

Retirees' Chapter News

Virginia Governmental Employees Association



A Message from the President...

We are in the holiday season – Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa and New Year’s. We have much for which to be thankful and we know of many who need help. Let us resolve to do what we can to make life better for less fortunate others.

The 2015 elections are over. Now is the time to write, call, visit, or email our state Senators and Delegates to voice support for state employee and retiree issues. Adequate compensation, fully funded retirement benefits, and containment of health-care costs are ongoing VGEA concerns.

The next state budget will be announced by Governor McAuliffe on December 17. Much will depend on state revenue and Federal budget outcomes. Since it seems there is never enough money to go around, we need to push for our issues to be top priorities.

Members matter. More VGEA Members increases the volume of our collective “VOICE.” Applications and membership information are online at VGEA.org. To spread the word, VGEA brochures which now include applications are available from the office (877-302-7146) and at Chapter meetings. Let’s each one reach one.

Our November meeting at Nick’s Roman Terrace went well. Faye Spruill presented the Treasurer’s report. Vice President Dee

Esser updated us on several items and introduced our speaker, Dr. Walter Griggs, of VCU, who spoke entertainingly about the building and collapsing of the railroad tunnel on Church Hill.

Our next meeting dates, all on the second Monday, are : December 14 (Olive Garden, 7113 W. Broad Street); January 11 (Virginia Credit Union); and February 8, March 14, and April 11 (all three at Nick’s Roman Terrace). Monday, February 15 is VGEA Legislative Day (to attend please RSVP to VGEA at 804-355-3120).

Please plan to attend and bring a friend.

Thanks and Happy Holidays!

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” Ghandi

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VGEA Richmond Retirees Chapter

November 2015 Meeting Minutes

The 2015 November Meeting of the Retiree Chapter was held on the 9th at Nick's Roman Terrace. The meeting was conducted by Walt Pulliam, President. He asked that everyone check the listing that was being circulated to ensure that all information was correct.

Walt welcomed everyone, and asked if there were any new members present. He encouraged us to recruit new members. He acknowledged all Veterans and said everyone appreciates their service. He also reminded us that now is the time to submit an application for scholarships. One will be named in memory of Jim Roberts. He called for a motion to accept the minutes from our October Meeting as distributed previously. Becky Ryburn made a motion that the minutes be accepted. Marian Winer seconded. Motion carried.

Faye Spruill, Treasurer, gave the Treasurer's Report. The balance as of October 31st is \$1,891.51. Pat Mays gave Walt a suggestion for purchasing a microphone.

Winfrey explained that the drug deductible for non generic prescriptions is going to be \$360 next year. He spoke to Ron Jordan about this issue, but has not received a response.

Dee Esser, Vice President, reported that the Board's Bylaw committee has done a complete revision of all of the bylaws.

Dee then introduced our speaker, Walter Griggs, professor at VCU and author of "The Collapse of Richmond's Church Hill Tunnel." Mr Griggs started his presentation with an interesting historical fact. Benjamin Franklin wrote several letters requesting that the turkey be made our Official National Bird. Today it might be more appropriate than the eagle.

Railroads and their disasters have been in the news for many years - such as the wreck of 1997 in Danville. He has had an interest in the Church Hill tunnel since 1945 when his father showed him the tunnel and explained that there are dead men in there.

It was started in 1871 when a train was requested to go from the James River to 17th Street. However, the area merchants did not want it to go over or around Church Hill. Geologists said that it could not go through it because it was unstable. It was just mud and water. Engineers felt it could be done. An engineer who was a UVA grad decided it could be done. From the very beginning, they ran into a lot of problems. There were many cave-ins. Also, there were many accidents. One man was killed when a beam fell on him. Others died from falling in the shafts.

The first train coming through the Tunnel had to be cancelled. Eventually, it was opened. The City of Richmond had promised to deepen the river, but decided instead to build a track to Newport News. As a result, the Church Hill Tunnel track was closed in 1902.

In 1925, it was decided to reopen the tunnel, and that they would make it better by installing more pipes and better bracing. On October 2, 1925, Engine 231 went into the tunnel under Jefferson Park. Bricks began to fall. The engineer told everyone to get out. Some of the firemen were able to escape, but all of them died the next day. It took nine days to get to the tracks. The engineer's son sat at the side everyday waiting to see if they had found his father.

It was determined that the tunnel should never have been built. It was not properly braced and that noise and movement made it unstable. It was determined to permanently seal it.

Dee Esser, Vice President, announced that Jane Watkins from the Credit Union would be our January speaker. Ms. Watkins has offered to host the meeting at their headquarters in the Boulders. If we wish to make it a luncheon meeting, we would have to have boxed lunches catered. Don Wells made a motion that we change the meeting time to 11 a.m. and forgo lunch. It was seconded by Kermit Spruill. Motion carried. Our January meeting will be on January 11th at 11 a.m. at the Boulders.

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

Dee Esser announced that Delegate Betsy Carr is willing to be our speaker at our April meeting. She is trying to get Henrico County Police for a "Safety for Seniors" presentation for February or March. Marian Winer made a motion that we return to Nick's Roman Terrace for our February, March and April meetings. Ellis Giles seconded. Motion carried.

Walt encouraged everyone to contact our Delegates

and Senators to express our opinions on various issues such as full funding of VRS, Health Care Costs, etc. February 15th will be VGEA's Legislative Day.

Our December Luncheon will be at the Olive Garden on December 14th at 11:30 a.m. It's the Olive Garden on West Broad Street near Glenside Drive.

Submitted by:
Janet Martino
Secretary

Save the Date for this Upcoming VGEA Event:



February 15 (*Presidents' Day*) is VGEA Legislative Day

***Come out to Visit Your Legislators and Lunch at the VGEA Office.
Meet at 8:30 a.m. at 1011 E. Main St., Suite 400, Richmond, Va. for
Coffee and Danish.***

***RSVP today to 877-302-7146 or 804-355-3120. Email info@vgea.org if you
have special dietary needs for breakfast and lunch.***

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Apply for \$10,000 in Scholarships by January 1



There's still time to apply for a **VGEA \$2500 SCHOLARSHIP!** Four \$2500 scholarships will be awarded for the fall 2016 semester, for a **total of \$10,000 in VGEA scholarship money!**

Deadline for applications is January 1, so get your packets in today. Only the first 100 will be considered. **Recipients must be VGEA Members, their spouses, children or grandchildren.** Applications were sent with last month's *Retirees' News*, and are also available in several places on the VGEA website: vgea.org. Look for more information on our homepage!