

National Active & Retired Federal Employees Association

President's Message

By Pat Meyers

Happy Saint Patrick's Day to those of Irish ancestry or just Irish for the day!

There were 20 members present for the February program on the task force headed by Dr. Cynthia Davis to develop an Arlington Age Friendly Community Action Plan as part of AARP's Age Friendly Network. It generated a lot of interest and was a record attendance for our chapter since we resumed in-person meetings. So good to see some new faces! Looking forward, please join us in March to hear about Arlington County's Guardianship Program. See information below.

I'd like to give a shout out to VA Delegate Patrick Hope's office for sponsoring a Joint Resolution commending our chapter's 75th anniversary of efforts to forward NARFE's agenda. It was returned from Legislative Services and will be introduced into the current legislative session by Delegate Hope. We'll keep you posted. Thanks to Ed Weiler for getting the necessary information to Delegate Hope's office this past summer.

Did you know that Chapter 7 is a member of the Arlington County Civic Federation (ACCF) which meets monthly to discuss issues concerning Arlington County residents? Likely your Civic Federation is also a member as is my Glen Carlin Civic Association. Your current chapter voting delegates are myself as your president, Ed Weiler, our legislative chair and member, Mileva Hartman. We also have alternate delegates. Meetings are held monthly at 7:00 p.m. both virtually by Zoom and in-person at the Virginia Hospital Center's Hazel Auditorium. Organization members and the public are always welcome to attend. Our current issue is a proposed resolution aiming to improve the county's engagement with our community. While issues may not always be NARFE-related, they are always citizen-related. If anyone would be interested in being a future delegate or alternate, please let me know.

March is NARFE PAC Month! During the 2021-2022 cycle, 24,318 members contributed \$1,702,094.44 to support fed-friendly candidates and promote advocacy issues. The average contribution was \$69.99. NARFE-PAC's goals for 2023-2024 are to raise \$1.6 million. With decreasing membership, all contributions are welcome and encouraged. Contribution forms will be available at the March meeting for anyone wishing to contribute. See Ed Weiler's article in this newsletter about the importance of NARFE PAC. I look forward to seeing you on March 8th.

March 8 Meeting – Guardianship and Its Place in Society

By Norbert Erickson

A range of impairments manifests in some unfortunates unable to cope with normal stress and properly care for themselves. Categories include minor status, dysfunctional family life, short or long term emotional and physical disabilities – self induced or otherwise, neglect of planning for the future, lingering perceptions of helplessness, old age, or any combination of the above. *(continued on p. 2)*

Guardianship paves legal avenues directed to improve the lot of this segment of society through already existing institutions and competent caretakers within communities.

Our speaker, Denise McDonald is the Guardianship Program Coordinator and a Management Intern of Aging and Disability Services within the Department of Human Services, Arlington County. Her career presently embraces dual roles, that as support of court appointed guardians in the county and that as an adjunct professor of abnormal psychology at the George Washington University. She has had prior work experience as a mental health technician at Inova's Comprehensive Addiction Treatment Services Unit. Her academic credentials include a BA in psychology from Virginia Wesleyan University and an MA in forensic psychology from George Washington University.

Fellow chapter members should anticipate a thoroughly informative presentation.

Legislative Corner

By Ed Weiler

NARFE's Political Action Committee (NARFE-PAC): An Increasingly Vital Tool for Extending NARFE's Reach Beyond the Beltway

NARFE's mission to promote the interests of its members rests on three pillars: (1) a small Headquarters staff to lobby on Capitol Hill; (2) locally-based chapter members, as well as "national-only" members throughout the US; and (3) NARFE-PAC, which among other things, channels campaign contributions to NARFE-friendly Congressional candidates. Over the past several decades, however, the relative heft of the second pillar has shrunk, as NARFE membership has declined, and many local chapters have folded entirely.

Although NARFE membership traditionally has been concentrated in the DC Region, the ongoing closure of chapters---especially those beyond the Beltway--- exacerbates this imbalance and thereby diminishes NARFE's national profile. Fortunately, to some extent, NARFE-PAC can step into the breach by providing funding for candidates in states beyond the Beltway. NARFE-PAC contributions are pooled by Headquarters staff, and upon consultation with local chapters and/or chapter federations, disbursed where such funds are deemed to have the most impact. An example of this process can be derived from data in the Contributions & Disbursements reports for the 2021-2022 funding cycle (found on NARFE's website, under Advocacy/NARFE-PAC). Thus, in Virginia, home of many "safe seats" for NARFE-friendly legislators, NARFE-PAC collected approximately \$114k, but disbursed only about \$65k to Virginia-based candidates---thereby elevating NARFE's influence in states with a lesser concentration of Federal civil servants and retirees.

NARFE-PAC also extends NARFE's reach by contributing to "leadership PACs," and to "noncandidate-specific PACs." Leadership PACs are run by candidates who in turn fund other like-minded candidates (thereby showing "leadership"---get it?), while noncandidate-specific PACs are affiliates of political party (e.g., the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee; the Republican Main Street Partnership). In both cases, NARFE-PAC contributions facilitate communication channels for NARFE's advocacy staff that might otherwise be closed or difficult to navigate. Out of NARFE-PAC's total disbursement of \$1.3 million in the 2021-2022 funding cycle, nearly 40% (or roughly \$520k) was for these two groups. Legislating has always been a people-to-people business, and remains a key aspect of how things get done on the Hill.

NARFE-PAC's funding goal for the 2023-2024 funding cycle is \$1.6 million. Please consider doing your part to make this a reality. Finally, I would be remiss without giving a shout-out to the 49 members of Chapter 7 who contributed \$7.1 thousand during the 2021-2022 funding cycle. This amount put us in a first-place tie with Chapter 1159 (Annandale) among all contributing Virginia chapters. Keep up the good work.

Sharp Increase in TSP Hardship Withdrawals Sends Ominous Signal

A recent news article (*WSJ*, 2/3/2023, p.B-1) concerning a spike in hardship withdrawals from 401(k)-type plans caught my attention, especially since it included data on the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). According to the article, hardship withdrawals from Fidelity Investments (the Nation's largest 401(k) plan administrator) saw an increase of some 26% in 2022 over the previous year. As reported elsewhere (CNBC.com), Vanguard in 2022 sustained the highest number of such withdrawals since 2004. And in the TSP, (*WSJ*, *op. cit.*) hardship withdrawals were up a whopping 50 % in 2022 over 2021 (from 145,834 to 217,661, or 3.2% of all TSP holders).

What's going on here? While one data point of course is not dispositive, it does suggest that many Federal employees are living precariously close to the edge---especially those in the lower pay grades. Moreover, it buttresses the case for the recently-introduced *Fair Act* (*H.R. 536/S.12*), sponsored (respectively) by Rep. Connolly (VA, D-VA-11) and Sen. Schatz (D-HI), which calls for an average pay increase of 8.7% in 2024 (4.7% wages; 4.0% locality pay). In view of the looming budget fights on the Hill this year, prospects for their success are not bright; but it's clearly a fight worth waging. Stay tuned.

Membership Report

By Nancy Palmerino

We currently have 296 Chapter members and an additional 429 National members in our chapter area for a total of 745 Chapter and National members.

Meeting Place and Time

Our meetings are held at the Lubber Run Community Center, 300 N. Park Drive, Arlington. There is a parking garage on Park Drive with free parking up to 4 hours. As you enter the center from the garage, the Beech Room is across the hall to your left. Social time begins at 12:00 noon and our program begins at 12:30 pm.

Virginia Federation of NARFE (VFN) Annual Conference – April 2-5

The Virginia Federation of NARFE (VFN) Annual Conference will be held at the Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center on April 2-5, in Hampton, VA. For Conference and banquet registration, go to <https://vanarfe.org/conference2023/>. The Early Bird registration deadline for the Conference and the banquet is March 1! The absolute deadline for discounted hotel rooms for the Conference is March 3! Our chapter president, Pat Meyers, is planning to attend. You may contact her at 703-578-3372 if you would like more information

Even if you are not able to attend the conference, you can become a Conference Supporter. Sources of funding beyond the registration and banquet fees are required to fund the Conference. One additional source of funding is from Chapter Members who become Conference Supporters. Chapter members are invited to show their support by contributing in one of the following categories: Platinum (\$100), Gold (\$75), Silver (\$50), Super Angel (\$25), Angel (\$20), Cheerleader (\$15), Booster (\$10) and Supporter (\$5).

If you wish to donate, please complete the form below, with a check payable to 2023 VFN Conference and mail to the address on the bottom of the form. Donations will also be accepted at our March meeting. Mailed contributions must be received by March 1 to guarantee publication of your name in the program booklet.

2023 NARFE VFN Conference Supporter

Print your name as you would like it to appear in the program booklet.

Name: _____

Check applicable category:

Platinum (\$100) Gold (\$75) Silver (\$50) Super Angel (\$25) Angel (\$20) Cheerleader (\$15)
 Booster (\$10) Supporter (\$5)

Include check, payable to "2023 VFN Conference" for total amount indicated.

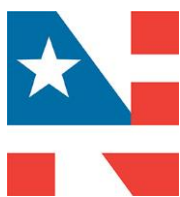
On the Memo line write "2023 VFN Conference Supporter". (Do not mail cash.)

Mail to: Nancy Palmerino, Chapter Supporter Coordinator, 4503 4th Road North, Arlington, VA 22203

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Contact Information

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