



2022 Annual Meeting was Terrific

By Allan Hill

The almost universal reaction of our members as they pulled into Lake Blackshear Resort (LBR) for the 2022 Annual Meeting was, “Wow, this is pretty!” And the almost universal reaction of our members as the 2022 Annual Meeting came to a close was, “Wow, this was a terrific meeting!”

After the presentation of the flag by the Fort Stewart Youth Challenge Academy to open the meeting on Monday, Commissioner Mark Williams of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources welcomed over one hundred attendees to Georgia Veterans’ State Park, site of LBR. As our keynote speaker, Jeannie Coffee of AMBA gave us some helpful ideas about strengthening local chapters. Russel Carlson, DCH Chief Policy Officer, and Louis Amis, Executive Director of the State Health Benefit Plan (SHBP), then

presented an update on open enrollment and the upcoming rebid for SHBP vendors. Interestingly, Mr. Carlson mentioned the need for more staff in state government and encouraged us to recommend such a career to our friends and families.

Following the update by DCH, Jim Potvin, Executive Director of ERSGA, discussed the health of our retirement fund. Mr. Potvin stressed that while he was pleased that ERS was able to grant a COLA, (albeit not as much as we would have liked), his number one priority was ensuring that our monthly benefits would not be compromised. Because of the efforts of GSRA during the recent Legislative Session, future COLA’s will be pre-funded, he said, though he couldn’t say at what percentage. Once the ERSGA presentation concluded, video presentations to the

membership by both gubernatorial candidates, Governor Brian Kemp and Stacey Abrams, were shown



Members salute the flag as the Annual Meeting opens

After Monday's general session and workshops, members made their way to the Welcome Reception, a short walk away at the scenic lakeside Marina Grill, where singer and guitarist Josh Carson entertained. Catching up with old friends and co-workers, they enjoyed the cash bar and a tempting selection of hors d'oeuvres. The highlight of the evening was undoubtedly the world premiere of *The Ballad of a Retired State Employee* ([see the video at the GSRA website](#)), featuring GSRA State Secretary Allan Hill on guitar and vocals.



Members enjoying the entertainment at the Welcome Reception



Members having a good time at the Welcome Reception

On Tuesday, members again attended the workshops of their choice in the morning before convening in the auditorium for lunch. The staff at LBR provided us with exceptional service and a great buffet with turkey and dressing, pork tenderloin, and all the fixings.

Following lunch, GSRA President Beverly Littlefield conducted the business meeting, introducing Chuck and Chuck (Freedman and Clay) for the Legislative Report,



The two Chucks, Clay and Freedman, presented the Legislative Update

Allan Hill for the minutes of the 2021 Business meeting, and Harold Grindle for the Treasurer's report. Marlene Autry presented the Amendments to the By-laws, and Sadie Rogers reported on the slate of nominations for officers and Board members for 2023. Sadie remarked on the difficulty of finding people willing to serve. Many of our Board members have served for ten years or more, and new blood is desperately needed. Beverly then called for a motion to

adopt the results of the on-line election, which was approved by acclamation. Beverly Littlefield, Harold Grindle and Allan Hill will continue in their offices. Thanks to Judy Bryson, Sadie Rogers and Dan Coffee for each agreeing to serve a two-year term as At-large Board members.

At the end of the Business Meeting, members were more than ready for one of the favorite traditions of the in-person annual meetings, the drawing for door prizes. As in the past, the local chapters, as well as our vendors and partners, and a local Home Depot, outdid themselves in providing a wonderful assortment of door prizes, which members used their provided tickets to vie for chances to win. Some members were even lucky enough to walk away with more than one door prize! Following the drawings, the meeting concluded.



Recognizing our vendors and partners before the door prize drawings

Against a backdrop of perfect weather and the welcoming atmosphere of Lake Blackshear Resort, the enthusiasm of being together again was contagious. Smiles, good feelings, and warm greetings to long-time friends and co-workers were ubiquitous during the 2022 Annual Meeting. All in all, it was a terrific meeting!



Lake Blackshear glows in the sunset

Thank You

The GSRA Board wishes to thank the intrepid Annual Meeting Planning Committee members, Kip Mann, Allan Hill, Laura Pike, and Rhonda Floyd, for their tireless and brilliant efforts towards planning and executing the 2022 Annual Meeting. You guys rock!

Survey to Determine Future of the Annual Meeting

While the 2022 was a huge success, only 97 members registered. In 2019, over 200 registered.

The Annual Meeting takes a lot of work, months of planning and a lot of money. At some point, we have to ask if it's all worth it for such a small turnout. GSRA by-laws require an Annual Business meeting; the presentations, workshops, luncheon and reception are all done to make the meeting fun and memorable.

During the pandemic, we conducted the business meeting virtually. The Board met via ZOOM and members attended on the GSRA website. Is that the future of the Annual Meeting? Is a one-day meeting at a central location

such as Macon the future? Perhaps regional meetings would encourage and strengthen local chapters.

The Annual Meeting Planning Committee is visiting the Columbus Iron Works in November in preparation for the 2023 Annual Meeting. Before deciding on a site for next year, GSRA will conduct a survey to gauge the feelings of the membership on the meeting. Please take a moment to give us your feedback. The future of the Annual Meeting depends on it.

Local Chapter News

East Metro

The East Metro local chapter held a meeting September 22 at First Baptist Church of Covington with 30 participants in attendance. Chick-Fil-A provided lunch, and the featured speaker for the meeting was GSRA President Beverly Littlefield. Beverly spoke about plans for the upcoming year, and GSRA's continuing efforts to pursue a 3% COLA. She also emphasized the importance of members responding to any Action Alerts GSRA sends out during the upcoming session.



East Metro members



East Metro Members enjoy Chick-Fil-A lunch

VOTE

Consider GSRA Pension Deduction

Would you like to make your life just a little bit easier? Did you know you can start by signing up for Pension Deduction to pay your GSRA membership dues? Once you sign up, you can rest easy that your dues will be kept up to date, and that is one due date you will not have to remember.

For those of you who have not yet taken advantage of Pension Deduction and would like to, please visit our website at www.mygsra.com, and you will find the Pension

Deduction form there OR call the GSRA office at (770)312-2799 and we will be glad to mail one to you.

The dues deduction is \$1.67 per month. Not only does this keep your membership automatically active, it also provides financial stability for the association.

Please consider making the switch to Pension Deduction, and do not hesitate to let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

Get to Know Your GSRA Organization Members

From time to time we like to highlight different members of GSRA. Our members come from all areas of our state and are retired from all areas of state government. This month we are featuring Judy Bryson, Vice-President and Treasurer of the Columbus-West Georgia local chapter.



Judy Bryson

Columbus-West Georgia Chapter
Vice-President and Treasurer

Judy Bryson joined GSRA after retiring from the Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) in 2017. She became active with the West Georgia/Columbus GSRA local chapter after relocating back to the Columbus area. She currently serves as the chapter's vice president and treasurer.

Judy knew GSRA was the type of organization she wanted to be involved with after hearing about it from Ray Josey, President of the Valdosta GSRA chapter. Having always valued public sector work, she could continue to support state retirees, learn, and work on issues of importance to state retirees, and build valuable relationships through GSRA.

During her 30-year tenure with the GDOL, Judy served in six different workforce development roles under 6 different administrations. Over the course of twelve years, she served in three positions under Commissioner Michael Thurmond, including executive assistant, chief of staff and deputy commissioner. In these roles, she managed a budget of over \$500 million dollars, an Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund of \$3 billion, and daily operations for 4000 staff members in over a hundred locations throughout the State of

Georgia. Her other roles with the GDOL included: Recipient Services Section Chief for the Employment and Training Division, Administrative Services Coordinator, and Assistant Director for Field Services.

Prior to joining state government, Judy served in community and economic development roles with the city of Savannah, where she administered the Community Development Block Grant Program. Before that, she worked in Washington, D.C., involved in program and legislative analysis for the National Council for Urban Economic Development.

Judy received a BS degree in Political Science from Spelman College and a master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Pittsburgh.

Judy is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and is involved with various projects being undertaken by her local Spelman College alumni association in Columbus. She is a 5th generation family member of Branch Hebron Baptist Church in Meriwether County, Georgia. She enjoys travel, spending time with her many family members and friends, and contributing to causes of importance to her.

April New Members

Name	County		Name	County		Name	County
James Abson	Fulton		Mary Greenfield	Monroe		Sarah Kathleen Oxford	Lamar
Gloria Ambrose	Henry		Karen Gulley	Cobb		Donald Peacock	Upson
Mohamed Arafa	Cobb		Louis Gunnels	Baldwin		Lee Pendergrass	DeKalb
Tonya Awbrey	Coweta		Chad Hartley	Glynn		Polly Penson	Madison
Karen Bailey	Forsyth		Vicki Helms	Upson		Darlene Peterson	DeKalb
Frances Brooks	Fulton		Patricia Hicks	Baldwin		Nancy Pisor	Fulton
Clara Brown	Richmond		Otis Hicks	Brantley		Paulette Robbins	Hancock
Laura Champion	Gwinnett		Carol Holmes	Fulton		Sabrina Rogers	Randolph
Judy Cooper	Dawson		Linda Howard	Dougherty		Judith Small-Benn-Wright	Gwinnett
David Coper	Douglas		Dianne Ivins	Henry		James Sutton	Spalding
James Cothorn	Wayne		Teresa Larry	Chatham		Pamela Terrell	Newton
Lera Cox	Baldwin		Sharon Lockett	Richmond		Janice Thomas	Dooly
Regina Denton	Henry		Ivan Mason	Lee		Randy Tillman	Monroe
Elizabeth Dixon	Chatham		Junius Miles	White		Elois Warren	Baldwin
Beverly Dixon	Fulton		Sherri Mobley	Haralson		Sabrina Watson	Cherokee
Dia Fennell	Tattall		Rhonda Morrison	DeKalb		Laurie Wentworth	Dawson
Janet Freeman	Monroe		Colleen Mousinho	Gwinnett		Laurie Willis	Colquitt
Edginald Gibbons	Washington		Tim Nelms	Henry			



Donate to GSRA Legal Fund

GSRA's Legal Fund was established as a dedicated legal fund in the event that leadership, on behalf of its members, ever has to retain legal counsel. The fund will be used to cover all appropriate legal fees related to ensuring that retiree benefits are not reduced or eliminated.

Every donation makes a difference. For more information and to donate to this fund click on the link below.

[GSRA Legal Fund](#)



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APCU serves State and Federal workers, retirees and their families in Georgia. Visit APCU's exhibitor table at GSRA. For more information, visit apcu.com, or call us at (404) 768-4726 or Toll-free at (800) 843-5433.



APCU partners with Member Wealth Management, a financial services program, to help our members with financial planning, investments, insurance, as well as retirement and estate planning strategies.

APCU has invited Shavon Ramon, a Managing Associate with Member Wealth Management, to offer a great workshop, "Money Talk 101", at GSRA. This seminar is designed to facilitate conversations around financial milestones for retirees.

Topics will include:

- ★ The importance of setting financial goals
- ★ Understanding your current financial position
- ★ Preparing for a successful retirement
- ★ Income tax considerations
- ★ What your loved ones need to know



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