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Current News of Special Interest to State Retirees

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RSEA TO GET SNEAK PREVIEW OF ABE'S 200TH BIRTHDAY BASH

- Muriel Runyen, Publicity & Education

Every American school child can tell you that February 12 is Abraham Lincoln's birthday, but until recently, few could also recite the year of his birth. Then suddenly the nation woke up to the fact that Abe will turn 200 in 2009, and now the whole country is involved in plans for a year -long celebration.

Coming to our May meeting to tell us about some of those elaborate plans is a man who is distinguished in his own right: Dr. Axel Steuer, president of Illinois College in Jacksonville.

Dr. Steuer is a member of both the state and national planning committees for the Lincoln Bicentennial and will tell us about some of the preparations now underway, as well as bring us a preview of some of the events scheduled to take place around the country.

Before coming to Illinois College five years ago, Dr. Steuer served as president of Gustavus Adolphus College in Minnesota and taught and held administrative positions at Occidental College in California.

Born in Germany, he came to the United States as a boy and grew up in Pennsylvania and southern California. He graduated summa cum laude from Occidental, with degrees in philosophy and psychology. He later earned his master's degree in philosophy from Harvard, the STB degree from Harvard Divinity School, and Ph.D. in Religious Thought from the

University of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Steuer was on the faculties of Princeton University, Haverford College, and Swarthmore College before returning to Occidental as a professor and chair of the Department of Religious Studies.

Among the many awards bestowed upon Dr. Steuer are the Templeton Foundation's List of 50 Presidents Effectively Promoting Character Building at Their Colleges (1999) and the Royal Order of the Polar Star, which was personally presented to him by the King of Sweden (1996)

Central Illinoisans may recall that Dr. Steuer was the speaker at the naturalization ceremony for new U.S. citizens at the Old State Capitol in Springfield in 2005.

Until now, most of us have heard only snippets of information about the plans for the Lincoln Bicentennial, but with Dr. Steuer's participation in the two prestigious state and national advisory councils, he will be in a position to disclose many of the details which won't be known to the general public until a later date.

With all the worldwide attention drawn to the capital city since the opening of the Abraham Lincoln Library and Museum, we know that Springfield will be the focus of much of the Bicentennial celebration, and we want to be the first to hear about it. See you at the meeting on May 28th.





After an almost complete rewriting of Senate Bill 1985, the bill sailed through the Senate by a vote of 57-0. The bill now sits in the House, awaiting action, not at all a sure thing, despite the overwhelming approval in the Senate. As I said, last month, what generally emerges from lengthy studies and negotiations is a bill that is not entirely satisfactory to any of the parties involved, but, in this case, it apparently struck a note with the Senate membership. So, let's look at the actual language of the bill, as it emerged from the Senate.

Beginning July 1, 2009, the offset under this subsection shall no longer be applied to any widow's annuity of any person who began receiving retirement benefits, or a widow's annuity, prior to January 1, 1998.

Beginning July 1, 2009, the offset under this subsection shall no longer be applied to the widow's annuity of any person who began receiving a widow's annuity on or after January 1, 1998, and before the effective date of this amendatory act of the 95th

General Assembly.

Any person who began receiving retirement benefits after January 1, 1998, and before the effective date of this amendatory act of the 95th General Assembly may, during a one time election period establishes by the System, elect to reduce his or her retirement annuity by 1% in exchange for not having the offset under this subsection applied to his or her widow's annuity.

Any employee in service on the effective date of this amendatory Act of the 95th General Assembly may, at the time of retirement, elect to reduce his or her retirement annuity by 1% in exchange for not having the offset under this subsection applied to his or her widow's annuity.

The same provisions apply to survivor's benefits.

However, there is already a problem with the numbers, as revealed in an actuarial study initiated by our retirement system. This study indicates that a one percent contribution by retirees would not make this bill rev-

enue neutral. In other words, the contribution rate will have to be raised in order to ensure that the state will not have to cough up one additional penny for our survivors. At this writing, we have no idea what that final percentage will be, or if we might reach a point where we can no longer support our own bill. Needless to say, we will be in there fighting for the best deal we can get!

For us, the perfect scenario would be for the entire House to approve the bill, as is, and send it on the governor for his action. If, however, the House decides to make changes in the bill, which, in light of the above actuarial study, is not only possible, but probable, it would then have to be sent back to the Senate, for concurrence. And, even that depends on the House bringing the bill to a vote. Unfortunately, in our ego and power driven political climate, bills are often shelved, not because they have no merit, but simply because they came from the other chamber.



RETIRE STATE EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION ADDRESS CHANGE FORM AND APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

email address
retire@RSEA4U.org
website
www.RSEA4U.org

NAME _____
First Middle initial Last

MAILING ADDRESS _____
Street Address or PO Box # Apt # if applicable

_____ City State Zip Code

PHONE # () _____ E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

Mark ALL Boxes that apply:

- Permanent Address Change Temporary Address Change for _____ months
- Current Member Renewal (Annual Payees Only)
- New Member I am a: Retiree Surviving Spouse *Current Employee of _____
(year) (Agency)
- My Check for \$_____ is enclosed for January through December / _____ (Annual dues are \$9.00 per year.)
year(s)
- I hereby authorize the State Employees Retirement System of Illinois (SERS) to deduct from my pension check the amount as certified by the RSEA of Illinois for my dues, and to remit said amount to the RSEA of Illinois. I also authorize SERS to provide change of address information to RSEA, if requested. (Currently, the deduction is 75 cents per month.)

Signature: _____ SS# _____ Date _____

Mail to: RETIRED STATE EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION P.O. BOX 1974 SPRINGFIELD, IL 62705-1974

Current employees must obtain, complete and submit a payroll deduction to your payroll department.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS - THANKS FOR JOINING US

Irma Berry, Bluffs	Doris Hunter, Springfield
Richard Carruthers, Ramsey	Gary Olsen, Dixon
Rachel Clarke, Springfield	John Wiedman, Effingham

FINAL FAREWELL TO OUR DEPARTED MEMBERS

Albina Alberto, Chicago	James McCaughey, Cuba
Clarence Bell, Chicago	Bernice Mikalauskas, Chicago
Robert Bills, Jacksonville	Georgia Monier, Springfield
John Bloom, Rock Island	Betty O'Connor, Chicago
Eleanor Childress, St. Louis, MO	Mary Parkes, Oakland
Hazel Crum, Rushville	Donna Richter, Elgin
Walter Epright, Springfield	Jose Rocha Sr., Round Lake Beach
Neil Gustafson, Green Bay, WI	Glen Sanderson, Champaign
Evelyn Jones, Galesburg	F. Homer Shoup, Colorado Springs, CO
Lucile Kurth, Chicago	Arester Smith, Chicago
Rasik Mali, Buena Park, CA	Vincent Turk, Huntington Beach, CA
Sandra Mason, Belvidere	Edgar Webb, Creal Springs
Ivan McBride, Lacy, WA	Helen Wright, Evans, GA.

Our sympathy goes out to the deceased members' families. Please remember that surviving spouses can continue membership by submitting a new membership application.

-Pat Espenschied, Membership Chair

FEW MAJOR BENEFITS CHANGES EXPECTED: WATCH FOR YOUR HANDBOOK!



"If Tina can pack'em in like that, she ought to be on the program at every meeting!" one of our members was heard saying as he left the April meeting.

Tina Sibert, field representative for the State Employees Retirement System, did indeed pack the house. More than 135 members, spouses, and survivors came to hear what changes and / or additions might have been made to their benefits package for the coming year.

There was good news and bad news, as usual. The good news is that there are very few changes on the horizon. The bad news is that there still are no arrangements to provide for shingles shots.

Shingles shots? The subject wasn't on Tina's agenda, but came to light during the questions and answer period which followed her formal presentation. Ms. Sibert admitted that the popular new vac-

cine had apparently been overlooked but in view of the widespread demand, it would probably be made available in the near future.

Ms. Sibert, in her first appearance before the demanding RSEA audience came prepared with a Power Point presentation to emphasize her talking points. Compulsive note-takers relaxed and put away their pens when she announced that the annual Benefits Choice Options handbook, which is sent by mail to all members of the state retirement system, was languishing in the post office even as she spoke, and would presumably be in members' hands within a few days.

If Ms. Sibert's optimism bears out, RSEA members will have the Options Choice book long before they read this newsletter and will be able to make the necessary changes, if any, in their insurance plans before the May 31 deadline. Unfortunately, the books didn't arrive in the mail prior to the REPORTER deadline, so we're unable to call attention to any significant changes which should be

noted.

Ms. Sibert reminded the audience that a major part of her job with SERS is conducting the Myths and Realities of Retirement (MRR) workshops for retirees, and she distributed pamphlets listing the dates and locations of workshops scheduled for 2008.

The one-day workshops, she said, are packed with practical advice on the constructive use of leisure time and offer information on the various SERS entitlements, estate planning, group insurance, and financial planning. Not only are the workshops free, but they also offer coffee and doughnuts as an added inducement.

Ms. Sibert gamely answered dozens of questions from her attentive audience, and the question period might have gone on all afternoon if the good-hearted speaker hadn't paused to say she was getting hungry for the homemade cookies we'd promised her. If you still have questions after reading the handbook (assuming it eventually arrives), Tina can be reached at 217/785-6977.

- Muriel Runyen.

HERE'S THE BUZZ ABOUT THE 2008 ILLINOIS STATE SENIOR SPELLING BEE!

The Association of Illinois Senior Centers and your local Senior Center announces the 2008 Illinois State Senior Spelling Bee!

Seniors are encouraged to bring out their inner "Smarty-pants" by signing up for the 2008 Illinois State Senior Spelling Bee, hosted by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois, the Illinois Department on Aging and the Association of Illinois Senior Centers, to be held this summer around Illinois. This will be the first statewide Bee held since 1997 and all Senior Centers, from the smallest town to the largest city, are encouraged to participate. The contest will be held at your local Senior Center in June 2008. Local winners will advance to the regional semifinals. The state finals will be held at the Illinois Building at the 2008 Illinois State Fair on Senior Day, Monday, August 11, 2008.

Interested senior participants are encouraged to sign up at their local Senior Center.

HAPPY SPELLING!

- Marcia Hoos

NEWS FROM THE PRESIDENT - Bill Curry

HAPPY BELATED BIRTHDAY to the Chicago Metro chapter. Over a year ago, Sylvia Schluter and then president Joyce Rodgers worked together to start a chapter in the Chicago Metro area. Last April, President Rodgers and some board members traveled to Chicago to provide support for the chapter. A year later the chapter is still growing. I attended a Chicago Metro chapter meeting April 30th at the invitation of Chairwoman Schluter.

Fourteen members were present at the meeting and heard a presentation by Eric Salcedo from the Attorney General Office. He spoke about identity theft and answered questions and left the chapter some literature.

Chairwoman Schluter called upon me to make some comments. I

thanked Chairwoman Schluter for all her efforts and hard work over the past year and few months. I encouraged the chapter to keep plugging away and in time everything will come together. The biggest problem for the chapter has been locating a permanent meeting place. Chairwoman Schluter believes the chapter has found a location but is waiting for the remodeling to be completed. I also answered a few questions. Hopefully, my attendance at the meeting indicates our continued support. In the near future it is my hope that more officers and board members will be able to attend a meeting of the Chicago Metro chapter.

The chapter now has a new problem. The secretary for the chapter has decided she does not want to

continue as secretary. Presently, Chairwoman Schluter is serving as Chairwoman and secretary. I think she is also serving in many other capacities!

Do you have one afternoon to help Chairwoman Schluter? Do you want to renew friendships with co-workers who have retired also? Send Chairwoman Sylvia Schluter an e-mail. I am sure she will appreciate your help. Also, for more information about the meetings you can contact her at:

Sweetvyce@aol.com

Coffee and cookies were served at the conclusion of the meeting. Chairwoman Schluter also made sure everyone had coffee and cookies.

TID BITS FROM YOUR EDITOR...

Remember: June 14 is **FLAG DAY**. Flag Day is a holiday created by Congress in commemoration of the adoption of the U.S. Flag in 1777.

Memorial Day - May 26 (Observed). Please remember not only our loved ones this day but our servicemen and women too.

Mrs. Velda M. Garrelts of Springfield sent us the following article that her sister from Iowa sent to her and she said this might be appropriate for this time of year. Many of you know Gardening can become a serious passion. Some times we get so carried away and we neglect our other household duties. Although maintaining a house is important I've learned not to sweat the small stuff. Life is generally about choices and most times these choices give us great joy and a sense of real accomplishment over weighing any guilt we might feel. However, don't expect your mate to always share your sense of gardening. Sometimes it can cause him or her some inconveniences. Thanks to Lindsay Blenheim and Mike Hillman for allowing me to use this story as an example of what could happen. I hope you enjoy it as much as I have.

A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF A GARDENER'S SPOUSE

*She dug the plot on Monday, the soil was rich and fine
But she forgot to put the dinner on, so out we went to dine.
She planted roses Tuesday, she says they are a must,
They really were quite lovely, but she forgot to dust.
On Wednesday it was daisies they opened with the sun,
All pinks and whites and yellows, but the laundry wasn't done.
The poppies came on Thursday all bright and cherry red,
I guess she really was engrossed, she never made the bed.
It was violets here on Friday in colors she adores,
It never bothered her at all, the dirt upon our floors.
Saturday I hired a maid, I'd not admit defeat,
She can garden all she wants now and the house will still be neat
It's nearly lunchtime Sunday I cannot find the maid,
Oh I don't believe it, She's out there alongside
my wife with her own spade!*

Thank you Velda for this really nice article and so true to the Gardeners in all of us.



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THIS MONTH

Wednesday, May 28, 2008 - 1:30 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran Church
Family Life Center
2477 W. Washington St., Springfield, Illinois

"A Preview of the Lincoln Bi-Centennial In Illinois"

Dr. Azel Steuer
President of Illinois College

COMING ATTRACTIONS

June 25, 2008
TBA



CHICAGO METRO CHAPTER

For more information - Contact Sylvia Schulter at (773) 275-1464 or her email at sweetvyce@aol.com.