

# The Connection

## NEWSLETTER

Fall 2022

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### Why I Joined and Participate in the ARDOT Association of Retired Employees

Greetings to all ARDOT retirees. During my 41+ years of employment with the AHD/AHTD and now ARDOT, I worked in several Divisions and have had contact with employees from the Central Office Divisions and all the Districts. The overwhelming majority of the employees I met were great public servants whose mission was to provide a safe and efficient transportation system to enhance the quality of life for all citizens.

Membership and participation in the Association allows me to continue the fellowships developed over the years. But there are other reasons for joining and participating. Among them are:

- To stay informed on what’s happening at ARDOT. This includes getting updates about retirement benefits, health insurance and financials.
- To promote or oppose legislation which affects retirees. Although the Association is not a registered lobbying organization, informing retirees about proposed changes to laws and regulations allows retirees to let their local representatives know about their informed opinions of the changes.
- To persuade all retired employees to act as goodwill ambassadors to promote the activities and traditions of ARDOT.



As you are well aware, the last two years have been hard on the World, our Country and our Association. The District chapters have not been able to meet and we have not held an annual meeting of the Association since October 2019. As we slowly return to a “new” normal, we are planning for a statewide meeting on September 29, 2022 at the Bishop Park Recreation Center in Bryant, Arkansas. Further details are included in this newsletter.

A special Thank You is deserved to John Watkins, Immediate Past President. John was elected President in October 2019 and served as President during the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021. John resigned from the position in March 2022. Thank you John for your service.

David Mayo, Sr. Vice-President

**SAVE  
THE  
DATE**

**STATEWIDE LUNCHEON SPEAKER** Come and join your fellow retirees at the ARDOT Association STATEWIDE luncheon starting promptly at 12 noon Thursday, September 29th (yes, a month earlier than usual) held at Bishop Park in Bryant, Arkansas. Our guest speaker will be a representative from UNITED HEALTHCARE, our new health insurance and prescription drug provider. Purchase your ticket from Doyle Hughes ASAP. His contact information is shown on the header above.

## Address and Beneficiary Changes

Attention all retirees, if you move, please notify RoShunda Colclough at the Arkansas State Highway Employees' Retirement Office at (501) 569-2532. Besides keeping your address and phone number current, you also need to keep your beneficiaries current. You should contact the Group Insurance Office at (501) 569-2417 for beneficiary updates on your group health or life insurance. Since 2001, the Retirement System provides an additional lump-sum benefit of \$7,500 payable to your beneficiary at the retiree's death. If you have any questions about this benefit or the beneficiary for this benefit, please call (501) 569-2532.



### **Continued Importance of Dues:**

Annual dues are still very critical to the success of our retirees' association. The district chapters are not meeting in person, so we strongly encourage meeting virtually using the Zoom app. Of course it is not the same, but it does allow you see each other in real time. All of the chapters are losing the momentum we once had prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. We need more than ever to maintain contact and support for your District Chapter. The annual dues fee has not changed, only \$15 for the retiree member and \$10 for their spouses.

We would appreciate any ideas on how we can remain strong and attract new retirees, even after the pandemic eventually goes away.

Thanks,  
**Doyle Hughes**, State Secretary/Treasurer

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## **RECRUITMENT OF OFFICERS**

Membership in the ARDOT Association of Retired Employees (the Association) is limited to AHD/AHTD/ or ARDOT retirees and/or spouses, widows or widowers. Individual Chapters are defined in the bylaws as being one or more in each ARDOT District. Each Chapter should have duly elected officers. There is also an additional Chapter set up for northwest Arkansas retirees.

The Executive Committee of the ARDOT Association of Retired Employees consists of the Association President, the immediate past President, duly elected Association Officers, and Chapter Presidents or their designated representative.

Again, due the pandemic, Chapter meetings have not been held for over two years. Some Chapters have recently met in an effort to get restarted and reorganized. Three Chapters do not have any elected officers and are not currently meeting or conducting business.

Per the bylaws, a portion of the yearly Association membership dues collected is reimbursed to the Chapters for expenses. Association members are automatically assigned membership to individual Chapters.

PLEASE CONSIDER JOINING THE ASSOCIATION AND PARTICIPATING IN ONE OF THE INDIVIDUAL CHAPTERS. THE ASSOCIATION HAS PROVIDED RETIREMENT INSURANCE AND OTHER PERTINENT ARDOT INFORMATION FOR RETIREES AT CHAPTER MEETINGS.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT ONE OF THE ASSOCIATION OFFICERS.





## NEWS FROM THE ASHERS OFFICE

- **COLA:**

The Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) for Fiscal Year 2023 is **3.0%**. This increase is reflected in your July 2022 benefit payment.

- **LIFE VERIFICATION AUDITS:**

ASHERS has begun performing Life Verification Audits. This process is as a result of the retirement industry having difficulties in verifying annuitant deaths. In the past, ASHERS has used services which compared our payroll listing to Social Security records as a means of identifying when someone passes away; however, that process is not foolproof. ASHERS is adding additional steps to identify annuitant deaths and alleviate the possibility of an overpayment of benefits; however, we are also required to perform periodic Life Verification Audits. This means that should you receive correspondence from our office asking you to verify that you are still alive, it is important for you to complete the form, have it notarized and returned to our office. Failure to comply could result in a delayed payment of your benefits.

In addition, please instruct the individuals who are responsible for carrying out your end-of-life affairs to notify the ASHERS Office in the event of your death.

- **DISABILITY AUDITS:**

ASHERS has also recently performed an audit of disability benefits. Our System is required by Legislative Audit to periodically review the status of individuals who are receiving early retirement benefits due to a disability.

**Please be aware:**

1. A disability retiree may earn an amount less than what is considered by the Social Security Administration as the maximum amount that a person under sixty-five (65) year of age may earn; without losing disability benefits.
2. A member who is retired because of disability shall be required to submit proof of income on a periodic basis. If the disability retiree refuses to submit the requested paperwork, their annuity will cease until the documents are received.
3. A member who is retired because of disability shall be required to undergo periodic medical examinations at the discretion of the Board. If and when a medical examination shows that the disability has been removed, disability retirement shall cease.
4. If an individual who retired from ASHERS on disability begins gainful employment, the ASHERS Office should be notified immediately to discuss benefit options.



Robyn Smith  
ASHERS Executive Secretary

- **BENEFICIARIES:**

Please make sure to keep your beneficiaries on file in both the Retirement and Insurance Offices up to date.

## Why become a member of the ARDOT Association of Retired Employees?

Why should I become a member of the Association? There are several reasons that I can think of.

- 1 – It is one of the best ways to keep up with and in contact with your former fellow employees.
- 2 – By being a member of your local district chapter, you can keep up with ARDOT activities in your area and throughout the state.
- 3 – The most important reason is to stay abreast of any changes in our retirement system. This allows us to know of any proposed changes that may affect us all and to be able to exert influence on the people who set the rules for our system.



Currently we are members of what most consider to be the best of all the State of Arkansas retirement systems. That it is the best system is not by accident. We have a Retirement Board that I believe is second to nobody and our Retirement Office that is led by ASHERS Executive Secretary Robyn Smith is the best. The Board and Robyn work tirelessly to stay abreast of current law as it affects the system and Robyn maintains an excellent working relationship with the legislative committees that oversee all the state retirement systems.

This all being said, there is an urgent need to increase our membership. Unfortunately, as retirees, we are somewhat limited in our ability to participate in all of the activities we would like to due to age and other reasons. This is why we have recognized a need to recruit more of our most recent retirees to take their place in leadership roles in order to maintain our organization. In recent months, we have been informed by three of the chapters that they no longer are able to maintain a set of officers to lead said chapters. Some would say that we are little more than a social club. As you should be aware, the Association cannot by law lobby the state legislature. We are therefore limited to telephone campaigns to our various senators and representatives. Over the years, we have used this tactic with great success. The most recent example of this was our successful campaign to keep our prescription drug plan in place.

Please encourage our newest retirees to not only join the Association but to become active in it in order that we can maintain a healthy and viable organization that is able work for all of our retirees, both present and future.

Thanks in advance for all that you do.

John E. Watkins, Immediate Past President

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### **Update from Larry Dickerson**

In what has been one of the most historic and volatile market conditions in over 40 years, the Retirement Board and our Asset Managers keep reminding us that market corrections do come to an end.

Causes of the current market correction have impacted investment markets around the world. The US Markets have been impacted by:

1. Consumer inflation hitting a fresh 40-year high;
2. Producer price index, which measures the prices paid by wholesalers also hitting a 40-year high;
3. The Russia-Ukraine conflict has drastically increased uncertainty about the recovery of the global economy;
4. The Federal Reserve's monetary policy to fight inflation.



As I have mentioned in the past, ASHER's investment policy is designed to allow our investment managers to adjust portfolios and capture opportunities given the current market conditions. As a result, there has been a shift to a larger holding of cash, a greater percentage of assets in commodity-related investments, and a weighting of our bond investments on the short end of the yield curve.

As we enter the last two months of the fiscal year, it would be encouraging to see signs that inflation is leveling, and that a diplomatic end to the Russia-Ukraine conflict is reached.

# Job Opening!



The Secretary/Treasurer position has an URGENT need for being replaced by someone new this year. Throughout our nearly 40-year history only 4 people have held this position in the Retirees Association; first was Sibyl Maddox, then Ann May, Bonnie Wesson, and myself. Our current By-Laws describe the duties of the Secretary/Treasurer as two-fold. Generally, the Secretary will record the minutes of two annual meetings and present them at the next meeting. In addition, the Secretary, at the direction of the President, will handle all correspondence

concerning the Association. Since our founding the development of the internet and PCs, we have the added capability to maintain membership lists for all Districts consistently. The Treasurer collects all dues and funds payable to the Association's bank account. Disbursements from the account will be made by check bearing the signature of the Treasurer or authorized person on file. The Treasurer prepares a financial statement twice a year showing all debits and credits to the account showing the source of all funds and the purpose of the expense. A How-to manual will be provided with examples of current financial statements. All of these functions are now being done with Microsoft Excel and Word. Basic skills and knowledge of these two applications, or similar tools, can be very helpful.

## **Duties of the position:**

Carrying out the duties of the Secretary/Treasurer is enough for two people, but tracking funds and membership are so dependent on each other that the founders combined the two positions. However, one solution is to have a retiree member and their spouse serve as Secretary/Treasurer and one could check the others work, which is essential.

## **Expenses:**

There is a proposed annual budget for the Association presented as a guide for the year's operation with categories, such as postage, printing, annual meeting costs and estimated income for the year. All major expenses are paid with Association funds.

## **Time Requirements for the Position:**

Work times vary throughout the year, the busiest time is right after a newsletter is sent out and right before the annual meeting in the fall. It is generally less than two hours per week on average to answer the mail received. In the past it has been our goal to visit each chapter at least once a year, which are usually in the Spring and Summer months as can be scheduled. This gives the Secretary/Treasurer an opportunity to meet and contact all the other chapter officers during the year. All four State officers are invited to chapter meetings and the driver is compensated for mileage reimbursement on each trip.

## **Compensation for the Position:**

There is an appreciation line item for the Secretary/Treasurer in the operating budget. Currently, I pay myself \$250.00 every 6 months, which covers small expenses, such as returned mail, supplies, paper, trips to post office for small mailings, and my time. With careful management, the appreciation amount can easily be increased to \$1,200 /per year to provide fair compensation.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions about this position at 501-227-3819 or [etusnavy@aol.com](mailto:etusnavy@aol.com). Hoping to hear from you soon.

Doyle M. Hughes, Outgoing Secretary/Treasurer.



Anderson, Gary	Dawson, Raymond	Kendrick, Robert	Rose, Betty
Bagley, Benny	Dickens, Douglas	Kirkpatrick, John	Rosenbaum, George
Barnes, Jerry	Doughty, Jesse	Kirksey, Joann	Scott, Mary Ann
Barnes, Shirley	Downie, Jessie	Kling, William	Shands, Billy
Bates, Earl	Dull, Wayne	Lemon, Patricia	Smith, Billy
Beach, William	Dunaway, Luther	Lester, Carlos	Smith, Francis
Bearden, Donald	Fowler, Jimmy	Lester, Oscar	Snowden, Harry
Best, Lizzie	Fowler, Rose	Lewers, Larry	Stacks, Jerry
Bethea, Billy	Garrigus, Kathryn	Luce, Wilma	Staggess, Ronald
Binns Jr., Charles	Garrison, Hershhal	Matthews, Tony	Standridge, Bobby
Blocker, Andrew	Gatlin, Edith	McConnell, Barbara	Stark, Harold
Bramlett, Carl	German, Naomi	Mdntosh, James	Stobaugh, Jack
Bray, Frank	Gill, Minnie	McKinney, Jerald	Stockton, Gerald
Breedlove, Alta	Godwin, James	McKnight, Jimmy	Stout, Ronnie
Brewer, Finis	Goodwin, Loretta	McMahan, Frankie	Tedder, Mattie
Briggs, Omega	Graham, Mary	Medford, Charles	Turney, Mickey
Butler, Lonnie	Hall, Andrew	Melton, Phyllis	Tyler, Kenneth
Calaway, Donna	Harding, David	Montgomery, Loyal	Walker, David
Calhoon, Raymond	Hawkins, James	Nation, Marinelle	Ward, Betty
Campbell, Coy	Heffington, William	Oliver, Leroy	Ward, Steven
Campbell, Kenneth	Herring, Nancy	Parks, John	Watkins, James
Carlile, Jo A.	Hicks, Maxine	Parr, Franklin	Watson, James
Carlton, Charles	Higgins, Alpha	Pergeson, Donald	Webb, Davin
Carlton, Marvin	Hill, Berlin	Petty, Winfred	Wheat, Joe
Chaney, James	Hollingsworth, Gerald	Phillips, McArthur	Widner, Teddy
Chenevey, Donald	House, Mary	Plunk Jr., Henry	Williams, Jerry
Clayton, Faye	House, Melvin	Potter, Ernest	Williams, Roy
Clover, Virginia	Huffine, Alma	Potter, Oneida	Williams, Ruby
Coburn, Dorothy	Humble, Frank	Price, Larry	Wright, Jerry
Cole, Annette	Hunt, Billy	Raimer, Bill	Wyers, Rita
Cross, Shirley	Ivy, Rickey	Reaves, Alvin	Young, Billie
Davis, Gertrude	Johnson, Roy	Redwine, Jean	Zeno, Marsha
Davis, Grady	Jones, Thomas	Reed, Randall	
Davis, Johnnye	Kendall, William	Robinson, Cecil	

“We regret any omissions”





**Tickets for Statewide Annual Meeting**  
**September 29, 2022**  
**11:00 a.m.**  
**Bishop Park, Bryant Arkansas**  
**\$15.00 Per Person**

**Come and Enjoy  
 fish, chicken and all  
 the trimmings  
 catered by King Kat**

District \_\_\_\_\_

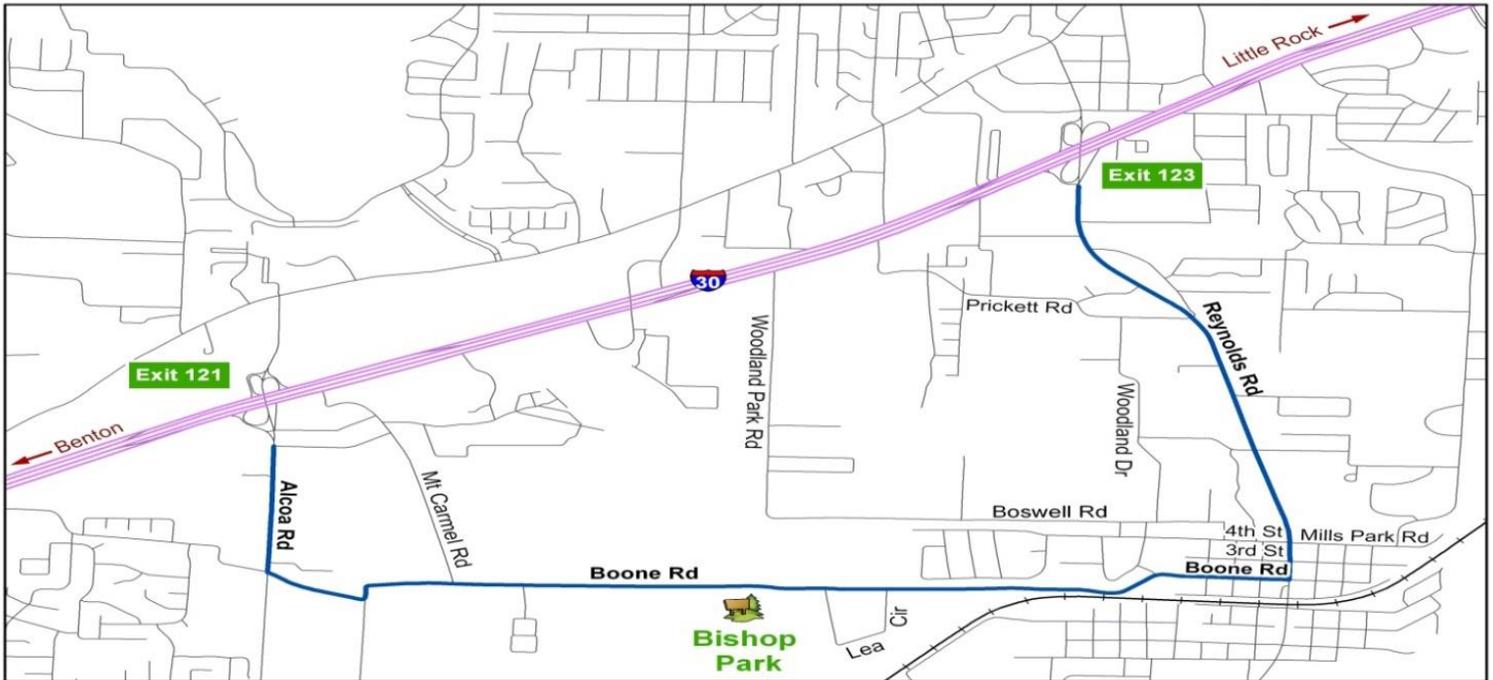
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Member \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse \_\_\_\_\_

Address to send tickets to: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**BRYANT COMMUNITY CENTER AT BISHOP PARK**



**Don't miss out on food, fun, fellowship, door prizes and  
 valuable information!!!**

ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED  
ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF  
TRANSPORTATION EMPLOYEES  
INC.



Doyle Hughes, Secretary/Treasurer  
9112 Leatrice Drive.  
Little Rock, AR 72227

Return Service Requested

Presort Standard  
U. S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit # 645  
NLR, AR  
72114

We urge you to fill out the Membership Application Form below. You can turn it in to your local Chapter Secretary/Treasurer or mail application and \$15.00 annual dues to: **Doyle Hughes, Secretary/Treasurer, 9112 Leatrice Dr., Little Rock, AR 72227.** Make your check payable to: **AHTD Retirees Association.**

**2023 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM**

Retiree Name \_\_\_\_\_  \$15 Fee Enclosed

Spouse Name \_\_\_\_\_  \$10 Fee Enclosed

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Year You Retired \_\_\_\_\_ Division/  
District No. \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Street or Route & Box No. City State

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_