The Monitor

Fall 2024

Ventura County Community College District Retirees' Association

Annual Meeting Part 1: Your Benefits Questions Answered

By Marie Soo Hoo and Sandy Hajas



The General Meeting on May 8, 2024, was the first hybrid meeting held by the VCCCDRA. 52 retirees attended in person at Guthrie Hall, and 53 retirees attended online. The meeting was a success, and we were able to get through it with few technical glitches. Although it was intended to have half the meeting include a discussion on retiree insurance issues, it had to be postponed until all representatives from Navitus, Anthem, Burham, and the District broker were available. (See page 2 for an overview). Maggie Lepore from Burham& Associates did, however, host a preliminary discussion on many issues retirees brought forward. She also answered questions they had concerning prescriptions, coverage issues, and the cumbersome appeals process with Navitus.

The business portion of the meeting continued with the election and re-election of officers for the July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2026, term. Susan Bricker was voted in again as President, Robin Douglas as Vice-President, Marie Soo Hoo as Secretary, and David Magallanes as Treasurer.

The proposed bylaw changes were approved by a vote of the retirees present at the meeting. There were changes made to Article III further defining associate members, deleting language specifying the dues amount, and raising the dues as follows: Lifetime Membership will be $250 (with $150 going to the VCCCDRA operating fund and $100 to the Legal Fund), annual dues were raised to $25 (with $15 going to the operating fund and $10 going to the legal fund).

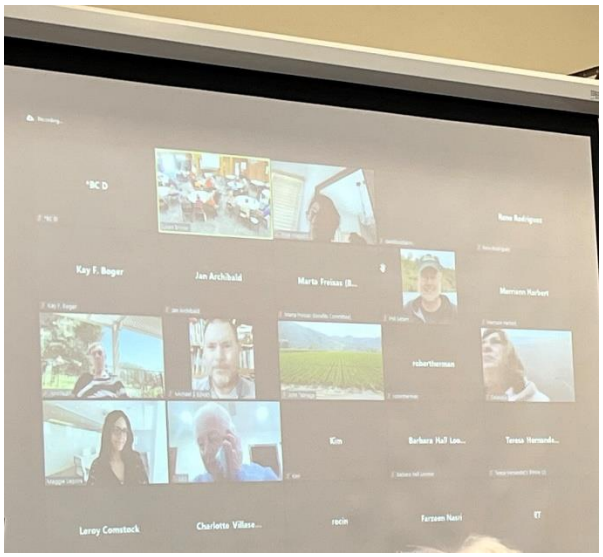
Joy Kobayashi, outgoing Membership Chair, gave her report on the VCCCDRA Membership. We have a total of 825 active members of which 467 are Lifetime members and 358 are annual dues members. (Please note that only 20 of the 358 members are current with their annual dues.) **.** To pay your dues, please write a check to VCCCDRA and mail it to P O Box 6216, Ventura, CA 93003-6216)

Scholarship Chair Carolyn Dorrance announced that the VCCCDRA -sponsored Don B. Medley Scholarship was awarded to Alexander Sanchez, a graduate of Santa Paula High School who will be attending Moorpark College in the Fall.

Anne King, Executive Director the VC Foundation, also announced that the VC Foundation will again be a sponsor with the Retiree Association for a social event this coming year.

Annual Meeting Part 2: Your Benefits Questions Answered

By Marie Soo Hoo and Sandy Hajas



Part 2 of the Annual General Meeting was held July 26, 2024, at VC Gutherie Hall. The purpose of the meeting was to provide VCCCD retirees with a forum to voice some of the issues brought about by the switch to SISC for medical benefits and Navitus for prescriptions. The meeting was a hybrid with attendees on Zoom and in person at Ventura College Guthrie Hall. There was a total of 42 retirees attending online through Zoom and 20 attending in person.

Past President Diane Moore welcomed all retirees to the meeting. Harry Culotta, Chair of the Benefits Committee, introduced Katy Lyon and Janice Endo, provided a brief history of the VCCCD Benefits Office, then introduced the host, Maggie Lepore, Partner & Vice President, Employee Benefits, who represents Burham& Associates. Maggie is the "go-to" person to resolve retiree issues that cannot be answered within VCCCD.

Maggie introduced the panel: Lola Nickell, Client Relationships Manager for SISC; Frank Impastato, SISC Account Manager; Jeff Bogardus, Navitus, Client Services Executive. Sheridan Eaddy and Danny Rodriguez from Burnham & Associates assisted Maggie via Zoom during the presentation. Katy Lyon, VCCCD Benefits Analyst, was also on the panel.

Maggie Lepore started with a presentation of informational slides for attendees. She reviewed the Open Enrollment Timeline, health plans that are available for retirees to enroll in depending on whether they are under 65 or over 65 and eligible for Medicare or not. She advised anyone with questions to review the Benefits Guide that is available on the District's website. She informed attendees that she had been given a list of questions that would be addressed first and then, time permitting, she would take questions from attendees viewing via Zoom.

The questions that were presented to Maggie Lepore were questions that had been submitted by VCCCDRA . They had been prepared by Marta Freixas, a member of the Benefits Committee and At-Large Representative of the Executive Board. The panel spent considerable time answering the questions. Their answers are available on the Zoom video that was posted on the District's website under the Human Resources Department. It is recommended that anyone who is interested view the video to hear the information that was provided. As a result of this meeting, there were several points raised concerning how SISC, the District and/or Burnham& Associates will work to help the VCCCDRA improve how healthcare works for our members.

Maggie Lepore and the other panelists shared their contact information with the group. Their contact information is also available online at the VCCCD website at https://www.vcccd.edu/departments/human-resources/benefits

2024 Social Event in Celebration of VCCCDRA's Thirtieth Anniversary

by Marie SooHoo

This year marks the 30th Anniversary of the founding of the VCCCD Retiree's Association. Our Social Committee has planned a celebration that will be held at Ottavio's Italian Restaurant, 1620 Ventura Blvd., in Camarillo, on **Tuesday, October 8, 2024, from 12 noon – 3 p.m.** There is limited seating for this event, **reservations are required**. No walk-ins or pay at the door can be accepted. NO Exceptions. Beverages (non-alcoholic) and dessert are included with your meal. The restaurant's bar will be open for the purchase of alcoholic beverages. **Please complete and return the reservation form that you will find in this Newsletter, along with your payment, by the deadline date of September 27, 2024, to the address given on the reservation form.** There will be raffle prizes, and silent auction items as well, so bring plenty of cash or your checkbooks! We look forward to seeing many retirees. Spouses, guests, and significant others are also invited to attend. See page 7 for reservation form.

Don B. Medley Scholarship

By Carolyn Dorrance

This Spring the Don B. Medley Scholarship was awarded to Alexander Sanchez, a graduate of Santa Paula High School who will be attending Moorpark College in the Fall. He was introduced to the VCCCDRA Board in June and outlined his detailed plans for achieving his goals in becoming a Cyber Security Network Systems Engineer.
The Executive Board members were impressed with this intelligent, organized, goal-oriented and deserving young man.

During September, the documents for the Don B Medley Scholarship offered by the VCCCDRA should be reviewed and submitted to the Ventura County Community Foundation. Since detailed revisions at 3 different meetings were determined last year, the review process should be simpler this year.

Copies of the revised description and flyer will be posted on the Association blog. www.blog.vcccdra.org along with deadlines for the application process when determined by the Foundation. Last year, the hard outreach work for all scholarships administered by the Foundation staff led to a doubling of scholarship applications to 1,476. Also, over 1.5 million dollars was given out!

If you have any questions or suggestions regarding the Scholarship process, submit them to Carolyn Dorrance at Cohassetcd@aol.com.

Invitation to Serve on the Executive Board



Do you have a few hours a month to help your retired colleagues by serving on the Executive Board of the VCCCD Retirees' Association? We are looking for someone to serve as the **Membership Chair,** which is an appointed position. This position keeps our membership list up to date, creates a membership report for the newsletters, emails the membership with pertinent information, and attends our monthly board meetings.

The Executive Board meets for two hours, once a month, through **Zoom**. Please consider serving on your retiree organization board. We need your help!

President's Message

By Susan Bricker, VCCCDRA President

Dear Colleagues,

This Summer edition of the Monitor has excellent articles on our upcoming Fall Social Event, the 2024 Annual Meeting and the Health Benefits Panel Discussion that occurred this year. Hope you enjoy them, and please remember to sign up for the Fall Social!

Now it is my pleasure to finally be able to say that we have an approved legal settlement with the District! The settlement agreement was approved by the VCCCD Board of Trustees earlier this year, but in fact the negotiations between our attorney and District counsel were completed months earlier. We are waiting now for the District to forward their corrected list of covered class members for a final review. Although the District is ultimately responsible for vetting the accuracy of that list, we were able to identify more than 80 eligible individuals whose names were missing from their first version. Kudos to Joy Kobayashi for maintaining excellent Membership records! When the list is finalized, our attorney and the District's counsel will request a court date to gain a judge's approval of the settlement. Once the judge is assured that no issues remain on either side, he or she will approve the settlement. Then copies of the settlement will be sent to all covered class members, and with a few final steps we will be at the end of this long, drawn-out saga.

I want to thank all of you for your continued patience and support during the very long and tedious process of navigating our current lawsuit against the District, coupled with the frustrating fact that we have not been able to say much to you during the negotiations. Your response to our earlier requests for contributions to the Legal Fund was so strong that it has been three years since we made our last appeal. But as we face continuing costs to complete this process, our legal fund is running low, and we need to ask for your support once again. We need to build up the fund again – not *only* to pay for work recently done and to finalize this legal action, but to also be ready for anything that may develop. It is this preparedness that has enabled the Association to endeavor to protect the interests and rights of retirees.

Getting to this point has been no small feat, as it seems like every time we thought we were on the verge of a settlement, new issues would arise over things like proposed language or the terms for inclusion of covered class members in the settlement. Progress has been painfully slow, due in part to the COVID pandemic and lockdown – remember that this all started in 2019! – but also due to delays primarily on the part of the District and their legal counsel. Dare we say that finalizing the settlement was not a priority for them? But the situation from beginning to end has brought clarity to just how important it is to have legal documents that can be referred to when circumstances threaten retirees' rights.

I mention that this all started in 2019, five years ago when the District decided to contract with CalPERS to provide health benefits for active and retired employees. At that time, the District announced that all retirees age 65 and over would have to sign up for Medicare in order to continue receiving their benefits. When the Executive Board held a special meeting and invited the then-Chancellor to attend and discuss the new proposed health benefits change, the Chancellor confirmed that they were indeed requiring all retirees to enroll in Medicare ***and*** that the District was willing to pay Medicare premiums for ***only three years***. Included in this new requirement was a group of employees who had ***NEVER PAID INTO SOCIAL SECURITY*** and had never been required by the conditions of their employment to sign up for Medicare at age 65 in order to receive their lifetime-guaranteed health benefits. Such a requirement would create a substantial financial burden for these retirees and was considered by the Association to be a violation of the employees' legal rights. That was a clear indication of how little was understood about the

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rights that had accrued to retirees over the years. Further talks with the District failed to produce a resolution to the Association's concerns, and a lawsuit was born. Our attorney and the legal team, consisting of Lyn MacConnaire, Patricia Parham, Rene Rodriquez, Diane Moore, and myself, have been in lockstep throughout the process working to bring about a successful conclusion. Countless hours have been spent gathering the required documentation, poring over proposed language changes that might have had a detrimental impact on retirees, and in negotiations between our attorney and District counsel to substantiate our position that these retirees had earned District-paid lifetime healthcare benefits. Furthermore, we advised the District that it was responsible for all costs associated with providing those benefits. Finally, once we have a court-approved settlement, we will have a legal document that puts in writing what retirees are entitled to at a minimum. Likewise, this document will serve to discourage future administrations and the Board of Trustees from taking unilateral actions that negatively impact the quality and integrity of District-provided lifetime healthcare benefits to retirees.

I would like to be able to say that this current legal action is the last one that we will have to undertake…but I cannot in good conscience say that. And I cannot stress enough the importance of having sound legal documents on which to rely in the event of future threats to our hard-earned rights. Consider this: a new Chancellor, addressing an entirely new set of Trustees, might ask why the District should be so generous as to pay the Medicare premiums and associated costs on behalf of retirees? Without an official legal document like a court-approved settlement to answer the question, a new Administration might feel that they are free to take action however they please, completely unaware that they would be infringing on retiree rights earned over many years and previous negotiations…and we would have the beginnings of yet another lawsuit to defend our rights.

Please consider contributing to the ongoing efforts to protect those hard-earned rights. We are again suggesting a contribution of $250 from each retiree. An early response will keep us from needing to do this again anytime soon. Contribution checks may be made payable to VCCCDRA and mailed to:

VCCCD Retirees' Association
P.O. Box 6216
Ventura, CA 93006-6216

Thank you all for your continuing support. It is and has been vital and essential to the work of your retiree association, the VCCCDRA, and its leadership through the Executive Board and its Legal Committee as we work to protect your District-earned rights and the quality and integrity of District-provided lifetime healthcare benefits. Once the lawsuit is finalized, the Executive Board will provide an opportunity for discussion of the process with the membership as well as a full accounting of the legal fund.

Wishing you all a happy, healthy, and safe fall season, and we hope to see you at Ottavio's Restaurant in Camarillo for our 30th Anniversary Fall Social on Tuesday, October 8th!

With Respect and Appreciation,

Susan Bricker, President
VCCCD Retirees' Association

Membership Report

BY JOY KOBAYASHI

Please join me in welcoming our valued colleagues to the VCCCD Retirees Association and in wishing them a long and satisfying retirement.

James Antero	MC	Kim Hoffmans	VC
Karen Beatty	MC	Maureen Jacobs	VC
Brad Cabelli	DO	Jerry Mansfield	MC
Mitchell Cervantez	VC	Lawrence Nathanson	MC
Khushnur Dadabhoy	MC	Kelly Neel	VC

In Memoriam

We honor the memory of our departed colleagues and extend our sincerest condolences to their families, friends, and associates.

Paul Aiello	VC		
Edrissa (Ed) Bassey	OC	Marilyn (Jean) Kauffman	OC
Victor Belinski	DO	Teresa Martinez	DO
Helene Ann Corley-Mulligan	OC	Terry Pardee	VC
John Grzywacz (Gray)	MC	Lola Rudd	VC
Sheelah Henry	DO	John Turturro	VC

REMINDER! ARE YOU BEHIND IN ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES?

Please send your payment today!



VCCCD Retirees' Association
P.O. Box 6216
Ventura, CA 93006-6216

Support your retiree association, pay your dues:
Annual dues: **$25.00**

(Note: If you have paid the lifetime membership rate of $200.00, your dues are paid.)

EMAIL ADDRESSES NEEDED: If you are receiving this issue of the newsletter through the U.S. mail and have an email, please contact the VCCCDRA at **vcccdra@gmail.com** so that we have updated information. Thank you.



VCCCD RETIREES' ASSOCIATION – 30TH ANNIVERSARY

2024 ANNUAL FALL SOCIAL EVENT

This year's Annual Social will be the 30th Anniversary celebration of our VCCCD Retirees' Association. The Association was founded in 1994 by Don Medley, instructor at Moorpark College and the first administrator of the VCCCD Information Technology Department. Little did he know that this Association would do more than just provide a way for former colleagues to stay connected once they had retired. This Association has done more than that over the past years having won two legal settlements to maintain medical health benefits coverage provided by the District for many retirees. So many of us are ever so grateful to Don that he did so.

This year's event will be a little different from those in the past. The Committee members will not be doing all the work. But it will still have some great food prepared by the great cooks at Ottavio's Italian Restaurant. The meal will be served buffet style, and the menu will consist of the following: 1) Lasagne Neopolitan, 2) Baked Ziti (vegetarian), 3) Chicken Marsala, and 4) Chicken Parmigiana. Also included is fresh baked bread, garden salad with Italian dressing, and the following beverages: coffee, tea (hot or iced), soda or lemonade. A choice of the following desserts is included as well: spumoni, cappuccino, or vanilla ice cream.

JOIN US FOR A GREAT AFTERNOON OF FOOD, CAMARADERIE, PRIZES AND FUN!!

Date: Tuesday, October 8, 2024
Place: Ottavio's Italian Restaurant – 1620 Ventura Blvd., Camarillo, CA
Time: 12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Social Hour: 12 p.m. - 1 p.m. Food service: 1 p.m.

Cost: $40 per person (includes tax & tip) please complete and submit reservation form by deadline date as indicated below. RESERVATIONS REQUIRED – No walk-ins will be allowed.
The afternoon will be filled with good food, 50/50 raffle & prizes, silent auction items, camaraderie, and plenty of laughs with former colleagues and friends!! Hope to see you there**!! (If you are interested in donating items for the raffle or silent auction, contact Becky Hull (bhullandus8@gmail.com) or Marie Soo Hoo (masoohoo@twc.com).**

Cut Off Here and Return Bottom Portion with Check

Reservation/Payment Form

Retiree's Name: _____ If spouse/guest attending, provide name below:
Name: _____ Circle one: Spouse Guest

Make checks payable to: VCCCD RETIREES' ASSOCIATION
$40 per person x _____ persons = $ _____ total amount of your check
Mail completed reservation form and check to:

VCCCD Retirees' Association
P.O. Box 6216
Ventura, CA 93006-6216
RESERVATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY SEPTEMBER 27, 2024

VCCCD Retirees' Association
P.O. Box 6216
Ventura, CA 93006-6216

Place Postage Here

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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Fall 2024

Ventura County Community College District Retirees' Association

2024-2025 Executive Board

Susan Bricker, President	vcccdra@gmail.com
Diane Moore, Immediate Past President	utsmoore@yahoo.com
Robin Douglas, Vice President	vcogrobin@gmail.com
Marie Soo Hoo, Secretary	masoohoo@twc.com
David Magallanes, Treasurer	vcccdratreasurer@gmail.com
Harry R. Culotta, Benefits Committee Chair	hculotta@fastmail.com
Vacant, Membership Committee Chair	
Larry Manson, Educational Issues Committee Chair	lmanson@west.net
Carolyn Dorrance, Scholarship Committee Chair	vcccdra@gmail.com
Carmen Guerrero, Technology Committee Chair	cguerr49@gmail.com
Sandy Hajas, Newsletter	sandy.hajas@gmail.com
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Rene G. Rodriguez, At-Large Representative	vcccdra2@gmail.com
Joan Smith, At Large Representative	ccpresident@hotmail.com