a partnership with the Omaha Public Schools. OPS contributes space for a cycling studio child watch and YMCA offices needed to run their program at Westview. In turn, the YMCA contributed funds to support the construction of an aquatics center consisting of a six-lane swimming pool with spectator seating and a leisure pool area. The YMCA and OPS share access to the auxiliary gym, which will offer many activity options. Both new high schools started the year with freshmen and sophomores. Juniors will be added in 2023 and seniors in 2024.

Pine Elementary School, located on 10<sup>th</sup> and Pine, has opened and has a 600 student capacity. It has an enormous gym as they were able to refurbish the gym from Grace Bible College. High schools may reserve practice time in the gym. Forest Station,

located at 1000 North Fort Crook Road, has a 600 student capacity. When you walk into the school, you are reminded of the forest as its color scheme was chosen from forest greens, blues, brown and other nature colors. Bluestem Middle School, located at 42<sup>nd</sup> and U Street, has a 1000 student capacity. It is the last new school being built and will be ready for the 2023-2024 school year.

Older schools were not forgotten in the 2018 Bond Program. Adams, Catlin, Conestoga, Edison, Highland and King Elementary Schools all received capital improvements (capital improvements increase the building system effectiveness). Edison had its safe room turned into two classrooms, and three more rooms were added; Highland received an eleven-room addition; Masters added four rooms; Pinewood added three classrooms; and Spring Lake had a ten-room addition.

Middle Schools receiving capital Improvements and additions were Lewis and Clark (15 rooms were added) and Morton (9 rooms added). High Schools that received capital improvements were Benson, Bryan, Burke, Central, North, and Northwest. South and Central High Schools have requested some work this fall.

The start of the 2022-2023 School year has seen some great improvements to the Omaha Public Schools' buildings. All this took place thanks to the Omaha citizens' approval of the 2014 and 2018 Bond Programs and the assistance of the staff of the Omaha Public schools.

**Pay your OEA-Retired dues now!** Annual dues for the combined retired organizations (NEA-Retired, NSEA-Retired, and OEA-Retired) are \$70 for the 2022-23 association year. If you are an annual member, be sure to return the dues notice you received in August along with your annual dues payment in order to keep your member benefits intact! Life members do not pay annual dues, and do not receive dues notices each August.

In May, 2022, OEA-Retired had 67 annual members, and 809 lifetime members.