



# SRSRA NEWSLETTER

For SRS Retiree Association Members

Gene Dixon, Editor

Volume 27, No. 2 April 2024

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## SRSRA Contact Information:

SRS Retiree Association, Inc. P. O. Box 5686, Aiken, SC 29804

Phone Message Line: 803-226-0070

e-mail: [SRSRA@srsretirees.org](mailto:SRSRA@srsretirees.org) or use the “Contact Us” button on the website.



Web Page: <http://srsretirees.org>



Like us on Facebook: SRS Retirees

## SRSRA Mission

The mission of the SRS Retiree Association is to work to advocate for the maintenance of retiree pension and medical benefits in current dollars, provide assistance and support of the greater SRS retiree population, ensure that the retiree benefits and needs are visible to the broader community, and support current and future missions of the SRS.

## About this Newsletter

The SRSRA Newsletter is published four times a year – January, April, July, and October. The Newsletter is sent to all dues paying SRSRA members. Previous editions of this newsletter are posted on the Retiree Association website at [www.srsretirees.org](http://www.srsretirees.org) under the Newsletters tab.

To switch to an electronic newsletter, send a note via [www.srsretirees.org](http://www.srsretirees.org), with your current email address.

## SRS Retirees on Facebook

Great sharing and information can be found on the SRS Retirees Facebook page. Search for the group name SRS Retirees and join your fellow retirees in that group or <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1628555790551114>.

## Annual Meeting

The 2024 Annual Meeting will be held on April 16, 2024 at the University of South Carolina Aiken (USCA) Etheredge Center. Registration will begin at 11:00 AM. The meeting will start at 1 PM. A call for questions was held in March and has now closed. No questions will be accepted during the meeting. Minutes from our last (2023) Annual Meeting are included in this newsletter. Mark your calendars and make plans to attend. We are counting on a record turnout!”

## 2024 SRSRA Annual Meeting Agenda

USCA Etherredge Center, 471 University Parkway, Aiken, S.C.  
1:00 pm April 25, 2023

### Call to Order and Opening Remarks

SRS-DoE Update

SRSRA Resource Center Update

DOE-SR Update

Questions and Answers -Panel/Board Members

Note: In the interest of the health and safety of our membership, we will not be taking questions from the floor at the meeting. Questions were previously submitted to the SRSRA website <https://www.srsretirees.org>.

Election

Door Prize Drawings

You MUST register and be present to win.

Adjourn

### Additional considerations for your welfare and safety:

Please note that you are responsible for your health protection. Mask wearing is optional at the USCA-Etherredge Center. Campus requirements can be found here: <https://www.usca.edu/pacer-ready/latest-updates/messages-to-campus-community/mask-optional-beginning-monday-march-28>. The USCA-Etherredge Center COVID-19 Helpline is also available at 803-641-3271 or [covid-helpline@usca.edu](mailto:covid-helpline@usca.edu) should you have additional questions.

It is your responsibility to know, and abide by, any federal or state laws relative to firearms and weapons (knives, etc.). Possession of firearms and weapons is unlawful on the USCA campus. Please review the campus requirements found here: <https://usca.edu/campus-safety/legal-notice/laws-concerning-weapons-on-campus>.

USCA campus policy prohibits all pets from campus due to health and safety liabilities. Service animals must be registered and approved by the USCA Office/Department of Disability Services are exempted. Any person found to have an unauthorized animal on campus will be asked to remove the animal promptly.



### Gas Card Winner

The first gas card winner for this issue is Mary J. Hightower. This SRSRA member has won a \$50 gas card courtesy of the SRSEA and SRSRA. Please text or call Bob Hottel (803 221-4248) or email ([abhottel@bellsouth.net](mailto:abhottel@bellsouth.net)) within 30 days to claim your gas card! Please verify your home address when you contact Bob.



## SRSRA Retiree Resource Center News

Contributed by Laureen Feinman, Manager

### New Location

Since we began operating at our new location in January, we have welcomed 30 retirees and family members for office appointments, handled over 300 telephone calls, hosted two BOD committee meetings, transmitted \$245,591 in HE/WW claims, revised Age-in Training Meeting materials and materials describing the SRNS and SRMC benefit plans and provider changes. Service requests include claims issues, enrollment assistance, life insurance claims help, interpretation of Medicare, tax, and company plan documents (6 of us are certified SHIP Medicare counselors) and other matters for our retirees and spouses.

### Recognizing Henry Lucius

Henry has been an extremely valuable volunteer leading the technical team for the successful implementation of our new telephone system and computer network these last few months. Henry, Don Stevenson, and Ranny Saylor have worked hard ensuring the suitability of the new technical arrangements and saving potential outside vendor installation expense. These gentlemen climbed through the ceilings and walls to do the wiring, carpentry, and the plumbing, while still maintaining their good humor. Henry worked in the IT area at SRS for many years and enjoys his retirement with his wife Ruthanne.

### R Review Savings

Over the past nine years, the RRC has saved retirees \$3.5 million in R costs. Of the 413 reviews conducted in 2023 for 2024, 62% saved projected R costs for the following year. One verified amount saved was \$182K for 2023. Both SRNS and SRMC engaged new brokers who tried to call every retiree for Med Supp or Medicare Advantage plans enrollment, and while they enrolled them, they also presented their particular licensed R plans for consideration. Retirees are not required to purchase specific Part D R plans so we expect more savings next year as the Medicare review tool offers all available R plans in their areas.

### SRSRA RETIREE RESOURCE CENTER NINE YEARS SAVINGS THRU R REVIEWS

Review Year	Policy Year	Savings (\$000's)
2015	2016	313
2016	2017	435
2017	2018	310
2018	2019	304
2019	2020	363
2020	2021	497
2021	2022	398
2022	2023	606
2023	2024	<u>281</u>
TOTAL 9 YEARS' SAVINGS		3.507 million

### R Review Recognitions

The 2023 Medicare Plan D R open enrollment season went very well, and we want to recognize the volunteers who participated in those reviews. As a result of COVID and LSCOG restrictions, we developed a robust remote review program with John Plodinec, John Veldman, Rick Geddes, Nick Kuehn, Jack Roberts, and David Zigelman. Other volunteers came into the SRMC building (which SRMC had generously allowed us to use again) and met face-to-face with clients: Tom Varallo, Sandy Carroll, Dave Fauth, Dick Frushour, Ken Perrine, Don Stevenson, and Bob and Marie Malstrom.

### **SRMC Plan Migration Issues**

Not all retirees have been successfully migrated to the new plans and those retirees remain a priority. SRMC retirees who have not enrolled in the SRMC group Humana Plans will not have their stipend allocations for 2024 and the future unless they are in the PEBA or military exemption group. Several SRMC retirees have material balances in their HE/WW reimbursement accounts that they will no longer be able to use for claims incurred prior to 1/1/2024. The amount of the remaining prior year allocations is still available but not for old claims. We have offered to work closely with SRMC to contact all the retirees who are losing their stipend or coverage or have over a certain amount in prior year allowances, and we are hoping to receive contact information soon. Our observation is that VIA and SRMC have tried to contact as many people as possible, but some retirees or surviving spouses are just not responding. No wonder with the onslaught of telemarketing, medical issues, and retirees' lack of technical abilities or equipment. Our goal is for our volunteers to contact the ones left, and to help with the prior years' claims. If you know someone who needs help, please call us.

### **Office Visits**

Our counselors meet with retirees for scheduled appointments. Call the SRSRA message line, (803) 226-0070, to leave your request and a description of what you need. You can also email your request at [SRSRA@srsretirees.org](mailto:SRSRA@srsretirees.org). Your issue will be reviewed and assigned to the volunteer who specializes in that issue who will call you to set a time and send you specific information you will need to bring with you to assure the best use of the meeting time. Some matters can be handled over the phone, and we have several very skilled long-term volunteers who prefer to counsel over the phone.



### **Drop Box**

Outside the main entry to the office on Newberry St., you will find a drop box where you can leave materials. The drop box is preferred over the mailbox on the street.

### **Update on Pension Plan**

Our last Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) was obtained in 2002, and inflation has taken its toll on that. Since that time the Association has made three unsuccessful attempts to secure a pension adjustment. During the past year the association has worked with the Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS), the plan administrator and the Department of Energy-Savannah River (DOE-SR) to complete a new request. This request has been submitted through formal process for a pension adjustment in FY2025. The Association has done everything at this point possible. SRSRA members are able to contact congressional representatives requesting their support for a COLA.

### **Gas Card Winner**

The second gas card winner for this issue is Claudia R. Dortenzo. This SRSRA member has won a \$50 gas card courtesy of the SRSEA and SRSRA. Please text or call Bob Hottel (803 221-4248) or email ([abhottel@bellsouth.net](mailto:abhottel@bellsouth.net)) within 30 days to claim your gas card! Please verify your home address when you contact Bob.



## In Memoriam: January – March 2024

SRSRA Board members obtain these names from local newspapers. If you would like your deceased loved one included, please send us their name via our website, email at [SRSRA@srsretirees.org](mailto:SRSRA@srsretirees.org) or leave a message at (803)508-7065.



Kenneth Jo Anderson	Aiken	John C Lewis Jr	North Augusta
Randy Darryl Atnipp	North Augusta	Phillip Gerald Lineburger	Augusta
Hal Baughman	Aiken	James Allen "Al" Marshall	Charleston
John Brian Bouchillon	Aiken	Annanette Goff Martin	North Augusta
Glenn Wilbur Carver	Langley	William Joseph McKnight	Warrenville
Patricia Lott "Patty" Craig	Williston	James Thurmond Moody	Barnwell
Waymon C "Buck" Daniel	Williston	Henry Albert Morris	Aiken
Nancy Barnes Deen	North Augusta	Susan Cabbage New	Aiken
Ellen Black Deer	Ulmer	Earl Garland Parker	Aiken
Herbert "Hank" Elder	Aiken	Anita Sue Poore	North Augusta
Loy Webster Filmon Jr	Aiken	Deborah Lynn Turner Provost	Washington, GA
Joseph E Hamilton	Aiken	Frances Yvonne "Vonnie" Savoy	Aiken
Robert E Hanvey	Charleston	John G "Jack" Simon	Aiken
Rita Consolie Hegler	North Augusta	Stanley E Smith	Aiken
Charles Herbst	Aiken	Rhonda G Still	Blackville
Kenneth John "Ken" Hofstetter	Aiken	Harold Francis Sturm Jr	Aiken
Everett Jamison "EJ" Holgate	North Augusta	Vivan Yelton Tate	Aiken
Toni Kay Jimenez	Grovetown	James Hery West II	Graniteville
Juandail Kirby	Aiken		

## Benefit Contact Information

Note: contract information is provided by others and is subject to unannounced change.

- ✦ **SRSRA Resource Center, 210 Newberry St NW, Aiken SC 29801:** (803) 226-0070  
Message Line [SRSRA@srsretirees.org](mailto:SRSRA@srsretirees.org)
- ✦ **SRS Benefits Service Center at the Site:** HR, payroll and benefits questions. Currently no live answer; the SRS Message Line will take your information for a return call. 803-725-7772 (local area SC and GA) 800-368-7333 (toll free) [service-center@srs.gov](mailto:service-center@srs.gov)
- ✦ **SRNS & BSRA: LIG Solutions (SRNS)** 855-662-0681
- ✦ **SRNS & BSRA Health Equity** (formerly WageWorks): 855-662-0681, prompt 2
- ✦ **SRMC (post 65 retirees) VIA Benefits and Claims:** 800-848-1831 <http://my.viabenefits.com/srmc>
- ✦ **SRMC (post 65 retirees) Humana:** 877-258-5901
- ✦ **SRMC (pre-65 retirees):** 833-413-1179, <http://www.mysrmcbenefits.com>
- ✦ **Blue Cross/Blue Shield of SC:** 800-288-2227 <http://www.southcarolinablues.com>
- ✦ **LIG Solutions (SRNS)** 855-662-0681
- ✦ **Medicare Helpline:** 800-633-4227 <http://www.medicare.gov>



Option 1 for Medical, Option 2 for Dental, Option 3 for Pre-Cert/Med Authorization

- ✦ **Prudential Life Insurance:** 844-494-4778 Company Control Number/Access Code = 51945  
[www.prudential.com/mybenefits](http://www.prudential.com/mybenefits). Or call your SRS or SRMC Benefits Center for updated account access information.
- ✦ **Social Security:** 800-772-1213 <http://www.ssa.gov>; Aiken 866-275-8271
- ✦ **Transamerica Pension and 401K:** 866-288-3257 [www.transamerica.com/portal/srsretire/](http://www.transamerica.com/portal/srsretire/)
- ✦ **Corteva Connections:** 800-775-5955
- ✦ **Corteva Agriscience:** for other DuPont Benefits 800-775-5955
- ✦ **DuPont Retirees Contact Information:**  
<http://www.retiree.dupont.com/our-company/retirees/contact-us.html>

### SRMC Contact Information

- ✦ Visit <https://www.savannahrivermissioncompletion.com/>
- ✦ **SRMC Benefits Portal: 833-413-1179** To update Pre-65 medical or dental benefits due to a qualifying life event, view amount of Retiree life insurance, update Retiree life insurance beneficiaries, make changes to retiree contributory life insurance, make changes for open enrollment, or to report a divorce or death of a dependent.
- ✦ **Pension Payments: 803-725-7772** Service-Center@srs.gov Questions on direct deposit, pension questions.
- ✦ **Life Insurance Claims: 803-845-9222** SRMC-Benefits@srs.gov: To report a death claim.
- ✦ **ViaBenefits: 800-848-1831** To enroll in Medicare supplemental coverage and for HRA Stipend.
- ✦ **SRMC Benefits Department, Aiken 803-845-9222** [SRMC-Benefits@srs.gov](mailto:SRMC-Benefits@srs.gov)

### Gas Card Winner

The third gas card winner for this issue is Douglas D. Felix. This SRSRA member has won a \$50 gas card courtesy of the SRSEA and SRSRA. Please text or call Bob Hottel (803 221-4248) or email ([abhottell@bellsouth.net](mailto:abhottell@bellsouth.net)) within 30 days to claim your gas card! Please verify your home address when you contact Bob.





## 2023 SRS Retiree Association (SRSRA) Annual Meeting Minutes

### April 25, 2023, USCA Etherredge Center; Aiken, SC

#### **Call to Order and Opening Remarks** – Gene Dixon, SRSRA

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 pm. The following contributors were recognized for their support: our SRSRA members, the SRS Employee Association, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, Savannah River Mission Completion, and the Battelle Savannah River Alliance. The Lessie Senior & Youth Center and staff, and WJBF were also recognized for their support for our meetings.

The mission of the SRSRA is to advocate for retiree pension and medical benefits, provide support of SRS retirees, ensure retiree benefits and needs are visible to the broader community, and support current and future missions of the SRS.

The SRSRA Board of Directors (BOD) has given voice to retiree concerns and issues with those who can affect change. We meet regularly with DOE and all SRS prime contractors. We request their consideration and influence in providing SRS pension and health benefits that support a healthy and dignified retirement. To give this voice a positive impact, we must show strength, viability, and visibility. We must have a growing membership and willing volunteers. The BOD wants every retiree to join the SRSRA to increase our strength through numbers. Reach out to a retiree who may not know about the SRSRA and let them know about the organization and the work that we do. The BOD is grateful for your membership.

#### **SRS Update** – Michael Budney, SRS Manager, DOE-SR

Mr. Budney provided an update on the SRS budget, current mission priorities, and retiree support. The Administration's FY2024 budget request includes \$1.739B for SRS-EM. Key SRS-EM mission priorities include 1) continue disposition of tank waste; 2) continue Saltstone Disposal Units construction; 3) maintain H Canyon in a high readiness state; 4) construct a new Emergency Operations Center; 5) direct funding of SRS legacy pension; and 6) Payment In Lieu of Taxes, community, and regulatory activities. SRNL (operated by BSRA) is transitioning to a separate entity. It will operate as a Federally Funded R&D Center, allowing it to expand its business base.

The overall SRS funding profile is 47% EM, 51% NNSA, and 2% Work for Others. The NNSA's mission is increasing, while EM's is flat near term. The SRS landlord authority is, therefore, transitioning from EM to NNSA, with transition to be completed in 2025. There will be no impact to Site employees. Recruitment and hiring for open positions will continue.

There has been a concerted effort to bring the SRS Pension Plan funding to 100% funded. Through a change to annual level funding instead of ERISA (minimum required funding), the SRS Pension Plan is now almost 100% funded. The DOE values the work and contributions of SRS retirees and is committed to continued engagement and open dialogue with the SRSRA and working together to find solutions to issues through active participation in the SRSRA Annual Meetings and quarterly meetings with the SRSRA Executive Committee, accessibility to the SRS Contractors Benefits Team for information and assistance, continuous improvement on claims filing and reimbursements, ensuring pension obligations are met, and advocating for the SRSRA Resource Center. DOE-SR pays attention to what you, the retirees, say and request.

#### **SRSRA Resource Center (RC) Update** – Don Stevenson, SRSRA

The SRSRA RC provides free employee benefit assistance to SRS retirees by working with retirees and their families, SRS prime and benefits contractors, and Medicare providers. Services include assistance in selecting and enrolling in Medicare insurance plans and in filing reimbursement claims. The RC also offers monthly Age-In Training sessions and in-person appointments.

The SRSRA worked with the SRS Benefits Team to establish tiered annual stipend allocations as well as two stipend increases. Since RC inception through 3/2023, 1044 participants have attended Age-In Training sessions, over \$3.9M in Health Retirement Account claims have been processed, and 3667 prescription drug plan reviews have been conducted resulting in over \$3.2M in savings for retirees.

**Questions and Answers Session** - Moderator: Gene Dixon, SRSRA; Panelists: Paradio Maith, DOE; John Greenquist and Cary Holbert, SRNS; John Veldman, Don Stevenson, Dave Fauth, SRSRA.

Previously submitted questions were answered. A summary of the questions and answers provided follows:

#### Tax Documents

- What calendar date can retirees expect to receive tax documents, e.g., W-2 and 1099? SRS documents always seem to be late.

Answer: Tax documents are mailed by January 31. Contact the SRNS Customer Service Center ([service-center@srs.gov](mailto:service-center@srs.gov) or 803-725-7772) for address changes.

#### Cost of Living Adjustments COLA)

- Inflation has exceeded 5%; health care costs are rising even faster. When can the retirees expect to receive COLA increases in pensions and health care stipends? It's been over 20 years since we have received a pension adjustment.

Answer: Obtaining a pension adjustment/increase is the SRSRA's highest priority activity. We have submitted a request through the formal process for a 9% pension increase. The request was forwarded by the SRNS Benefits Team to the actuary to determine the amount of funding that would be needed for the 9% pension increase. The actuarial analysis result was that \$141M would be required to fund this increase. The increase request and actuarial analysis have been forwarded to DOE Headquarters. The additional monies must either be included in the budget appropriation request or added to funding bills. The SRSRA BOD is contacting staffers of our representatives in SC and GA to initiate these discussions.

#### Pension Fund

- DuPont always set aside a certain amount of money above the ERISA minimum for pension funding. In the years following, those dollars were diverted to mission work. When will they be restored?

Answer: DOE set up an insurance contract and deposited the estimated pension liability into that account. That account is a DOE asset. When DuPont calculated the pension contribution from SRS, DOE would pay from this fund. By October 1988, there was \$1,357M in that account. In April 1989, as part of the transition from DuPont to WSRC, DOE contributed \$725M from the account for the pension liability of terminated vested DuPont employees. Then DOE took another \$246M from the account and transferred it to DuPont to transfer to the WSRC pension fund. That deposit overfunded the pension by 39%. No additional contributions were needed/made for several years. That left \$386M in the account. In the 1990s, DOE had immediate funding issues. DOE weighed those needs and chose to draw from the remaining \$386M asset to pay for the mission/operational needs which included some of the required pension contributions during that time.

Pension plan discussions among SRSRA, DOE, and our representatives have been a driving force in changing from annual ERISA minimum required contributions to annual level funding contributions to the plan. As a result of these level funding contributions, our pension plan is now almost 100% funded.

#### Health Care Insurance Decisions

- What is the best way for retirees, or pre-retirees, to learn about optimized health care insurance decision-making? Are there classes? Is there one-on-one counseling? How do I make it happen?

Answer: The SRSRA website and our Facebook page provide information and a forum to interact on issues. The SRSRA offers monthly Age-In Training at the Lessie Price Senior and Youth Center in Aiken. Either contact the SRSRA Resource Center or use the "Contact" button on the SRSRA website to contact us for enrollment. The SRSRA Resource Center also provides counseling during the Medicare Drug Plan Open Enrollment period.

SRNS informed us that the RightOpt contract (through Conduit) will end in September 2023. SRNS is working to set up a new vendor for this process. Communications to follow.



### SRSRA Membership

- How do I know if my SRSRA membership dues are current? How do I pay my dues? How do I become a member?

Answer: SRSRA membership is by calendar year, irrespective of when dues are paid during the year. In February we send out year dues reminder letters to those who have not yet renewed their annual membership. You can contact the Resource Center or use the “Contact” button on the SRSRA website to ask if your membership is current. The newsletter is only sent to paid members, so if you are not receiving the quarterly newsletter, your membership is not current.

### ORA/SRSEA (SRS Employee Association)

- What is the status of the ORA? What happened to all the money after the site was sold?

Answer: The SRSEA (formerly ORA) is an independent organization. The store is indefinitely closed. The organization is currently restructuring. The SRSRA continues to receive funding from the SRSEA for gas cards and the Resource Center.

### Personal Benefits Issues

- How can members contact the appropriate SRS offices/people with unique/personal benefits issues?

Answer: Contact the SRNS Customer Service Center at 803-725-7772 or e-mail [service-center@srs.gov](mailto:service-center@srs.gov) and your request will be forwarded to the right person for response.

### WageWorks

- How do we contact someone who can advise/resolve WageWorks claims problems and issues?

Answer: You can try to call Health Equity/WageWorks directly and ask to speak to a supervisor. The SRSRA Resource Center will also work with you on documentation needed by WageWorks to resolve your issue.

### SRSRA Annual Meeting

- Why haven't the SRSRA annual meetings been occurring regularly? When is the next meeting?

Answer: The annual meetings were temporarily halted due to the pandemic and our need to be consistent with the requirements of our venue. The meetings were re-initiated on 4/25/2023. The next annual meeting is currently scheduled for 4/18/2024.

### United Way

- How does the SRSRA fit in with UW donations?

Answer: The SRSRA has conducted a member solicitation for United Way for the eight plus years. The monies go directly to the United Way. The donations are one-time contributions. Look for the form on the last page of our October newsletter.

### Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program (EEOICPA)

- Where can we obtain information about EEOICPA?

Answer: Go directly to our district Department of Labor (DOL) Division Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation (DEEOIC) office. The group is independent, very helpful and competent. They will lead you through the process that includes a dose reconstruction and a medical diagnosis needed for the “white card”. The DOL “white card” provides the healthcare benefits related to the diagnosis. Contact information is as follows:

Savannah River Resource Center (Department of Labor)  
1708 Bunting Drive  
North Augusta, SC 29841  
803-279-2728 or 866-666-4606

There are a lot of organizations commercially offering “assistance” with forms. Please be aware that these companies have a monetary stake in your compensation. They do not offer anything above what you will get free from the district office listed above.

#### SRSRA Newsletter

- How do we get on distribution for the SRSRA newsletter or change our address?

Answer: The newsletter is sent to all current SRSRA members. To change your address, either contact the Resource Center or use the “Contact” button on the SRSRA website and provide the new contact information.

#### General Business – Gene Dixon, SRSRA

- The minutes of the 2019 SRSRA Annual Meeting were approved.
- The proposed Board of Directors slate was approved.

#### Door Prize Drawings – Gene Dixon, SRSRA

The following ten members were randomly selected to receive \$100 gas cards: Ken Brooks, Kelly Ackeman, Shirley Patterson, Ken Green, Bruce Cadotte, Wade Bickford, Andy Cwalina, Ronnye Eubanks, Phil Zapp, and Gary Driesen.

#### Adjournment – Gene Dixon, SRSRA

The meeting was adjourned at ~ 2:30pm.

