

It's Happening! Register Now for First In-Person Annual Meeting since 2019!

By Allan Hill

[Registration is now open](#) for the 2022 Annual Meeting at Lake Blackshear Resort on October 3 - 4, 2022. We are planning a great program, including up to the minute updates from representatives from Department of Community Health/State Health Benefit Plan, Office of Planning and Budget, and Employees Retirement System/ERS Pension Plan. As the meeting will be our first opportunity in over three years to gather together and reconnect with long-time friends and colleagues and get in-person updates about topics of retiree interests, we are looking forward to seeing you!

Unfortunately, COVID is still a concern. GSRA recommends that all our members be vaccinated and boosted, whether or not you're planning to come to the Annual Meeting. The last thing we want is to once again have to cancel our meeting due to a surge in the virus. We are a most vulnerable population, and we want all our members to be safe and healthy.

The Resort is offering GSRA members a special \$95 room rate from Sunday through Tuesday night, as well as a special \$119 rate for 2-bedroom lakeside cottages. Rooms in the lodge are already sold out, so call or go on-line to reserve a room at one of the villas. Each villa has eight individual rooms, which gives you the opportunity to get together with a group of friends to stay together while still enjoying your own private room.

You can make reservations on-line or by phone. To get this low rate, reservations must be made by **September 1, 2022**. For on-line reservations, go to the website www.lakeblackshearresort.com. In the upper right-hand corner click on the orange box: Lowest Rate Guaranteed BOOK ONLINE. Enter arrival date and select number of room nights. Enter Group ID: **394467**. Click on Check Now: Click on Book Now and complete required information to make reservation.

For telephone reservations, call 800-459-1230 and ask for group block **394467**. Reservations for the event should be made by individual attendees directly with the hotel prior to the Cut-off Date. All guests should identify themselves as a member of GSRA in order to obtain the organization's rate.

As the resort has only set aside a limited number of rooms for GSRA, we recommend that you make your reservation as early as possible. The hotel will accept reservations from attendees after **September 1, 2022** only on a space and rate available basis.

Please go to the GSRA website at www.mygsra.com for all the Annual Meeting details and registration and plan to join us in October!



Lake Blackshear Resort



Top of Mind: Any Road Will Do

By Beverly Littlefield

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, GSRA leadership was challenged with how to keep the organization's doors open and lights on and in what direction to head. Despite everyone's best efforts at every level, we were looking at flat membership numbers and virtually no chapter growth. Pandemic lockdown and social isolation put an end, for the time, to chapter meetings and visits by Board and Policy and Operations committee members. The traditions of GSRA's Day at the Capitol and the Annual Meeting had to go on hold.

At that time, we had no way of knowing for sure that within the next two years we would realize our major goal of a restored COLA, but we believed we should continue its pursuit. At the same time, we were concerned that, as an organization, we were at a fork in the road: we could choose the right path and hopefully continue to grow as an organization, or we could go down a road to nowhere leading to organizational entropy and decline. Lots of questions, but no answers.

So we decided to make the best use of all this time on our hands. Thanks to past President Jim Sommerville, in the spring of 2020 we began work with UGA's Fanning Institute on Leadership, meeting remotely over the span of many months, to develop a planning process. Our intention was, and is, to provide a framework for continuity for current and future leadership, to guide GSRA's work going forward.

Seeking the input of those most affected by an organization's work, variously called customers, constituents, or stakeholders, is basic to good planning. Your honest feedback provided valuable insight about what you thought that we were doing well, where we might improve our results, and what was most important to you. In other words, some things we should keep doing and some we should change.

We started by developing vision and mission statements for GSRA. The vision describes what the

world would look like if we accomplished our loftiest



One day Alice came to a fork in the road and saw a Cheshire cat in a tree. "Which road do I take?" She asked. "Where do you want to go?" was his response. "I don't know," Alice responded. "Then said the cat, "it doesn't matter."

goals and achieved our grandest aspirations. The mission describes why we exist: what we do and why we do it. Both represent GSRA to our

members and to the world.

We're launching the plan by rolling out the mission and vision statements. They are a starting point, not etched in stone. The major areas of focus are on Membership and Legislation/ Advocacy. We'll revisit them periodically, but, for now, they form the foundation for how we will operate going forward.

In coming months, we'll share more information as we continue to implement and work our plan and processes. For now, unlike Alice, we have a better idea of where we're headed as an organization, and we'll learn more as we go along. Thank you for guiding us to which road to take. We hope you'll keep traveling along with us.

VISION... A future in which all state retirees and employees receive the retirement and healthcare benefits promised to them, so that they may have a secure and dignified retirement.

MISSION... GSRA advocates and educates to protect promised retirement and healthcare benefits for Georgia's state retirees and current employees.

GSRA Needs You

By Jim Sommerville

GSRA relies on the volunteer efforts of its members to achieve its goals and objectives. GSRA has been blessed over the years to have numerous hardworking volunteers step forward when needed to assume important roles such as State President, President-Elect, Board Member and Chapter President. Others have filled equally as important roles, such as Communications Chair, Legislative Committee Chair, etc.

Studies have shown that nonprofit organizations like GSRA can expect a member to take an active role in the organization for 3 to 5 years before fatigue steps in and the member begins to become less active. GSRA has been very fortunate that many of its volunteer leaders have been in their positions for much longer than 5 years. We cannot

continue to count on these same people to fill the jobs that are needed in order for GSRA to function as effectively as possible.

While we have added some part time personnel to take over some of the duties previously done by GSRA members, we still have the need for members to step forward and assume the mantle of leadership of critical components of GSRA's operation such as those enumerated above.

So please consider becoming a candidate for a position of leadership in GSRA. Your time and talents are needed to ensure that GSRA continues its' upward trajectory and continues to be an effective advocate for your retiree concerns.

Local Chapter News

East Metro

The East Metro Chapter met April 21 at The First Baptist Church Annex in Covington. This was the first in-person meeting since the pandemic began, and a pleasantly surprising 26 members were in attendance.

Lunch, provided by the Chapter, afforded members an opportunity for conversation and catching up with other members and friends.

After lunch, the group moved to the auditorium, where President David Taylor called the meeting to order, provided ERS updates on the 1.5% future COLAs, and provided a detailed report on the Fanning Institute Survey and analysis regarding GSRA's strategic plan.

The presentation was followed by audience participation and discussion, and, as always, the meeting ended with presentation of several nice door prizes.

Savannah Coastal

The Savannah Coastal Chapter met on May 23 with speaker Linda Socks, a certified personal trainer who specializes in senior fitness. Linda explained the necessity of staying active as one ages, and led the

group in a brief exercise session that can easily be done at home.



Linda Socks leads Savannah Coastal members in exercise routine

Southwest Georgia

The Southwest Georgia chapter met on April 28th at Albany State University's West campus with eleven members present. Discussion topics included: Our success with GSRA's Annual meeting at Lake Blackshear. The next chapter meeting is planned for July 28th.



Southwest Georgia members at their recent meeting



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APCU serves State and Federal workers, retirees and their families in Georgia. Visit APCU's exhibit table at GSRA. For more information, visit apcu.com, or call us at (404) 768-4125 or toll-free at (800) 847-9431.



APCU partners with Members Wealth Management, a financial services program, to help our members with financial planning, investments, insurance, as well as retirement and estate planning strategies.

APCU has invited Shanté Roman, a Managing Associate with Members Wealth Management, to offer a great workshop, "Money Talk 101", at GSRA. This seminar is designed to facilitate conversations around financial milestones for retirees.

Topics will include:

- ★ The importance of setting financial goals
- ★ Understanding your current financial position
- ★ Preparing for a successful retirement
- ★ Income tax considerations
- ★ What your loved ones need to know



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