

MESSENGER



Important Dates & Contacts	2
Director's Report	3 & 4
Retiree Spotlight	5
Strategies for Supporting Mental Health During the Holidays for Senior	6
Retirement Announcements	7
A Message From Our Deputy Director	8
Obituary	9
Winter Fitness for Seniors	10
Social Security Announces 2.8 Percent Benefit Increase for 2026	11
Detroit Area Agency on Aging Meals On Wheels	12
Announcements & Upcoming Events	13
Looking for Retiree Spotlight	14
Recipe Corner	15

IMPORTANT DATES & CONTACTS

CHECK

JANUARY	1/2/25	JULY	7/1/25
FEBRUARY	2/1/25	AUGUST	8/1/25
MARCH	3/1/25	SEPTEMBER	8/29/25
APRIL	4/1/25	OCTOBER	9/30/25
MAY	5/1/25	NOVEMBER	10/31/25
JUNE	5/31/25	DECEMBER	12/01/25

Did you move or change your
banking information?

Contact Payroll:

Jim Magee: 313-224-2821

Andrea Pennington: 313-224-2774

UPCOMING OFFICE CLOSURES

CHRISTMAS EVE	12/24/2025
CHRISTMAS DAY	12/25/2025
SWING DAYS	12/26/2025 12/29/2025 12/30/2025
NEW YEARS EVE AND NEW YEARS DAY	12/31/2025 01/01/2026

Health, Dental, Optical, and Life Insurance

For questions regarding your healthcare benefits, please contact the Wayne County Benefits Department at benefits@waynecountymi.gov or your account representative listed below:

Last Name CONTACT YOUR BENEFITS ENROLLMENT SPECIALIST

A-D	Ebony M. Byrd	(313) 224-0436 ebyrd@waynecountymi.gov
E-K	Andrea Allen	(313) 968-6432 aallen@waynecountymi.gov
L-R	Deborah Brown	(313) 224-6076 dbrown7@waynecountymi.gov
S-Z	Stacy Smith	(313) 224-7172 ssmith@waynecountymi.gov

BENEFITS DEPARTMENT GENERAL CONTACTS:

Office: (313) 224-5157

Fax: (313) 967-1228

QUESTIONS ABOUT STIPENDS:

benefits@waynecountymi.gov

Karyn Jones (313) 224-0354

kjones@waynecountymi.gov



As we close another year, the Wayne County Employees' Retirement System (WCERS) extends our warmest wishes to all retirees and beneficiaries. Your dedication and service have helped build the communities, institutions, and public workforce that continue to uplift Wayne County today. Whether your career was in administration, public safety, infrastructure, courts, health, or social services, we remain deeply grateful for the lasting contributions you've made to the people of Wayne County.

Every year, we also remember and honor the retirees who have passed away. Each left a lasting impact through decades of public service, and we extend our heartfelt condolences to their families, friends, and former colleagues. Their legacy continues to resonate throughout our communities.

I would also like to acknowledge our dedicated WCERS staff, whose professionalism and commitment ensure that our employees, retirees, and beneficiaries receive the support and guidance they depend on. Their attention to detail, care in service, and responsiveness reflect our mission every day. I thank them for their continued efforts on behalf of the Wayne County community.

The Retirement System remains committed to the secure stewardship of your retirement benefits. In 2025, we advanced our focus on technology and service responsiveness to ensure retirees receive timely information, accurate payments, and personal support whenever needed.

WCERS services over 8,000 employees, members, retirees and beneficiaries administering Defined Benefit plans, Defined Contribution plans as well as 457 savings plans. This year, WCERS paid over \$128 million in Defined Benefit payments to an average of 4,314 retirees and beneficiaries.

1099-R Tax Forms

Your annual 1099-R will arrive by January 31, 2026. Please keep this document for your tax records. If you misplace your form, or need a duplicate, you may request one through the website or by calling 313-224-7639.

Our team remains committed to responsive service.

Computer & Phone Scam Safety Tips

- **Never share personal information:** WCERS, Social Security, IRS, or banks will never call, email, or text asking for your Social Security number, bank account, or PIN.
- **Verify before trusting:** If you receive a call, email, or text requesting personal info, hang up or do not click links. Contact the organization directly using official numbers.
- **Beware of urgent threats:** Scammers often create pressure or fear, claiming your account is "compromised" or you "owe money immediately." Take your time and verify.
- **Check email addresses and URLs:** Scammers often use look-alike addresses with subtle misspellings. Hover over links to see the real URL before clicking.
- **Use strong, unique passwords:** Change them regularly and enable two-factor authentication where possible.
- **Keep software updated:** Ensure your computer, phone, and apps have the latest security updates and antivirus protection.

Be cautious with attachments: Never open unexpected email attachments or download files from unknown sources.

Continued on Next Page

Director's Report *Continued...*



Things to Do Around Wayne County This Winter

Cultural Experiences

- **Detroit Institute of Arts (Midtown)** – World-renowned exhibits and free admission for Wayne County residents.
- **Arab American National Museum (Dearborn)** – Showcasing heritage, history, and community stories.
- **Motown Museum (Detroit)** – Walk through the birthplace of the Motown sound.

Entertainment & Events

- **Campus Martius Park Winter Activities** – Ice skating, holiday lights, food vendors, and seasonal entertainment.
- **Wayne County Light Fest (Hines Park)** – Drive through or stroll among millions of holiday lights, displays, and seasonal attractions.
- **Fox Theatre and Detroit Opera House** – Holiday shows, concerts, Broadway tours, and special events through early 2026.

Parks & Nature

- **Hines Drive** – Scenic walking and biking trails year-round.
- **Detroit Riverfront & Belle Isle** – Winter scenery, birdwatching, and indoor attractions like the Aquarium and Conservatory.
- **Wyandotte and Grosse Ile Waterfronts** – Peaceful river views and winter tranquility

Staying Connected With WCERS

Visit www.wcers.org for forms, updates, FAQs, and contact information. If you have questions about benefits, survivor options, or personal account details, please reach out—our team is here to support you.

Warm Wishes for the Year Ahead!

Thank you again for your years of dedicated public service to Wayne County. We wish every retiree and your families a safe, joyful holiday season and a healthy, fulfilling year ahead. Your legacy continues to shape our community, and WCERS is honored to serve you.

Robert Grden

Executive Director, WCERS

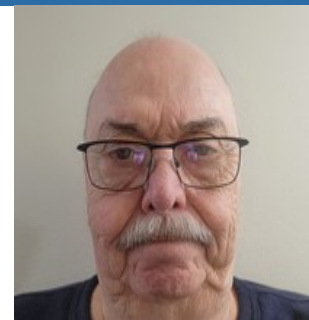


Retiree Spotlight

Richard E. Johnson



Richard E. Johnson devoted an impressive 30 years of his life to serving Wayne County, making a lasting impact on his community. His journey with the County began in September 1973 when he took on the role of a temporary employee in the Wayne County Sheriff's Department as a patrolman. By 1975, Richard transitioned to a full-time position, where he demonstrated unwavering dedication and versatility throughout his distinguished career. He moved through various roles, including Laborer, Bridgeman, Equipment Operator, Foreman, Highway District Supervisor, and eventually ascended to Department Manager I, II, and III, showcasing his leadership skills and commitment to public service.



Before he embarked on his career with Wayne County, Richard proudly served in the U.S. Army from 1969 to 1972 at Fort McNair in Washington, D.C. There, he attained the rank of E-5 in the esteemed Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) unit, gaining invaluable experience and developing a strong sense of duty.

As a representative of the workforce, Richard was not only experienced but also deeply compassionate, consistently striving to provide exceptional support to union members and advocating for the goals of the International Union, AFSCME. His strong and direct approach to addressing issues and resolving problems earned him respect among both colleagues and constituents, whether he was acting as a manager or fulfilling the role of a union representative.

Richard possessed extensive knowledge of the acts and regulations governing labor organizations, adeptly representing both public and private sector employees. His expertise played a critical role in negotiating labor contracts and ensuring the enforcement of contractual provisions, public acts, and court decisions vital for the welfare of bargaining unit employees.

In 1991, Richard married Pamela, creating a loving family environment that welcomed two wonderful children, Ryan and Amber. Outside of work, Richard relishes spending time outdoors, enjoying activities such as fishing and golfing. He also takes pleasure in traveling and cooking, often cherishing moments shared with his family around the dinner table.

Richard E. Johnson dedicated a remarkable 52 years of his professional life to public service, combining his roles at Wayne County with his position as a representative for the Union. On December 1, 2001, Richard E. Johnson retired from Wayne County, leaving behind a legacy of distinguished service that reflects his commitment, integrity, and dedication to improving the lives of those in his community.



Strategies for Supporting Mental Health During the Holidays for Seniors

The holiday season can be particularly tough for seniors, as it often brings up feelings of loneliness, grief, and stress. It's important to recognize the emotional challenges they may face during this time. However, there are compassionate and effective strategies that can help support their mental health and well-being. By understanding these challenges and providing gentle support, we can make a meaningful difference in the holiday experience for many seniors.



Here are a few constructive strategies to help support seniors mental health during the holiday season:

1. **Foster Open Communication:** It's important to create a safe space for seniors to share their feelings and expectations about the holidays. Checking in on them can make a significant difference, letting them know they are valued and understood.
2. **Incorporate Beloved Traditions:** Engage seniors in cherished activities they love, such as watching classic holiday movies, preparing their favorite recipes, or decorating together. These familiar traditions can bring comfort and add joy to their experience.
3. **Encourage Social Engagement:** Staying connected is vital for seniors. Invite them to family gatherings or community events, and if distance is a concern, make an effort to schedule regular phone calls or virtual gatherings. These connections can help combat feelings of loneliness.
4. **Plan Meaningful Activities:** Organize enjoyable holiday activities such as caroling, decorating, or crafting together. Being included in these fun experiences can uplift their spirits and help them feel engaged.
5. **Promote Gentle Physical Activity:** Encourage gentle exercises like walking or stretching, which can help reduce stress and improve their mood. Even small tasks related to holiday preparations can keep them active and involved, which is often beneficial.
6. **Create New Traditions:** Encourage seniors to explore new traditions that bring them joy and meaning, such as volunteering or participating in community outreach. These new experiences can offer a fresh perspective and a sense of purpose.
7. **Seek Professional Help if Needed:** Be attentive to any signs of severe depression or anxiety in seniors. If you're concerned, kindly encourage them to reach out to mental health professionals. Resources like the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (988) are available for immediate support.

By recognizing the unique challenges seniors may face during the holidays and showing understanding and compassion, caregivers and family members can create an environment that enhances their mental well-being and fosters a more joyful and meaningful holiday experience.



Happy Retirement!

September 2025—November 2025

NAME	DEPT.	NAME	DEPT.
Andrew Hill	DPS	John C. Beamer	WCS
Angie McClendon-Gordon	DHVCS	John Gaynier	WCAA
Arthur Cooper III	WCS	Karen Hessler	CIR CT
Charles Garber	DPS	Levil Iroha	HHVS
Daniel Howe	GAA	Mario Hill	WCS
Dawn Kruse	WCAA	Sharlene Gant-Greer	PROS
Diane Webb-Spielman	Comm	Steven G. Hawk	WCS
Glenn Fecteau	DPS	Theresa Samosiuk	WCAA
Herbert H. Bostic Jr.	WCS	Wilma K. Moore-Price	M&B



A Message From Our Deputy Director

As we enter the winter months, it is important to remember that retirement doesn't mean stepping away from community, it often means finding new ways to stay connected. One of the strongest predictors of well-being in retirement is having a sense of purpose. Volunteering offers exactly that. For some, like Executive Director Grden, contributing time and compassion to a local food bank brings a rare combination of connection, gratitude, and social interaction. Some WCERS staff contributed to the Wayne County Turkey Drive, hosted by County Executive Warren C. Evans, to help make sure families across the county could enjoy a warm Thanksgiving. Acts of service are proven to boost mood, reduce feelings of isolation, and strengthen your sense of belonging.

Just as community service helps maintain social well-being, staying connected to your retirement system helps protect your financial well-being. The **2025 Signature and Information Verification Form** is an important annual requirement that ensures your pension records remain accurate, and your benefits continue without interruption.

Why This Form Matters

- **Confirms your identity:** Helps prevent benefit fraud and protects your retirement income.
- **Ensures up-to-date information:** Addresses, contact details, and other personal data are essential for receiving important notices and payments.

Maintains uninterrupted benefits: Missing or delaying the form could result in processing issues or temporary holds.

Completing and returning this form promptly is a simple but essential step in safeguarding your retirement benefits. WCERS mailed out the 2025 form to all retirees in late October, you can request a new copy by emailing eretirement@waynecountymi.gov or calling 313-224-2846.



In Loving Memory

Reported September 2025 - November 2025

NAME	DEPT.	NAME	DEPT.
Anne O'Hara	Cir Ct	Grant Chase	WCS
Beatrice Logan	JUV/YTH	Howard Meyers	DPS
Beverlyn Jordan	PROS ATTY	Jeanne Stempien	CIR CT
Carlos Saenz	DPS	Leslie Johnson	WCS
Constance Bartlo	HHS	Marine McClendon	DOE
David Early	WCAA	Marion Manos	Deferred - WCGH
Donald Poloskey	WCRC	Mary Griffin	WCS
Eleanor Shattock	WCGH	Norman Sanders	DPS
Eric Higgs	M&B	Patricia Hampton	WCS
Essie Stevens	PROS ATTY	Paul E. Brooks	JUV
Eugene Sharp	WCS	Ralph Johnston	DPS
Faith Cairgle	HHS	Raymond Zuke	WCS
Florine Ingram	JUV/YTH	Ruth Hood	DWMHA
Francis Jacques	DPS	Shirley Meadows	WCS
Gloria Hankerson	CIR CT	Yolan Mickel	WCGH

Winter Fitness for Seniors

Hey there! Staying fit during winter can be a fun and uplifting experience for seniors. Here are some friendly suggestions for winter fitness activities that you might enjoy:

1. **Chair Yoga and Gentle Stretching:** These activities are perfect for improving flexibility, easing joint pain, and reducing stress. They're great for everyone!
2. **Indoor Walking Routines:** Walking indoors is a wonderful way to boost your heart health, strengthen your bones, and build stamina. Plus, it's nice and cozy!
3. **Mall Walking:** Why not take a stroll in your local mall? It's a safe, well-lit space, and many malls open early just for seniors!
4. **Indoor Swimming:** If you have access to a pool, swimming is a gentle yet effective way to tone muscles, improve heart health, and increase endurance. Dive in!
5. **Gentle Snow Activities:** Enjoy the winter wonderland with activities like snowshoeing or sledding. They can be a lot of fun and great exercise, too!

These activities will help you stay active and make the most of the fresh air and sunshine, even in the colder months. Just remember to check with your doctor before starting anything new, especially if you have health concerns. Dressing warmly and staying hydrated will keep you comfortable and safe during your winter workouts. Have fun and stay active!



Social Security Announces 2.8 Percent Benefit Increase for 2026

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has exciting news: Social Security benefits, including Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments, will increase by 2.8 percent in 2026. This means that, on average, Social Security retirement benefits will rise by about \$56 per month starting in January, positively impacting the lives of millions of Americans.

Over the past decade, the average cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) has been around 3.1 percent, with a COLA of 2.5 percent in 2025. This year, nearly 71 million Social Security beneficiaries will enjoy the 2.8 percent COLA beginning in January 2026, and approximately 7.5 million people receiving SSI will see increased payments starting on December 31, 2025. (It's important to note that some individuals receive both Social Security benefits and SSI.)

Commissioner Frank J. Bisignano of the Social Security Administration emphasizes, "Social Security is a promise kept, and the annual cost-of-living adjustment is one way we ensure that benefits reflect today's economic realities, continuing to provide a foundation of security." This adjustment plays a crucial role in fulfilling the mission of Social Security.

In addition, other adjustments that take effect each January are based on increases in average wages. As a result, the maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax (taxable maximum) is projected to increase to \$184,500, up from \$176,100.

To keep everyone informed, the Social Security Administration will start notifying individuals about their new benefit amounts by mail in early December 2025. Beneficiaries can expect a user-friendly, one-page COLA notice that is clear and personalized, detailing exact dates and amounts for their new benefits and any deductions.

For those with my Social Security accounts, accessing COLA notices online is a secure, efficient, and faster alternative to traditional mail. Account holders can also set up text or email alerts to receive notifications about new messages, including their COLA notice.

To facilitate this process, individuals looking to receive a COLA notice online should create or sign in to their personal my Social Security account and opt out of paper notices by November 19, 2025. Embrace the digital age! Create an account today at www.ssa.gov/myaccount. An online my Social Security account also offers the convenience of requesting a replacement Social Security card, checking claim status and benefits, and accessing SSA-1099 forms.

Additionally, information regarding Medicare changes for 2026 will be available at www.medicare.gov, with premium amounts for Medicare enrollees accessible through the my Social Security Message Center starting in late November. Those who prefer traditional methods will receive their COLA notice by mail in December.

The calculation of the COLA is governed by the Social Security Act, which ties it to the increase in the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) as determined by the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. This ensures that the adjustments are directly aligned with economic changes, helping to maintain the financial security of beneficiaries.

For more information you can right click on the link [Social Security Announces 2.8 Percent Benefit Increase for 2026 | News | SSA](#)

Detroit Area Agency on Aging-Meals On Wheels



The Detroit Area Agency on Aging's Meals on Wheels is a vital state- and federally-funded program dedicated to delivering nutritious, balanced meals to homebound seniors and adults with disabilities. It serves residents in Detroit, the five Grosse Pointes, Hamtramck, Harper Woods, and Highland Park. The program aims to enhance the quality of life for participants by ensuring they receive not only sustenance but also essential social interaction through friendly deliveries. Each meal is carefully crafted to meet dietary needs, promoting health and well-being for those who may have limited access to grocery shopping or cooking. Through this service, Meals on Wheels strives to foster community connections and support the independence of its clients.

Meal Options for Participants:

Participants have the opportunity to select from the following meal options:

- A hot meal delivered once each day from Monday to Friday, OR Five frozen meals delivered once a week.
- In addition, the program provides liquid nutrition for individuals who are unable to consume solid foods, provided they have a prescription from their physician.

Eligibility Requirements:

To participate in this program, individuals should meet the following criteria:

- Be 60 years of age or older - Be homebound and require assistance to leave their home
- Be unable to prepare meals independently - Not be able to join the Congregate Meal Program - Be capable of feeding themselves
- Have no caregiver available or willing to regularly prepare meals

Holiday Meals on Wheels:

The Holiday Meals on Wheels (HMOV) program is proudly supported by a combination of corporate, private, and community donations, enabling us to provide meals to thousands of homebound seniors and adults with disabilities during significant holidays, including Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and Labor Day.

The Detroit Area Agency on Aging (DAAA) is grateful for the invaluable partnerships with corporate and individual donors that make the Holiday Meals on Wheels Program possible. Your contributions play a vital role in supporting our mission.

Fundraising for HMOV began with grassroots initiatives led by DAAA staff in 1988. We recognize the importance of addressing social determinants of health, and we understand that access to nutritious meals is a crucial first step for many seniors.

This Thanksgiving and Christmas, we warmly invite seniors who wish to receive a hot holiday meal to reach out to the Detroit Area Agency on Aging (DAAA) at 313-446-4444. We are here to help nourish and support our community.

For more information right click on the attached link [Meals on Wheels | Nutrition | Detroit Area Agency on Aging](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS & UPCOMING EVENTS

Retiree Clubs

Wayne County Retiree Sub-Chapter 38

When: Second Tuesday of every month at 1PM

Address: UAW Local 182 35603 Plymouth Rd Livonia, MI 48150

<http://www.wcsubchapter38.com/>

We invite all retirees of Wayne County to join our Sub-Chapter! The annual dues are \$36.00, which can be easily paid through a monthly payroll deduction of \$3.00 or as a one-time payment via check or cash. To obtain a membership application, please reach out to Richard Noelke at wingsman81@aol.com. Your participation is valuable, and we look forward to having you with us!

.

Wayne County Sheriff and Airport Police Retirees Association

When: Second Thursday of every month at 12PM (free lunch is included)

Upcoming Meetings held on the following dates:

December 11, 2025

Address: American Legion #396, 6860 Middlebelt, Garden City, MI 48135



Looking for Retiree Spotlight

The Wayne County Employees' Retirement System proudly celebrates the achievements and journeys of our retired members through the Messenger Newsletter. Each edition is an opportunity to shine a spotlight on the incredible stories of our retirees, and we are continually seeking individuals to highlight in future issues.

If you would like to share your unique story with us, we invite you to submit a brief biography detailing your years of dedicated service with Wayne County, including your start date and retirement date. We encourage you to include two to three photographs that capture your personality, as well as insights into your hobbies or engaging activities that are occupying your time since your well-deserved retirement.

To take part in this exciting opportunity to be featured in the Messenger, please reach out to Javier Valentine at (313) 224-5893, or feel free to email him at jvalentine@waynecountymi.gov. We are eager to connect with you and include your story in one of our upcoming Messenger issue.

Don't wait too long—reach out soon! We look forward to celebrating you in our next Messenger. Wishing you a wonderful holiday season!



Holiday Dessert Recipes

2 1/2 cups milk

4 whole cinnamon sticks

1/8 tsps. ground cloves

1/2 tsps. vanilla extract

7 large egg yolks

3/4 cup sugar

2 cups heavy cream

2 tsps. Vanilla extract

1/8 tsps. Ground nutmeg

Eggnog



1. Combine the milk, cinnamon sticks, cloves, and ½ teaspoon vanilla extract in a large saucepan. Place it over low heat for 5 minutes to infuse the flavors.
2. In a medium mixing bowl, whisk the egg yolks and sugar together for about 1 minute, or until the mixture becomes pale and slightly thickened.
3. Remove the cinnamon sticks from the milk and increase the heat to medium-high. Gradually whisk about ¼ of the hot milk into the egg yolk mixture to temper the eggs. Then, pour the egg yolk mixture back into the saucepan with the remaining milk, whisking continuously.
4. Cook the mixture over medium heat, whisking constantly, for 3 minutes, or until it thickens slightly. Do not let it boil.
5. Pour the hot eggnog into a large bowl or beverage container and allow it to cool at room temperature for 1 hour. If desired, return the cinnamon sticks to the mixture for additional flavor.
6. After cooling, stir in the heavy cream, 2 teaspoons vanilla extract, and nutmeg. Refrigerate the eggnog for at least 4 hours, or until fully chilled.

Strawberry Shortcake Trifle



Ingredients

2 cups fresh strawberries (sliced)

2 tablespoons sugar

1 angel food cake

2 cups whipped cream

1 cup vanilla pudding

4 oz cream cheese

2 tablespoons powdered sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1. Slice your strawberries and toss them with a couple of tablespoons of sugar.
2. In a mixing bowl, beat softened cream cheese, powdered sugar, and vanilla extract until smooth. Fold in whipped cream gently until fluffy. If using pudding, you can mix that in too for extra smoothness.
3. Tear or cut the [angel food cake](#) into bite-sized chunks. Nothing fancy here — just make sure they're small enough to layer and fit nicely into your bowl.
4. In your trifle bowl, start with a layer of cake chunks, then a layer of cream, followed by a layer of [strawberries](#). Repeat until the bowl is full or you run out of stuff. End with strawberries on top — always finish strong.
5. Pop the whole thing in the fridge for at least 30 minutes, or even overnight if you can wait that long. It lets everything soak together like a flavor party in a bowl.