

# The AERA Voice!

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## RECORD-BREAKING ATTENDANCE AT ANNUAL DISTRICT MEETINGS!

By JANICE J. CHARLESWORTH, AERA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It began with the Annual District 7 Meeting in Montgomery with record-breaking attendance and it continued to the last district meeting in Thomasville with almost 100 in attendance. Overall more than 1,000 retirees came out to be informed on matters pertaining to education retirees! **The oldest person to attend a meeting this summer was Method Holmes, age 96, at the District 9 meeting in Enterprise.** Each of the nine meetings was hosted by AERA district directors who did a great job! Speakers included: AERA President Joe Ward, PEEHIP representatives Erica Thomas and Mary Townes, and UnitedHealthcare® representative Lynn Groff, who presented valuable information on the upcoming insurance changes.

During the first half of the meetings, I presented updates on what’s happening in Montgomery, including AERA membership updates, upcoming AERA election material, and legislative issues. President Ward wore two hats at each meeting. He began the meeting as AERA president. Later in the meeting, he put on his TRS/PEEHIP Board of Control member hat and informed attendees on issues facing the RSA. His message as president placed emphasis on challenging AERA members to recruit new members and to be engaged in the political process at the State House and back home. President Ward also reminded retirees that “AERA represents your interests and is totally dedicated to the

welfare of [its] members.”

AERA’s six Area Coordinators: *Marian Wood, Area I East; Charlotte Wilson, Area I West; Pauline George, Area II East; Jim Shannon, Area II West; Peggy Mobley, Area III East; and John Paul*

*Jones, Area III West* addressed members at the district meetings in their areas. They shared tips on having successful local unit meetings, inviting non-members to the meetings from all levels of education, and effective ways to communicate with all education retirees.

The remainder of the meeting dealt with PEEHIP insurance updates and changes. Mrs. Thomas provided an overview of PEEHIP, which included a

handout—the PEEHIP Member Handbook 2016-2017 that all members received for attending. However, the main focus of the meeting was an overview of the UnitedHealthcare® PPO Medicare Advantage Plan for retirees on Medicare that begins January 1, 2017. UnitedHealthcare® representatives gave a brief explanation of what changes are coming. Overall, the information was well received. Ms. Groff, *Linda Jones and DeDe Raybuck with UnitedHealthcare®* encouraged retirees to attend one of the upcoming 90+ informational meetings to be conducted across the state. Members should be receiving notices in the mail to attend a meeting in their area. **For more information, call 1-866-561-4042. RSVP is required.**



*Aerial view of members attending Annual District 1 Meeting in Russellville.*