

HIGHLIGHTS IN THE HISTORY  
OF CECIL COUNTY RETIRED TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION  
(NOT FOR OURSELVES ALONE, BUT FOR OTHERS)

CCRTA was founded September 26, 1950, at a meeting of eight persons at the Cecil County Courthouse. Dues were \$1.00. The stated purpose was to interest county and state officials in supporting an increase in pensions. Officers chosen were Helen Watson, president, Evelyn Kimble, secretary and Guy Johnson, who was a state senator, treasurer.

Mrs. Watson served as third president of MRTA 1953-1956. During her term MRTA affiliated with NRTA.

No meetings of CCRTA followed until March 1953 and thereafter yearly until 1967 when two meetings per year began. Their emphasizes were directed toward pension increases and other benefits.

In 1967 an investigation into forming a Blue Cross/Blue Shield group took place but was unsuccessful. Since 1985, when retired teachers had no health insurance through the Board of Education, negotiations have been ongoing and have now reached an acceptable level as of 1997.

In 1979 CCRTA began its first outreach effort when BC/BS of Maryland, WBAL/TV and the American Red Cross created Maryland Health Fair, Inc., which offered free health screenings and education to the public. One of our members

trained to be and was coordinator of the Cecil County site from 1980 through 1986. She approached CCRTA for volunteer assistance in non-medical capacities. Around fifteen retirees responded and continued this effort until the program was discontinued statewide in 1989. Our unit received an award for outstanding service, and our site coordinator' was individually honored.

In December 1983 our second outreach idea was a suggestion by then president Florence Smith to provide Christmas gifts to Cecil County patients at Upper Shore Community Mental Health Center. This program continues to date.

From 1962 through 1986 deceased members were honored by the presentation of a memorial book to the school where the honoree had last taught. In May 1986 our first annual college scholarship was suggested by the current president and a collection taken in the amount of \$200. This outreach continues annually as memorial donations by members. In May 1990 the Moment of Remembrance Service as a part of the scholarship presentation was inaugurated. The May 1997 campaign is underway at this writing and has already surpassed 1996's \$1100.

Our president, who was a volunteer at the Help Center (Dept. of Social Services), in December 1986 noticed a shortage of warm coats for needy children and suggested that, in lieu of the usual \$5. 00 Christmas gift exchange at our meeting, we each contribute to a coat fund. \$274.50 was

collected. This program also continues to date and in 1996 \$1335 was donated and seventy jackets purchased. This activity has received MRTA, NRTA, and AARP recognition.

The above activity has increased interest in the Help Center and about thirteen CCRTA members act as shopping guides t here in early December each year when needy citizens choose a selection of new, free Christmas toys for their children.

In December 1987 plans for CHALKBOARD were completed and our first official newsletter, complete with a new CCRTA logo was mailed in March 1988 under the guidance of new president, Kathleen Moyne.

An outgoing president, who had served as an officer or committee chair as well as three non-consecutive two-year terms as president was honored in May, 1995 with a framed Resolution of the Membership, a magnolia tree planted in her yard and a lovely luncheon at the Bayard House in Chesapeake City. Some members of other RTAs attended the planting and luncheon.

As to involvement at the state level: No mention is made in the secretary's minutes between the time Helen Watson was state president in 1953-1956 and the appointment of Betty Blankenship as North Eastern Regional Coordinator in 1995. However, Betty was also one of about twenty participants in the 1990 "Think Tank" in Ocean City when vital contributions were formulated which helped guide

MRTA in developing a central office with an executive secretary.

Throughout the years members have usually participated at state meetings when invited to do so, bringing back pertinent information to the local level.

Volunteerism is widespread in schools, retirement homes, churches, meals-on-wheels and hospice, etc, and we continue to be a vital part of life in The Land of Pleasant Living, Cecil County.

Cecil County RTA Archivist May 1997