



# T R E N D

(Thinking Retired Employees Need Direction)  
**Retired Employees of Kern County**

Volume MMXX-I

January & February 2020

www.reokc.org

Robert Seibly, President

M. L. Bennett, Editor (mlbennett36@sbcglobal.net)



## President's Message

**ROBB SEIBLY**

*Our mission is to promote the education and earned benefits of all retirees of Kern County, advocate the safeguarding and continuation of Kern County retiree pension and health benefits, provide avenues of support and information for Kern County retirees and beneficiaries, ensure proper and necessary representation on the Kern County Board of Retirement, and participate as an integral contributor in our Kern County communities' quality of life.*

Welcome to a new year of the "Retired Employees of Kern County" (REOKC) organization. I'm hoping that this new year "2020" will be a healthy and joyful year for all of us (amazing the thought that it is now 2020; it only seems like yesterday that it was 1970).

As your new President, I welcome any and all comments on how we (the Board of Directors) can better serve you. As you can see by reviewing the 2019 TREND's, our by-monthly newsletter, we have done much to bring you information on issues, trends, discoveries, and ideas that might make all of our lives a little better. We have tried to find information that would be of value to you and help better your living environment. Health and some of the latest procedures in health care being one of the most important; living trusts and wills; and travel for fun and education just to mention a few. Our Health Fair last year was a great success and this year we will continue to bring you the best we can find in the health area. Any good ideas, let us know.

We have a great team of folks that are wonderful in helping to make our luncheons and meetings successful, such as: Jean Park, Sharon Lesser, and Liz Keogh who are our Luncheon Greeters and welcome us to the meetings (and take our money if we need to pay along with keeping attendance records of members with payroll deductions), Mindy White, Linda Rendes and Donna Marquez who keep track of our raffle ticket sales, Donna Marquez who conducts our Flag salute, Peggy Richardson who collects the eyeglasses we donate, Jeanne Berkshire who takes

care of our publicity, Josie De La Torre who is our sunshine chair, sending cards and letters (and usually has a good joke to impart at the meetings), Ginger Mello and Jeanne Berkshire who are our CRCEA delegates, and Mary Lou Bennett who oversees our book exchange program and thank you, thank you, thank you, is the editor of the "TREND" newsletter. There are more folks that help in many areas and I can't name them all, but everyone is involved to make our luncheons and meetings of worth and value to all our members. Alone it can be overwhelming, together we can achieve just about anything.

At our November meeting, our speaker Dr. Curt Collins from Envista Medical Neck & Back Center spoke on some new medical areas in Stem Cell Therapy.

At our December meeting we had over 200 in attendance so we even had to add 3 more tables to the group. It was a great afternoon with music (East High School Choir), wonderful food, and good friends with whom to visit. We introduced the incoming Board of Directors and Teresa Vasquez swore in the new Board. A number of folks even went home with beautiful Red Poinsettia plants which were part of the raffle following this luncheon.

I would encourage all of you to get an updated copy of the REOKC's "Directory and Bylaws 2020." Copies were available at the December meeting and more will be available at our January meeting. This brochure will update you on Board Members, lunch/meeting times and place, websites & phone numbers, and the Bylaws of REOKC.

So many things have happened in 2019 that reviewing the TREND's for that year would show many of the accomplishments.

Someone may ask, "I am retired now so why should I be involved with REOKC (Retired Employees of Kern County)?" Well, that might be a good question to ask, so let me tell you what I think: Remember what I said above, "Alone it can be overwhelming, together we can achieve just about anything." Our mission statement which precedes my message just about sums it up.

So, again I welcome you to REOKC 2020 and hope you will be involved in this great organization. We need you, and if you review our updated brochure you will see that you need REOKC. Let's grow our benefits together.



## KCERA Retirement Board

By

Phil Franey, KCERA Retiree Trustee

***“A retirement system board’s duty to the system’s participants and their beneficiaries shall take precedence over any other duty” (Section 17(b) of Article XVI of the California Constitution).***

I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas and will enjoy a Happy New Year. The KCERA Board (Board) completed the 2019 year. Since this TREND will be sent to all KCERA retirees and beneficiaries, a very brief recap of the past year would include such matters as reclassification of positions, administration reorganization, revision of disability procedures, trustee appointments/elections and improvement to investment program.

Now I will share something of a more serious matter. For many years, much has been reported about the nationwide pension funding crisis leading some businesses into bankruptcy and many others with changing their pension programs. Although bankruptcy filings are rare in the public sector, many public agencies are facing budget stress to responsibly fund pension benefits. Like many of these agencies, Kern County (County) and the other 14 member agencies of KCERA may be facing the same concern of not maintaining an adequate funding level to pay for promised employee pension benefits.

As you may recall the Board consists of nine members - four appointed by the County Supervisors with one being a supervisor, County Treasurer-Tax Collector with an alternate, two general employee members, one safety employee member with an alternate and a retiree member with an alternate. Regardless of trustee representation, Board trustees’ primary duty is to KCERA participants and beneficiaries. Trustees are often advised that their fiduciary duty precludes decision making detrimental to retirees and beneficiaries.

When the Board is deciding issues that affect the County’s budget, their primary duty is to KCERA retirees and beneficiaries, not the County. The County has the responsibility to fund promised pension benefits and not use employee layoffs, hiring freezes, etc. to leverage political influence. Understand that there are legal protections and mandates in California law to fund and protect your pension benefits, but future generations may be at risk if this matter does not receive the necessary due diligence. As stated in the preface of this article, a retirement system board’s duty is primarily to the systems participants and beneficiaries. The Board’s duty is stated in the California Constitution, California Employee Retirement Law, and Fiduciary Law. KCERA trustees are entrusted with the duty to adhere to the advice of their counsel and independent actuary in setting the employer contribution rate funding for your pension benefits. This next year the act-

uarial experience study and resulting recommendations for pension benefit funding will be critical since investment returns and employer/employee contributions continue to underfund pension benefit liabilities.

KCERA assets (bonds, stocks, real estate and other investments) and employer/employee contributions are not meeting the demand of increasing pension liabilities for retirees and beneficiaries. The KCERA actuary provides the needed information of the employer/employee contribution rates, annual assumption rate and resulting current funding ratio. Other assumptions are also prepared using demographic and economic factors. Basically, the annual assumption rate is an estimate of the coming year’s investment income rate to fund pension benefits. The current funding ratio demonstrates the ability to fund pension benefit liabilities.

In 1999 the funding ratio was 100% with an annual assumption rate of 8.25%, in 2007 the funding ratio was 77% with an annual assumption rate of 8%, in 2013 the funding ratio was 61% with an annual assumption rate of 7.75%, in 2016 the funding ratio was 63% with an annual assumption rate of 7.50% and in 2019 the funding ratio is 64% with an annual assumption rate of 7.25%. For more than 15 years, the actual annual investment rate has not exceeded the annual assumption rate, but only once. The inability of the actual annual investment return rate to achieve the assumption rate increases the unfunded pension liability problem. During this time, the County granted enhanced pension programs in 2001 and 2005 followed by a severe market collapse. Inability to meet annual assumption rates caused by a significant financial market collapse, enhanced pension programs, increased member longevity and mass baby boomer retirements are just some of the factors that created the current 64% funding ratio of assets available to fund pension liabilities.

This situation leads to the obvious conclusion that the County and other KCERA member agencies will most likely be experiencing increased employer/employee contribution rates for many years to come in addressing underfunded pension liabilities. Consequently, the Board will experience the usual employer political pressure to do nothing. Hopefully, the KCERA Board will have the courage to perform their fiduciary duty despite the expected political pressure and not leave this burden to future generations.

During the November Board meeting the Verus (KCERA investment consultant) presentation included the fund balance and investment performance (net of fees) for the period ending September 30, 2019 as follows:

- Total Assets at market value - \$4,330, 592,400
- 1 Year - 3.3%
- 3 Years - 6.6%
- 5 Years - 5.4%
- 10 Years - 7.1%

(concluded on Page 3)



## PAYROLL DEDUCTION FORM

To sign up for (or stop) payroll deduction, check the box(es) below, complete the form, and submit it to REOKC.

- REOKC Luncheon Payment**  
By checking this box, I authorize KCERA to deduct \$6.00 per month from my pension benefit as an additional elective payment to REOKC. This deduction shall begin with my next pension payment.

*(Sign up for the luncheon payroll deduction and save \$1.00 per meal!)*

- REOKC Membership Dues**  
By checking this box, I authorize KCERA to deduct \$2.00 per month from my pension benefit as dues for my REOKC membership and to pay that organization. This deduction shall begin with my next pension payment. I understand my authorization and REOKC membership are voluntary and may be revoked by me, in writing, at any time.

Name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Dept. from which retired \_\_\_\_\_

Full Social Security # \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Clip out completed form and send to:

**REOKC / PO Box 2592 / Bakersfield, CA / 93303**

### STOP DEDUCTION(S)

- Check box to stop your deduction for the luncheon.
- Check box to stop your deduction for REOKC membership dues.



**"WELCOME!"**

## **NEW MEMBERS OF THE RETIRED EMPLOYEES OF KERN COUNTY**

**BENEFICIARY:** Leslie Poncetta

**COUNTY COUNSEL:** Janet Crosby

**KCERA:** Karen Frieson

**PROBATION:** Diane Correa

**PUBLIC WORKS:** Patricia D. Wright

**RISK MANAGEMENT:** Debbie Duffel



**WE WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER  
OUR DECEASED REOKC MEMBERS:**

Loretta Avery—Probation  
William Drakos—Behavioral Health & Rec.  
Kenneth Durant—Probation  
Margaret D. Green—Kern Medical Center  
Jeanine Gregory—Sheriff  
Byron Gunnell—Sheriff  
Stanley Guyon—Beneficiary  
Charles Howard—Substance Abuse Prog.  
Robert Kieke—Fire  
Shirley Lundin—Beneficiary  
Marsha Manuell—Human Services  
Frances McKendry—Health Dept.  
Nova Mullen—Beneficiary  
Paul W. Owens—Public Health  
Michael Palmer—District Attorney  
Opal Ralls—Beneficiary  
Linda Stuart—Human Services  
James Turley—Sheriff  
Ardie Wafford—Kern Medical Center

***"A Life well-lived leaves behind  
a beautiful bouquet of memories."***

*Author unknown*

**BAKERSFIELD HOMELESS  
CENTER**

On December 18, 2019 the Retired Employees of Kern County (REOKC) presented a check for **\$306.00** to the Bakersfield Homeless Center.

Thanks to all our members who donated to this charity at our regular monthly luncheons throughout the 2019 year!

**SUNSHINE COMMITTEE NOTICE**

If you know of any of our members who could use a get-well or sympathy card, please contact

**JOSIE DE LA TORRE** at (661) 348-4222

**Thank you!**

**TRAVEL TIPS**

**Tuesday, January 21st & February 18th:**

**Chukchansi Casino** Bus pick-up behind McDonald's on Real Road at 8:00 a.m. - back at 7:00 p.m. \$15.00 per person. Includes roundtrip bus, \$10.00 cash & \$5.00 food voucher.

**Princess Cruise Line:** "Best Sale Ever" from January 2020 through April 2021. You get the Drink Package, Wi-Fi, and Gratuities paid. Expires February 29, 2020.

**Globus Bus Trip:**

The Grand European—23 Days—May 6 - 28, 2020. Rate per person \$3818.00 plus airfare. Visit England, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, France and Spain.

**TRAVEL SHOW:** Thursday, January 30, 2020 from 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Riverlakes Ranch Community Center, 3825 Riverlakes Dr., Bakersfield. Featuring presentations from Globus, Cosmos, Avalon Waterways and Princess Cruise Line. You must make reservations for this show.

Single travelers who don't want to pay the single traveler supplement and are looking for a travel partner, contact Julie at The Cruise Port.

Call **Julie** at **The Cruise Port**, (661 324-6910) with any questions or to make reservations for your travel plans.

**Change of Address Form**

If your address has changed, in order to receive the TREND newsletter and other important notices from REOKC, you must complete this form and send it to REOKC, PO Box 2592, Bakersfield, CA 93303:

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(print)

NEW Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

OLD Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**REOKC USEFUL CONTACTS**

**KCERA Administration 661-381-7700**  
**www.KCERA.org**

- Retirement Check
- Withholding Forms
- Beneficiary Change
- Address Change (& REOKC) \*
- Retirement Board Meetings

**Retiree Health Benefits 661-868-3182**

- County – Health Insurance Div.

**REOKC Endorsed Insurance and Other Supplemental Benefits**

- Pacific Group Agencies, Inc.  
1-800-817-8838  
1-800-511-9065

**REOKC Other Related Services**

- **TREND Editor**
- **Membership**
- **Address/Email Change \***
- **Scholarship Program**

Mary Lou Bennett 661-871-5270  
[mlbennett36@sbcglobal.net](mailto:mlbennett36@sbcglobal.net)

- **Sunshine (Cards of Expression)**  
Josie De La Torre 661-348-4222

**KCERA Board Retiree Member**

- Phil Franey –  
[franeyp@bak.rr.com](mailto:franeyp@bak.rr.com)
- Alternate—Robb Seibly -  
[seiblyrl@gmail.com](mailto:seiblyrl@gmail.com)

**Kern County District Attorney's Office**

- **Elder Abuse: 661 868-2400**

**Kern County Aging & Adult Services**

- **661 868-1000**

## **NEW REOKC MEMBERS WANTED**

If you are a retiree from the County of Kern or any of the special districts that are members of the Kern County Employees' Retirement Association (KCERA), you are eligible for membership in the Retired Employees of Kern County (REOKC).

One of the most important functions of REOKC is safeguarding the pensions and benefits of Kern County retirees by maintaining legal and legislative counsel to monitor for legislation which could adversely affect your retirement benefits.

As a retiree, you are already seeing the benefits from the work done recently by REOKC:

- ◆ Additional \$21.00 a month on your regular pay.
- ◆ Death benefit increased to \$5,000.
- ◆ Purchasing power increased to 82%.

As REOKC members there are additional benefits:

- ◆ You'll be able to take advantage of supplemental insurance plans offered by Pacific Group Agencies at discounted rates. Some of the plans are: Vision, Dental, Pet Care, Legal Shield, Travel Guard, etc. (booklets available).
- ◆ The Scholarship Program established in 2012: If you have relatives (grandchildren, nieces, nephews, etc..) who will be graduating high school seniors, they will be eligible to apply for the REOKC scholarships.
- ◆ You'll be receiving all six issues of REOKC's newsletter, the TREND. The January and February issue only is sent to all Kern County retirees but the five remaining issues goes out only to REOKC members. Its purpose is to keep the members updated on issues involving their retirement benefits as well as current events and activities.
- ◆ Monthly luncheons at Hodel's for only \$7 each at the door for REOKC members and spouse or for a payroll deduction of only \$6 for member or \$12 for both member and spouse.

As you can see, there are many advantages of being a member of REOKC. Membership fee is only \$2 a month which will be deducted from your retirement pay. To join REOKC, complete the Payroll Deduction Form on page 4 and send it to the address listed there. Help REOKC help you by joining the more than 5,000 retirees who are already REOKC members!

## **ATTENTION REOKC MEMBERS!**

**We are now accepting Applications for the 2020 Scholarship Awards for Graduating High School Seniors who are relatives of REOKC Members!**



Six scholarship awards were presented at our August 2019 luncheon so remind your graduating seniors to apply no later than April 15, 2020 to be eligible for this year's scholarships.

Scholarship application forms, instructions and relevant information are all available on our website:

[www.reokc.org](http://www.reokc.org)

## **THOUGHTS TO PONDER**

~ Conceit is an unusual disease; it makes everyone sick but the one who has it.

~ Nothing will stir up more mud than a groundless rumor.

~ You know you're getting on when it takes you longer to rest than it did to get tired.

~ The one thing that is okay to swallow that won't result in indigestion is your pride.

~ People who snore always fall asleep first.

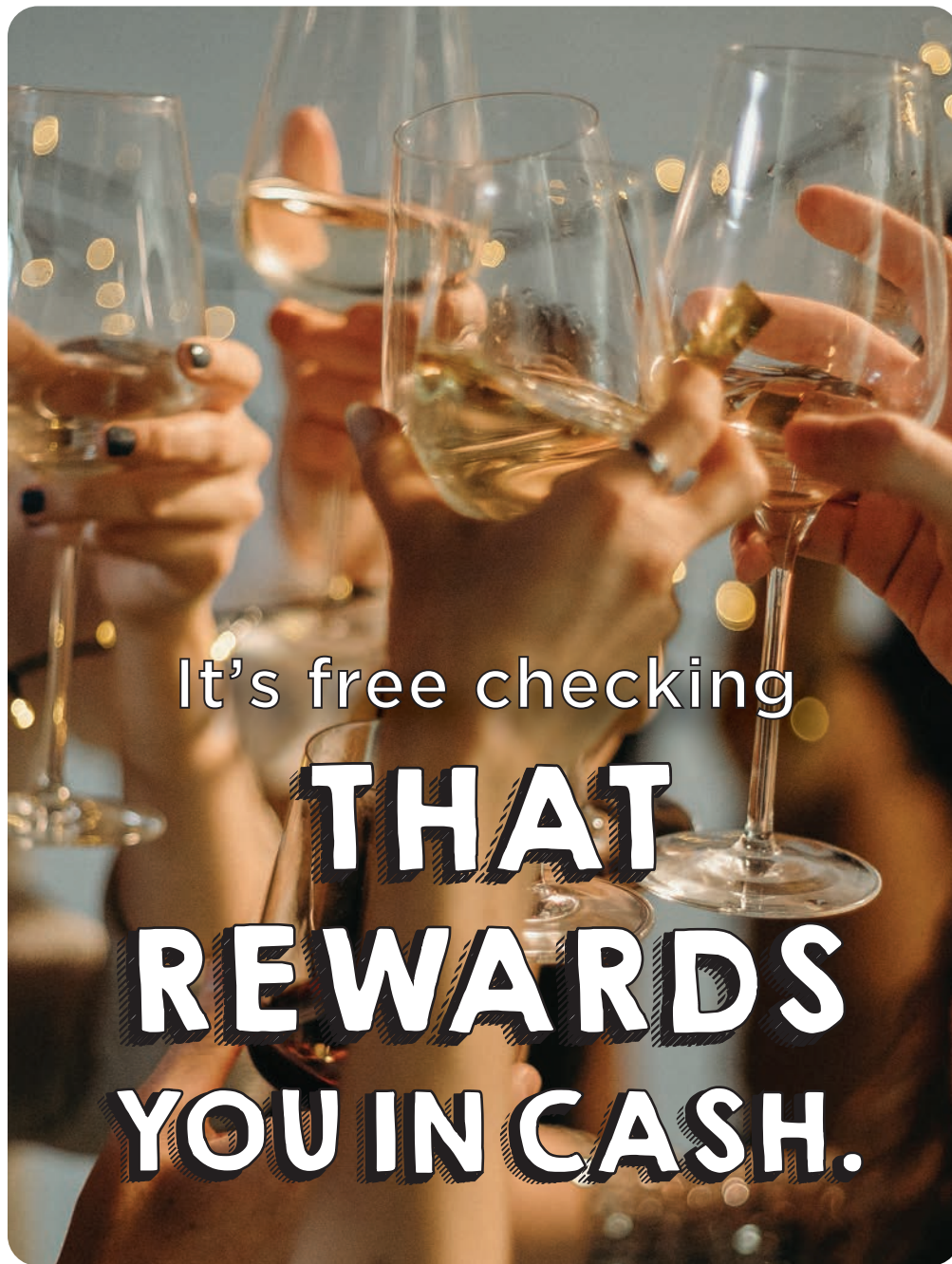
~ The best antique is an old friend.

**Reminder:** The surviving spouse of a retired Kern County Employee is eligible for REOKC membership. Just complete the Payroll Deduction Form on Page 4 and mail to:

**REOKC, PO Box 2592, Bakersfield, CA 93303**

**NOTICE:** All views and opinions expressed in the TREND are solely the representation of each writer. REOKC's only intention is to fairly inform our membership. The information presented in the TREND is believed to be from reliable sources. REOKC does not sell or disclose information about our members to third parties.

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Bakersfield, CA 93303**

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**January & February 2020  
Time Dated Material**

**Official Newsletter of  
The Retired Employees of Kern County Inc.**

## **REOKC LUNCHEONS**

**HODEL'S KERN ROOM  
5917 KNUDSEN DRIVE, BAKERSFIELD**

**(Reservations are no longer required and tickets will no longer be  
sold for future luncheons)**

**MEMBERS WITHOUT PAYROLL LUNCHEON DEDUCTIONS  
WILL PAY AT THE DOOR EACH MONTH:**

**TUESDAY, January 14, 2020  
REOKC members and their spouses \$7.00 each  
Guests \$10.00**

**TUESDAY, February 11, 2020  
REOKC members and their spouses \$7.00 each  
Guests \$10.00**

**Lunches served at 11:30 a.m.**

**(Payments requiring no change will be greatly appreciated.)**