

COASTAL CHAPTER HITS THE ROAD TO RECRUIT MEMBERS, START NEW CHAPTER IN LYONS

By Allan Hill



Members of the Savannah Coastal Chapter met in Lyons on September 7 to discuss the need for state retirees to band together in the fight to receive Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) to their retirement payments. The meeting was led by Chapter President Allan Hill and chapter members Laura Ryan and Lorr Elias.

Elias and Ryan explained to over thirty people attending the urgent need to increase GSRA membership in every county. GSRA is the only organization working on behalf of state employees and retirees to advocate for pensions and healthcare benefits. They outlined the steps that GSRA is taking to encourage state legislators to reinstate the once routine, semi-annual 1.5% COLAS and preserve affordable health care benefits.

Elias provided a historical overview of the threats to state pensions and COLAS and laid out the effects of inflation since 2009, the last year that retirees received a full COLA, referring to it as “elder abuse.” Ryan contrasted the difference of getting an annual bonus compared to an annual 3% COLA: it adds up to a \$9000 deficit over ten years.

Many thanks to everyone who came from Lyons, Vidalia and beyond, to the members of the Savannah Coastal chapter who went, to the twelve new members who joined GSRA, and to the good folks at Chatters Country Buffet Restaurant for hosting the event.

Come Join Us In Columbus!!

By Kip Mann and Allan Hill

If you think it's too late to attend the GSRA Annual Meeting you're wrong – you can still sign up! Early registration is over and hotel rooms not reserved have been released, but you can still attend the GSRA Annual Meeting in Columbus, GA on October 9th and 10th. Here's what you need to know. Onsite registration prices of \$65.00 per person are now in effect. You may register paying the higher rate by printing, completing and bringing the Registration form with you to the Columbus Trade Center Historic Iron Works along with a check (or credit/debit card) for \$65. Register on-site and you will have full access to all events and functions. To print the Registration Form: [Click HERE](#)

If you wish a room at the Marriott Hotel next to the conference center you can still get one at the GSRA rate, plus taxes and fees. Any members wanting to make reservations after the cut-off date will have to call the Columbus Marriott's Sales Department directly for any availability. The number to call is 706-324-1800 [ext. 2263] or [option 2] on Monday-Friday from 9:00am to 5:00pm EST. During any other time, the guests are welcome to leave a voicemail message including the guest's name, phone number, and dates requested. The Sales Department will accept reservations at the group rate up until September 29th, if hotel inventory is available.

Don't miss out on our keynote speaker, Laretta Hannon, the “funniest woman in Georgia.” Listen to a unique presentation from Danielle Templeton, Director of Communication and Outreach for ERSGA. Get updates from Russell Carlson, Commissioner of DCH, and Louis Amis, Director of SHBP. Attend informative and fun workshops. Catch up with long-time friends and co-workers at the opening reception on Monday afternoon while listening to our favorite troubadour, Josh Carson. Enjoy downtown Columbus with its many restaurants and attractions. Stroll the River Walk along the banks of the Chattahoochee River. And most of all, support GSRA with your attendance. We need you! Spend Columbus Day in Columbus, GA! We look forward to seeing you there.

GSRA Merchandise Is Back!

Also, back by popular demand, we will be taking orders at the annual meeting for GSRA caps, safari hats, and men's and women's polo shirts both long and short sleeve. A new men's and/or women's button down light blue dress shirt with GSRA's logo will also be available for ordering. So come prepared to dress for success and let people know who we are.





Newsletter

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SHBP Open Enrollment Information

This year's Retiree Option Change Period will include in-person meetings in addition to the virtual meetings (either online or by phone). To RSVP for an in-person or virtual meeting (either online or by phone), call 844-823-5455 to discuss your meeting preference. RSVP hours are 8 a.m.- 8 p.m. local time, Monday to Friday, and the lines will be available during the ROCP period.

For more information on the Retiree Option Change Period, including dates and times for the educational sessions, you may access the State of Georgia website using this link: [Click HERE](#)

Retiree Option Change Period In-Person Meeting Schedule

Monday, October 2, 2023

10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. ET
Hilton Garden Inn Albany
Room: [Flint I & II]
101 S Front Street
Albany, GA 31701

Thursday, October 5, 2023

10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. ET
Doubletree by Hilton Hotel
Room: Grand Ballroom
2651 Perimeter Pkwy
Augusta, GA 30909

Thursday, October 12, 2023

10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. ET
The Newnan Centre
Room: Arnall/Atkinson
1515 Lower Fayetteville
Road
Newnan, GA 30265

Tuesday, October 3, 2023

10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. ET
Anderson Conference Center at the Goodwill Campus
Room: [Ballroom]
5171 Eisenhower Parkway
Macon, GA 31206

Tuesday, October 10, 2023

10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. ET
Butternut Creek Golf Course - Union County
Community Center
Room: Ballroom and Rooms 101 & 201
129 Union County Recreation Road
Blairsville, GA 30512

Friday, October 13, 2023

10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. ET
Crowne Plaza Atlanta NE
Room: Richmond A
6050 Peachtree Industrial Blvd
Norcross, GA 30071

Wednesday, October 4, 2023

10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. ET
Ogeechee Technical College
Room: [Oak Room]
20 Joe Kennedy Blvd
Statesboro, GA 30458

Wednesday, October 11, 2023

10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. ET
Cobb Energy Performing Arts
Centre
Room: PAC Ballroom AB
2800 Cobb Galleria Parkway
Atlanta, GA 30339

Retiree Option Change Period Teleconference Schedule

Tuesday, October 17, 2023
10:00 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. ET
Dial in Number: 888-950-8043
Passcode: 7061063

Retiree Option Change Period Virtual Webex Schedule

Monday, October 16, 2023
5:00 P.M. - 6:30 P.M. ET
Meeting Information: 2662 625 3220
Event Password: October162023!
URL to join event available on SHBP website

Hello Autumn!



Top of Mind: Falling Leaves 2023

By Beverly Littlefield

We have made it through a sweltering summer and according to the Old Farmers' Almanac, the autumnal equinox occurred on September 23. So, hello, Autumn! It's understandable that we all tend to lie low during the peak of a heat wave. But now as the temperatures are more bearable, many chapters that may have taken a summer break are getting back together again.

As most chapters typically meet quarterly, planning a "program" for four times a year can be a challenge. In fact, program planning and finding and making meeting space arrangements are specific reasons that people have told me why they don't want to assume leadership roles at the chapter level.

As to meeting spaces, many chapters are able to arrange to use public spaces like libraries at no cost, or with a small refundable "wear and tear" deposit. Many county library systems now have state of the art internet access and connectivity, so adding slide shows or other visuals for presentations is easy. Other groups like to meet at a restaurant for a meal as a part of their meeting. Fellowship is an important part of membership: there is nothing like sharing a meal to bring people together.

Free space is great, but remember, too, that chapter budgets are intended to support the cost of meetings and activities. As everyone reviews and prepares their budgets for 2024, do keep that in mind. (By the way, we ask that chapters submit their budgets for the next year to us in November.)

Over the last year, I've either attended or heard about some of the programs chapters have arranged and they've been quite varied. In addition to inviting and meeting with members of the area's legislative delegation at some point during the year (always a good event if you can arrange it), here are some of the other topics and resources chapters have arranged –

- A Registered Dietician/Nutritionist discussed the nutritional needs of older adults and provided strategies for healthy eating.
- A representative of the Silver Sneakers program presented on safe ways of maintaining fitness, mobility and flexibility as we get older.
- An elder law/estate planning attorney discussed advanced planning to protect assets and benefits and to assure that families members know each other's final wishes, both for their healthcare decisions and the intention for their assets.

- An AMBA representative shared with one chapter how to get the maximum benefit from AMBA services and discount programs.
- A volunteer from the local Alzheimer’s Association Chapter, who also was a family caregiver, present a professionally produced video on recognizing the early signs of cognitive impairment, how the disease progresses and how to cope with the stresses of being a caregiver. This program was outstanding.
- A representative from a county’s Beautification program made a presentation to one chapter. This sounds like a good topic to encourage getting involved or staying involved in the community.
- A chapter hosted a member of the regional Area Agency on Aging staff who shared information about services available to older people through the statewide Aging Services network.
- Some chapters get together at least once a year for purely social gatherings, for a picnic, lunch or other meal, just for fellowship. No “program” planning required unless you’re having a potluck!
- In several areas, chapter members have gathered to address our Membership Outreach postcards. “Many hands make light work!”
- And, this fall one chapter plans to branch out to a different location in their area to hold a morning coffee outreach event for potential members.

Georgia is a resource-rich state in many ways. The state is blanketed with colleges and universities ([List of Universities in Georgia](#), [Map of Georgia Universities and Colleges \(mapsofworld.com\)](#) and technical colleges ([TCSG System Map Sep 2022](#)) that may be sources of program content and presenters. The UGA Extension Service ([Programs and Services | UGA Cooperative Extension](#)) offers community education on a variety of topics. And this may be a stretch for some, but this fall would be a perfect time for a field trip on one of Georgia’s “Georgia Grown Trails,” the Agritourism trails and places of interest established by the Georgia Department of Agriculture ([Home | Georgia Grown Trails](#)). Let your imagination out of the box and see what’s available!

As we enjoy the crisper days and nights of Fall, don’t let program planning be a barrier to pulling your group back together if you’ve taken a summer break. If you’re a chapter leader, consider reaching out to other leaders around the state to find out what has worked well for them. And, above all, ask your members what interests them, what topics they would like to have for a program. You can’t go wrong with member input. And, members, speak up! Don’t be shy about making suggestions for programs! We’re all in this together.

Find your Georgia Legislators

Use this link to easily determine your current state legislators by entering your address.

[Who Represents Me?](#)

Local Chapter News

Columbus-West Georgia Chapter

On August 15th, the Columbus/West Georgia Chapter held their quarterly meeting. There were thirty-five members in attendance, including one new membership and the renewal of four memberships. Debbie Scarborough with AMBA was our guest speaker. She provided an in-depth description of all of their products and services and graciously provided a box lunch for those in attendance. Thank you, Debbie, and to each of our members that were in attendance. Our next chapter meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 14 from 11:00 to 1:00 at Epworth United Methodist Church, 2400 Devonshire Drive, Columbus, GA. We will be honoring our veterans!



Some of the members attending the September meeting of the Columbus chapter



Debbie Scarborough with AMBA speaks to the Columbus chapter

CSRA of Augusta Chapter

The CSRA Chapter met on September 19 at the Office of Historic Augusta 415 7th Street, Augusta. Chapter President Clara Brown welcomed all in attendance and asked those who were attending their first meeting to introduce themselves. Nineteen retirees attended the meeting. After presenting a summary from the last meeting, the treasury report was made by Beverly Martin-Treasurer and Keith Watson-Vice President.

Clara reviewed items that were discussed during the GSRA Board meeting. The deadline for registering for the annual meeting had passed however, extending the deadline to 9/30 was discussed. Budget proposals are due in November. The

next GSRA Board meeting is 10/19 via zoom. Clara continued to solicit retirees to fill vacant committee positions. She thanked those who stepped up last meeting to fill the Special Events committee position (Merle McFadden and Patricia Dickerson) and Sondra Williams to help Sandra Schumann-Member Committee Chair.

Sandra Schumann discussed the status of the logo and marketed membership and our social media presence.

Clara closed the meeting by reminding attendees to bring a friend to the next meeting and to share the social media posts. The next meeting date is October 17 @ 1pm at Bath Gardens. James Brady, the Executive Director will be our speaker and that the address for Bath Gardens is 3855 Bath-Edie Road, Blythe, GA 30805 and will be posted on social media as well. Sandra who also volunteers at Bath Gardens elaborated on the details of the gardens and provided brochures.

Vice-President Keith Watson conducted the tour of the Boyhood Home of President Woodrow Wilson.



Members of the Augusta/CSRA Chapter at Historic Augusta



Augusta/CSRA Chapter members outside the Woodrow Wilson home

East Metro Chapter

The East Metro Chapter met at the First Baptist Church Annex in Covington on September 11 with twenty-seven members and one guest present. Prior to lunch from Bradley's BBQ in Covington, members socialized and enjoyed catching up on news. President Taylor welcomed the group and invited everyone for lunch.

After more socializing during lunch, President Taylor began the meeting and welcomed the guest speaker, Mrs. Laurie Riley, Manager, Keep Newton Beautiful. Chapter Secretary Janis Tidwell then introduced Mrs. Riley with a brief biography including educational background and noting her twenty-nine years of service to Newton County.

Mrs. Riley began her presentation with an overview of Keep Newton Beautiful and surrounding counties with the same or similar programs. She then did a member participation demo which was educational, interesting and fun. The demo illustrated the effects of individual as well as business and industrial impacts on ground water including two primary types of ground water pollution (one source identifiable and the other source unidentifiable or difficult to identify.) Her presentation demonstrated how easily polluted ground water seeps into creeks, streams and rivers and the ripple effect as well as how we can act to prevent and stop water pollution.



East Metro Chapter listen to speaker Laurie Riley at the September meeting

She discussed several upcoming events in which volunteers are needed including a September 30 "Rivers Alive" clean-up and tire collection. Volunteer Board members are also needed. Ongoing events including "Detective Seymore Green," a raccoon puppet show, also needs volunteers to assist at elementary schools. Programs for older students include EnviroScape educational models, which show the impacts of pollution on streams.

Member engagement was excellent with a number of questions and comments at the end. Mrs. Riley left a number of Keep Newton/America "goody bags" for members.

Drawing for door prizes closed out the meeting with a reminder of the October Annual Meeting in Columbus.

Macon-Middle Georgia Chapter

The Macon/Middle Ga Chapter had their quarterly meeting on Saturday September 9 at Ole Times Country Buffet, 1343 Gray Highway, Macon at 11:30am. There were twenty-one members present and an additional five members via Zoom. Caroline Poole, one of the community educators from the Alzheimer Association that delivers education and outreach in the Macon area, was the guest speaker.

Membership growth remains the chapter's main focus. We continue to recruit new members and during the meeting, two new members were added along with one renewal. President Clayton Teague gave an update to the members in attendance. Money was collected to contribute to the purchase of door prizes for the annual meeting and our December Christmas Party. The December meeting will be our fun meeting and our last meeting of the year. Once the location is finalized the details will be sent out. Officers for 2024 will also be elected at the December meeting. If you are interested in becoming a candidate for secretary or any other position let Melissa Belk-Teague know. Members were encouraged to invite other eligible retired or current state employees to attend and bring their spouses.



Macon-Middle Georgia Chapter members listen to guest speaker Caroline Poole at their September meeting

Bill Lucas, chapter Vice President, is running to be on the state board. Melissa Belk Teague is rotating off and we would like for you to support Bill's candidacy. Voting will take place soon so please vote William (Bill) Lucas as board member at large. Members were asked to continue to keep chapter treasurer Bobbie Jo Carver in their thoughts and prayers.



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](#)

Welcome new members!

AUGUST				
Name	County		Name	County
Evelyn Abron	Muscogee		Malinda Metts	Cobb
James Allen	Newton		Eva Moore	Tattnall
Vonretta Brimley	Houston		Fredericka Murray	Richmond
Traci Carter	Charlton		Irene Reddick	Early
Zedric Dickerson	Richmond		Sheree Roberts	Bibb
Barbara Fountain	Muscogee		Elizabeth Scott	DeKalb
Delbert Kerby	Tattnall		Sharolyn Spence	Dougherty
Kimberly Lambert	Fulton		Constance Spencer	Thomas
Jason Lewis	Bulloch		Jannice Thompson	DeKalb
Rhonda Lowe	Clarke		Gloria Wilkerson	Rockdale
O'Livia Meeks	Troup		Ruth Wilson-Edwards	Stewart
			Sharon Woods	Tift



