



ACREA News

Celebrating 49 Years of Service Since 1973

Social Security Benefits Rise 8.7% COLA Increase for 2023

In case you missed it, the Social Security Administration (SSA) announced a significant increase for the coming year -- [an 8.7% increase in Social Security benefits](#) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments starting January 2023 for COLA (Cost-of-Living Adjustments). <https://www.ssa.gov/cola/>

On average, Social Security benefits will increase by more than \$140 per month starting in January. The SSA will mail (or email) COLA notices throughout the month of December to retirement, survivors, and disability beneficiaries, SSI recipients, and representative payees. If you want to know your new benefit amount sooner, you can securely obtain your Social Security COLA notice online -- go to the Message Center in [your personal Social Security account](#). <https://www.ssa.gov/myaccount/>

For an update on County pension COLAs, see page 5. ❖

Medicare Premiums Drop

For Medicare, the [news is also good](#). The standard monthly premium for Medicare Part B enrollees will be \$164.90 for 2023, a decrease of \$5.20 from \$170.10 in 2022.

The annual deductible for all Medicare Part B beneficiaries is \$226 in 2023, a decrease of \$7 from the annual deductible of \$233 in 2022. <https://bit.ly/3U4dDxu> ❖

ACERS Trust Fund Remains “Strong”

Recent investment markets have been volatile, but Executive Director and Chief Investment Officer **Susie Ardeshir** of Arlington County Employees' Retirement System (ACERS) reports that, long-term, the fund is strong, despite a lot of “noise” in the market.

These updates were shared at the fall ACREA luncheon. As of the quarter ending June 30, 2022, the fund was 108% funded. ACERS Retiree Trustee **Rich Alt** noted that he and Trustee **Carl Newby** regularly give input on the pension fund investments from retirees' point of view. He observed that between what the County and current employees contribute annually, the fund needs to grow by about \$50 million annually to stay 100% funded. The amount needed continues to increase because, as we live longer and more people retire each year, more pension dollars are paid out. ❖

Take a Financial Check-up

Are you doing all you should to ensure your financial health? Check out “[11 Things Every Retiree Should Know](#),” a handy checklist shared with us by **Don Walters**, our Vaya representative. <https://bit.ly/VoyaTips> ❖



**Arlington County Retired
Employees Association, Inc.**
P.O. Box 2183, Vienna, VA 22183

acreainc@gmail.com
www.ACREA-INC.com

2022 Board of Directors

- **Carl Newby**, Chair and Retirement Board Representative/Trustee
- **Lisa Grandle**, Vice Chair
- **Susan Lane**, Secretary
- **Gail Rosner**, Treasurer
- **Melodee Melin**, Membership
- **Jane Eboch**, Newsletter Editor
- **Richard Alt**, Retirement Board Representative/Trustee
- **Karen Albert**
- **Gregg Kurasz**
- **Mary Stephenson**

ACREA announcements, newsletters, and forms are available on our website and our FaceBook page – look for “Arlington County Retired Employees Association.”

If you have a computer and received a hard copy of this newsletter, please consider letting ACREA communicate with you by email. You will help us save postage.

Save the Date

Our next luncheon is planned for May 2, 2023. Come for the camaraderie, the updates, and the food! ❖



Chairman's Corner

By Carl Newby

Dormancy: *the state of being temporarily inactive or inoperative.*

Refreshed: *having regained strength or energy.*

The news is good! ACREA came back to life in 2022, refreshed with new energy after two years of forced COVID dormancy. And we started the year with four new volunteers to serve on the Board!!! We are very grateful for the energy brought to the Board by **Lisa Grandle, Gail Rosner, Susan Lane, and Karen Albert**, as well as returning Board members **Gregg Kurasz, Jane Eboch, Mary Stephenson, and Melodee Melin**. Without their help and ideas, I truly don't know what this year would have been like, but I know it would have been sad. We also had assistance from others, including **Nancy Hart, Bob Tilman and Gus Vega**.

We held our traditional Spring and Fall Luncheons this year after a long two-year hiatus. The luncheons were great, and it was good to see so many familiar faces. More than 70 retirees attended each luncheon and enjoyed the social mixer hour and various speakers from the County. We met in the Fellowship Hall at the Little Falls Presbyterian Church. **Chef Gregg** and team prepared great buffet lunches for us and then did all the clean-up. It goes without saying that we are very grateful for their commitment to serving ACREA.

Learning from the last two years and wanting to reach out to those who cannot attend in person, we offered a virtual attendance option at the Fall Luncheon. **Karen Albert** took the lead on this effort and set up the remote meeting. **Susie Ardeshir**, Director of the Retirement Office, graciously volunteered to provide the necessary technology equipment and set-up at the luncheon. It worked!! The virtual meeting was well attended and feedback has been positive.

One lesson we've learned in the last few years is that we must ask questions and tell the County how we want to participate in changes to retiree benefits. *(continued on pg. 3)*

(Chairman's Corner, continued from pg. 2)

Simply stated, the Human Resources Department needs to dialogue with us **before** changes are made to benefits. I hope we sparked some interest in dialogue from DHR at the Fall Luncheon. Look for more on this topic later.

Thanks to all and have a happy holiday season.

Carl ❖

ACREA Luncheons

Spring Luncheon

At our **May 3 luncheon**, members heard remarks from **Matt de Ferranti**, Arlington County Board member since 2018. He discussed the FY 2023 County Budget, and highlighted the investment made in employee compensation. He lauded the resilience of County employees over the last several years, as they responded to challenges related to COVID. He pointed out the importance of continued County support for schools and affordable housing. He answered questions about Metro's future large operating deficit, and the FY 2023 salary increase for County Board members.

Mark Schwartz, Arlington County Manager, highlighted several new initiatives, including collective bargaining with employees, civilian oversight of police, the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), and potential changes to

zoning. These zoning changes involve proposed inclusion of duplexes in areas currently zoned Single Family. ACREA members pointed out the current inflation rate and asked him to be aware of financial challenges that retirees face.

Susie Ardeshir, Retirement Investment Office's new Executive Director and Chief Investment Officer, assured ACREA members that the Arlington County Employees' Retirement System (ACERS) fund is sound, and includes mostly long-term capital investments. **Rich Alt**, ACERS Trustee and Vice President, provided more details about the administration of the Retirement Fund.

Fall Luncheon

The ACREA fall luncheon was held on **October 4**. For the first time, there were both in-person attendees (74) and virtual attendees (9). ACREA hopes to continue this practice at luncheons, as there were positive reviews from remote and in-person participants.

County Manager **Mark Schwartz** reviewed what he considers the most important items for the County. First, Arlington's Missing Middle project is looking into zoning

changes to make more affordable, multi-unit types of residences available in currently single-family dwelling only areas. It is currently a hot topic with community members weighing in on both sides (see article in our County News section, pg. 5).



Second, the County's general and uniformed employees are being offered the option of unionizing with collective bargaining. The three current County employee unions, Police, Fire, and Service, Labor, and Trades, are now allowed to participate in collective bargaining.

ACREA expressed concern that the Employee Council, on which ACREA had a seat to represent retirees' interests, seems to have been dissolved now that employees are being unionized.

A third challenge is making up lost revenue due to a 25% vacancy rate in commercial properties. Many workers are continuing to work outside of the office at least part-time since starting to do so during the COVID pandemic.

Marcy Foster, Human Resources Department (HRD) Director, advised that HRD communicates with retirees via an annual retiree newsletter, responds to retirees who call or email HR staff directly, has a retiree on RFP review committees, and has retiree representatives on the ACERS Board.

It is possible that only about 50% of employees will end up in unions, so the Employee Council may be reconvened to gather input from non-unionized employees and retirees. Ms. Foster

and the ACREA board agreed to work together to create ways retiree input can be offered before final decisions that impact retirees are made.

Amy Rozier, HRD Benefits Manager, stated that the IRS has created a new federal tax withholding form, which HR will send out soon. HRD is working on a more secure form for changing direct deposit requests. She went on to discuss the upcoming nominations for the ACERS trustee and alternate trustee positions. Elections will be held from November 15 – December 4, and winners announced on December 7.

Colleen Donnelly, Health & Welfare Benefits Manager, described the new health insurance policies offered to retirees this year. Retirees under 65 were offered the CIGNA Choice Plan, and retirees 65 and older were offered United Healthcare's (UHC) Medicare

Advantage plan, which replaced the AMWINS supplement plan to basic Medicare.

The UHC Medicare Advantage plan was selected because for many retirees it reduced the monthly premium and requires just one



card, with one contact for Medicare Parts A and B, as well as the prescription drug plan.

It also eliminated the copay for primary care visits and lowered the fee for specialists. This change was made following concerns expressed by ACREA and retirees that therapies used by many retirees did not have a copay under AMWINS, but now have a \$45 copay per session. The terms were re-negotiated and next year's rate for copays for Physical, Speech, and Occupational therapies were negotiated down to \$15 per session starting January 1, 2023.

Ms. Donnelly said that anyone having issues with the UHC Medicare Advantage Plan may contact her for assistance.

VOYA representative **Don Walters** reviewed a tip sheet of things for retirees to do to keep their investments healthy and their estate planning up to date (see pg 1). He also stated that the rate of the Stability of Principal Fund, which is important to and selected by many retirees, is negotiated annually, and is based on what interest rates are at the time of the rate negotiation. ACREA impressed upon Mr. Walters that many retirees were disappointed in the comparably low rate in recent years, and ACREA will work with VOYA to determine how the importance of this fund to retirees can be brought to bear to negotiate the best interest rate.

ACREA 2022 Board of Directors Chair **Carl Newby** conducted the annual membership meeting, where he introduced the ACREA Board members, who were elected at the Spring Luncheon meeting, and stressed that the Board welcomes more help. Treasurer **Gail Rosner** reported that the amount in the ACREA treasury is \$14,556.84. Several door prizes were awarded and a 50-50 drawing was held with a prize of almost \$100 dollars. ❖

County Pension Adjustments

For County pension COLA increases, the numbers are different depending on which retirement chapter in the County Code you are in.

Chapter 21 members get a fixed 1.5% increase every year. **Chapter 46 retirees** get increases based on a set of formulas. Now is a good time to review the formulas as inflation may be a bigger number than usual this year. Below are the formulas taken directly from **Chapter 46** of the Arlington County Code (CPI is the consumer price index):

- A. For the first three percent (3%) increase in CPI, Retirement Allowance Adjustment = the increase in CPI.
- B. For CPI increases between three percent (3%) and twelve percent (12%) Retirement Allowance Adjustment = three percent (3%) + one half (1/2) of the increase greater than three percent (3%).
- C. For CPI increase greater than twelve percent (12%) Retirement Allowance Adjustment = seven and one-half percent (7.5%). ❖

Retiree Resources

Check out the County's new retiree webpage! <https://bit.ly/3NgtmHB>

County News

It Takes a Village

The incident and aftermath of the crash of an auto into the front of **Irelands Four Courts** called for the immediate response of the **Arlington Police Department** and **Fire Department**, as well as **Virginia Hospital Center**. Community support to help the staff and business followed. A medical emergency that struck the ride share driver appears to have caused the vehicle to leave the road and crash into the front of the pub. Fifteen people were injured, several critically. Ireland's Four Courts is located on Wilson Boulevard in the Court House Area.

The quick action of the Arlington police, who evacuated the staff and patrons and provided

emergency medical care, just moments before the auto caught fire, averted an even more serious crisis. The fire was extinguished by the Arlington County Fire Department. The injured were rushed to Virginia Hospital Center.

The larger Arlington community and loyal patrons of the popular Irish pub rallied to provide support through an event at Shirlington's Samuel Beckett's and through a Go Fund Me page that netted over \$95,000 dollars. Although two months have passed, the pub has not been able to complete restoration and re-opening, but efforts continue. **CPHD building inspectors** have determined that the building is structurally sound and repairable. ❖

COVID 19 and Monkeypox

Public health issues continue to be concerns for the County, although the Local Emergency for Arlington County, originally declared in response to the public health threat posed by the Coronavirus (COVID-19), ended Aug. 15, 2022. The [declaration](#) allowed the County to shift to virtual operations, including online permitting, appointments, remote inspections, County Board and Commission meetings, as well as Public Comment. Many of the new tools, strategies, and approaches borne out of the pandemic, however, will continue as the County moves beyond the local emergency declaration. <https://bit.ly/3gPjOHl>

[Monkeypox](#) is a disease caused by the monkeypox virus, which is part of the same family of viruses as smallpox. Monkeypox symptoms are similar to smallpox symptoms, but milder. Monkeypox is rarely fatal. For a fact sheet and treatment resources, visit the County's webpage. <https://www.arlingtonva.us/Monkeypox> ❖

Arlington's "Missing Middle"

For decades, Arlington County has used innovative tools and strategies to increase the supply of affordable housing, yet the need has

outstripped the supply of dwelling units to serve a growing workforce.

In 2020, the County began its Missing Middle Housing Study (MMHS) to explore how new housing types could address Arlington's shortfall in housing supply. A recent article in the *Washington Post* referred to the effort as "a reimagining of the idea of suburbia." The goal is to foster both availability and affordability. In addition to research and study by staff, the County has conducted "community conversations" to gather feedback prior to County Board consideration of proposed implementation measures later this Fall. ❖

Want County News?

Read the latest news on the County's online Newsroom, and sign up for a variety of informative updates. <https://bit.ly/ArIVANews>

Enjoy Arlington's Public Art

Public art is all around Arlington! Since 1979, when art was first negotiated as part of a private development project, Arlington has been an innovator in the field of public art. That first artwork – Nancy Holt's internationally acclaimed *Dark Star Park* – was dedicated in 1984. More than thirty-five years later, Arlington is home to a diverse and rich collection of over seventy permanent public artworks. Self-guided walking or driving tours are highlighted on the [County's webpage](#). <https://bit.ly/3TVJ39X> ❖

Adult Initiative to Help Youth

Project PEACE's Goal 1 has launched a campaign called "[Askable Adult](#)" to build the capacity of Adults in Arlington to be judgment-free, approachable resources and supports for youth in Arlington. The campaign includes a free workshop for parents and adults who work and support youth as well as general awareness about the experiences of youth in Arlington. <https://bit.ly/3fduW0g> ❖

Pickleball Anyone?

Pickleball is a fun, social and friendly court game that can be enjoyed by all ages and skill levels. The Sports and Fitness Industry Association named it the fastest growing sport

in 2021 and 2022. The game can be played indoors or outside – all it takes is a paddle and a plastic ball with holes. It’s played on a badminton-sized court (about 1/3 the size of a tennis court) and combines many elements of tennis, badminton, and ping-pong.

Arlington County has several outdoor & indoor pickleball courts for drop-in play. Outdoor pickleball courts are available at Fort Scott, Glebe Road, Gunston, Lubber Run & Walter Reed Parks. Indoor courts are available at Arlington Mill, Carver, Lubber Run, & TJ Community Centers. Classes for seniors are offered through Dept. of Parks and Recreation’s 55+ Program. You can also sign up on the [County’s website to stay updated on pickleball](https://bit.ly/3SKRy5X) in Arlington. <https://bit.ly/3SKRy5X> ❖



New Members?

The interruption in our meetings caused by COVID precautions has made it more difficult for us to know who is retiring and to let them know about ACREA. We encourage current members to reach out to former co-workers and bring them along to our next luncheon. You can help by sharing this newsletter with any who may not be receiving our communications or by directing them to the ACREA website. ❖

In Memoriam

*Remembering ACREA members who died this year
(listed with hometown and date of death)*

Name	Hometown	Department	Date of Death
Bill Profitt	Damascus, VA	DMF	Dec. 4, 2020
John Karinshak	Arlington, VA	Police	Feb. 2, 2022
Fredric I. Hiller	Annandale, VA	DPW	Feb. 7, 2022
David L. Albert	Lancaster, VA	DES	Feb. 16, 2022
Roger B. Qualters	Arlington, VA	Libraries	Mar. 28, 2022
William E. Rogers	Jane Lew, WV	PRCR	Mar. 31, 2022
Michael Burnett	Amissville, VA	Police	April 4, 2022
Constance McAdam	Arlington, VA	PRCR	April 16, 2022
Richard P. Sorrell	Vienna, VA	DTS	May 31, 2022
Patricia McGrady	Springfield, VA	CPHD	Oct. 12, 2022



**P.O. Box 2183
Vienna, VA 22183**

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