



SCARE Newsletter

Sonoma County Association of Retired Employees

Published Quarterly **November 2025** Volume 325 Issue 4

Calendar of Events 2025

Membership Meetings

11/18/25

Meetings are at 1pm at
Finley Center and on Zoom

Board Meetings

1:00 PM Dates may change so
call Board member first.

11/5/25

Get Newsletter by Email:

Many members have agreed to get notices and newsletters via email. This saves money and trees and lets us get info to you more quickly. Plus you can increase the font size for easier reading!! If you are willing to get notices and the newsletter via email, send an email to communications@sonomacountyretirees.com authorizing SCARE to send them to you. Please add that address to your address book so spam filters let it through.

If you would like to get the newsletter both by email and by USPS, contact Lou Maricle (maricles2@gmail.com)

The SCARE Newsletter is printed quarterly. The information printed in the newsletter is believed to be accurate and from reliable sources. However, no responsibility is assumed by SCARE, the Editor, or the writers for inaccuracies in the articles as published.

President's Message by Kathy Young

This year has gone by quickly. It's hard to believe that the holidays are just around the corner. SCARE board members have continued to be active in attending Board of Supervisors (BOS) meetings, talking with BOS members and keeping the COLA issue active. We ask that you continue letting the BOS know how you feel about not having COLAs for almost 18 years. SCERA (Sonoma County Employees Retirement Association) gave a State of the Pension System Report to the BOS on October 21, and the BOS reviewed their legislative agenda on October 28. We will be talking about both at our November 18 Membership Meeting.

Next steps for SCARE include establishing a PAC to support elected leaders who support county retirees in getting COLAs and maintaining medical benefits. It is important to emphasize that these issues influence existing staffing by impacting recruitment and retention issues. Retirees have spent many long hours helping Sonoma County residents. Phyris has been working with SCERA to change the wording in their written and electronic materials to reflect that there isn't a specific COLA schedule.

At our next SCARE Membership Meeting Julie Wyne, CEO of SCERA, will be our speaker. This promises to be an information packed meeting. Other important topics include voting on SCARE Board Members for 2026/2027. Continuing board members include Chris Bauer, Phyris Tobler, Paul Carroll and Lou Maricle. A prospective board member, Sherry Parr, is looking forward to joining the board. We still have one opening remaining so if you might be interested or have questions, give me a call. We encourage all of you to talk to county retirees and make sure they are SCARE members. What we do benefits all county retirees. The SCARE application can be found on our website; <https://sonomacountyretirees.com/application.pdf>.

Unfortunately, we have lost a valuable member of the SCARE Board. John Pels recently passed away. We thank him for his many years representing SCARE on the SCERA board. He continued to be an active member on the SCARE board. We will miss his valuable contributions to our members.

Our November Membership meeting will be held at 1:00 PM on November 18, 2025. In person at the Finley Center Cypress room (join us at 12:30) or by Zoom. The Zoom information is: Join Zoom Meeting <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/8954632781?omn=83007426292>, Meeting ID: 895 463 2781, Dial by your location: +1 669 444 9171 US. See Agenda at the end of this newsletter.

We look forward to seeing you at the November membership meeting.

Board of Directors

Officers

President — Kathy Young

707 539-8027

kyoung2@sonic.net

Vice President — Carol Bauer

707 708-1061

bfuzzy51@aol.com

Secretary — Paul Carroll

707 559-0588

Pf.carroll58@gmail.com

Treasurer — Phyris Tobler

707 795-6926

phyris@sbcglobal.net

Immediate Past President —

Alix Shor

707 495-4992

alixshor@sonic.net

Directors at Large

Chris Bauer

Andre Bercut

Ed Clites

Shaun Du Fosee

Lou Maricle

Vacant

Vacant

Retirement Board Retiree Reps

Mark Walsh

Alternate: Neil Baker

Committee Chairs & Tasks

Health Benefits/JLMBC: Phyris Tobler

Membership: Lou Maricle

Financial Oversight: Phyris Tobler

CRCEA Rep: Carol Bauer

Alternate: Lou Maricle

Newsletter Editor: Phyris Tobler

Programs:

Scholarships: Ed Clites

SCCLO, ICPC, NBLC: Bill Robotka

Facebook Coordinator: Bob Bulwa

[Contact info on website](#)

November 18th Membership Meeting Speaker

Julie Wyne, the CEO of SCERA, will give us an update on status of the pension fund and on actions being taken by SCERA and the County to provide a COLA. These presentations are always very informative. Feel free to ask questions as she is prepared for that. Our members usually have a lot of questions.

Julie provided a State of the Pension Report for 2025 to the Board of Supervisors on October 21st. Several SCARE members spoke about the need for a COLA but it would have been more impressive if we had more members present. We are hoping we can get more members there for the 10/28 BOS meeting on setting legislative priorities for the County. It is really important to have the BOS give legislation re COLAs a very high priority.

Emergency Prep Help (EPH)

Seniors are the fastest growing demographic in Sonoma County and in California. They are also the most vulnerable in emergencies and disasters for a variety of reasons. EPH provides workshops for seniors that provide information and strategies on what to do to prepare for an emergency and what to do in an emergency. As part of the 2 session workshop, you get a go-bag with supplies and a great deal of information. They have workshops in various parts of the county. Information on the various workshops is available online at <https://www.emergencyprephelp.org/events>. You can go online to check out location and date for upcoming workshops. They are in different cities in the county. There are 2 sessions 2-3 weeks apart, each one being 2 hours. Anyone 55 and older can attend free.

Medical Equipment Recycling Program (MERP)

MERP is expanding to two days per week— Monday and Wednesday from 11 am to 1 pm. They are located at 3650 Standish Ave, Santa Rosa (in parking lot of the Child Parent Institute). This is run entirely by volunteers. They take donations of any gently used or new medical equipment and make it available **free** to anyone who needs it. Items that they can use/make available are wheelchairs, walkers, commodes, canes, adult diapers/briefs, first aid supplies, safety equipment. See their website for a more complete list of items—sonomamerp.com.

MERP has now added a site in Cloverdale. It is only open on Fridays from 11 am to 3 pm. It is located at 247 Treadway Dr, Cloverdale. Phone number for both is 707 353-3416.

There is a similar service in Petaluma called Homecare Equipment-Supplies located at 3820 Bodega Ave. It is open on Thursdays from 11am to 3 pm. Phone number 707 364-0305.

Ongoing Effort to Get COLAs and Changes in the Settlement Agreement re County Contribution for Health Insurance

We are in a holding pattern after the presentation to the Board of Supervisors. They were very receptive to need for COLAs and referred it to County Council to look at ways legislation could allow them more flexibility in giving COLAs but the budget for 2025-26 has been approved without a COLA in it which means no COLA next year. **There is a BOS meeting on October 28th where the Board will set its legislative priorities.** We will be attending as well as sending out email to members asking them to attend. We hope to pack the room to show the BOS how important this is to retirees. We will let you know the result at the November Membership Meeting.

We still encourage you to write to your Board member, even if you have in the past. Following are some of the points we made to the Board of Supervisor members when we met with them. You may want to include some of them in your letters although if the lack of a COLA has had a major negative affect on you, be sure to focus on that and explain how it has impacted you.

- ◆ Sonoma County's Ad Hoc COLA which promises to keep retirees at 80% of purchasing power is not working. Sonoma County retirees have not been granted a cost of living increase since 2008, and those who retired after 2003, have never gotten a COLA. Other public agencies in California have automatic COLAs which means they get a 2 or 3% COLA every year. County said they would give COLAs to keep retirees at 80% of purchasing power.
- ◆ About half of retirees get \$2,500 or less—and sometimes much less. There are people who retired in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s when salaries were much lower compared to today's, so they have very low pensions. There are 765 retirees who retired before April 1999 who have lost 78% of their Purchasing Power as of March 2025, and they started out with very low pensions. To see chart, go to our website—<https://www.sonomacountyretirees.com/index.shtml>
- ◆ 32% of Safety retirements and 5% of General retirement are based on duty disabilities. They are younger, often with families and high health insurance costs, and they average \$1,000/month less than regular service retirements. They are many years away from being Medicare eligible.
- ◆ Having no COLA affects the County's ability to hire and retain employees.
- ◆ Sonoma County has a very high cost of living, but if retirees move, they often have very high health insurance costs unless they are Medicare eligible.
- ◆ As retirees age, their costs go up as their health deteriorates and they need to hire people to assist them with daily needs. If they need to go into assisted living, it becomes very expensive.
- ◆ The Board of Supervisors has shown that they care about older people as they adopted a comprehensive Master Plan for Aging, which ensure that the increasingly aging population can age with dignity and independence. But they seem to have forgotten about their own retirees.

In addition to our discussion with the BOS about COLAs, we are also asking them to modify the SCARE settlement agreement and increase their contribution for those impacted (those who retired before June 30, 2016) as it is due to decrease to \$200/month in July 2026 for those folks and also to eliminate the clause that the contribution will be stopped in 2041. Possible upcoming federal insurance changes could further impact retirees

Email addresses for Board Members:

- District 1 — rebecca.hermosillo@sonoma-county.org
- District 2 — david.rabbitt@sonoma-county.org
- District 3 — chris.coursey@sonoma-county.org
- District 4 — james.gore@sonoma-county.org
- District 5 — lynda.hopkins@sonoma-county.org

There is a lot of pension information on the SCARE website at <https://www.sonomacountyretirees.com/pensions.shtml>.

JLMBC Report by Phyris Tobler
Health Insurance Information

There is not much to report. We will be getting preliminary insurance rates in December and chances are that there will be increases given legislation in Washington DC that cuts Medicaid funding. While none of the plans are funded through Medicaid, it still is likely to have an impact on rates.

2025-26 SRJC Scholarship Winners

Nicolas Alexander

Major: Automotive Technology: Electric and Electronic Systems Specialist

What or who inspired you to attend Santa Rosa Junior College?

I was inspired to attend SRJC by my parents who encouraged me to pursue a career that is fulfilling. I am back at school so I can hone my automotive skills and jump into the workforce as a certified Automotive Diagnostic Technician. At the same time, I am also inspired by my work at COTS, where I assist in the daily operations in the office at the homeless shelter. So, I am also taking some classes to learn about Addiction Studies. These classes are part of the Social Work and Human Services department, and the end goal is to potentially become a certified Addiction Counselor. I am inspired by my volunteer work at the Sonoma County Library Adult Literacy program, where I tutored an English learner one-on-one every week for about 1 year, and currently volunteer once a month as an English Group Conversation Class facilitator.

How will the gift of scholarship support your educational goals?

The gift of a scholarship would greatly aid me in my academic studies because I would be able to focus more on attending school and be able to work less than full time on the weekends. Currently, I work part time during the week and full time on the weekends while I attend school, and so a scholarship would help free up critical hours.

Ammerman, Graciela

Major: Spanish

What is the job title of your intended career goal?

Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist

What are your future goals after SRJC?

After completing my studies at Santa Rosa Junior College, my goal is to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. I am passionate about becoming an ICU nurse, where I plan to gain critical experience for at least a year. Following that, I aspire to advance my career by applying to a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) program. I've always had a passion for caring for others, and nursing has long been the path I've felt drawn to. My personal experiences, including my time serving in the military, have instilled in me a desire to give back to those in need of care. I believe nursing is the perfect way to channel this passion and make a meaningful impact.

How will the gift of scholarship support your educational goals?

The gift of this scholarship would mean so much to me. I'm currently living with my boyfriend and working while pursuing my education, and this scholarship would help ease some of the financial burdens we are faced with. More importantly, it would serve as a powerful encouragement for me to continue working hard and stay focused on my studies. With less financial stress, I'd be able to dedicate myself even more to my nursing degree and my future career in healthcare.

Continued from previous page -

Olvera, Jeremiah

Major: Engineering

What or who inspired you to attend Santa Rosa Junior College?

I want to be able to further my education and complete my general education classes before transferring to a 4-year university. I will also utilize this time to explore possible career goals. By attending Santa Rosa Junior College, I will be able to further my education without having to get in unnecessary debit.

What are your future goals after SRJC?

After completing Santa Rosa Junior College, I want to attend a 4 year university, possibly UCLA. I want to get my degree in engineering and also obtain my masters. Having a degree in engineering would allow me many possibilities for a career as there are several fields I can choose from. I would like to return to Sonoma County and give back to my community.

How will the gift of scholarship support your educational goals?

By granting a scholarship to support my education goals, it will help me financially. I come from a household of 3 siblings, and my parents cannot fully support all of us in extending our education goals. In addition, this would allow me to focus on my studies while being able to hold a part-time job.

Sonoma County Master Plan for Aging

We have been trying to get Joni Huntsperger to speak at our Membership Meeting but she has had health problems and has not been able to attend. We hope to get her for the February meeting. Meanwhile, there is a lot of information in the last 2 newsletters about this plan and the different committees. If you are interested in serving on any of the committees, you can call Joni at 707 565-4560 to get more info and/or to volunteer.

Alphabet Soup by Bill Robotka

ICPC: The ICPC met on September 4th, and discussed the 2025 report to the Board of Supervisors (BOS). The 2024 "State of the Pension" report to the BOS is available at this link: <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6895663&GUID=EAE0B5D2-56F9-44F9-A83A-F1C4F8F39F06&Options=&Search=>

Also, the 2024 report on the Pension COLA was discussed. You can download a PDF copy of that document at this link: <https://sonoma-county.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=14112755&GUID=8DD8CC8C-C41C-49FE-8FA5-EAD18D9895EF>

NBCLC: The Labor Day breakfast took place on September 1st. SCARE is a sponsor of this. It was well attended and there were a lot of speeches.

The CLC's annual COPE awards banquet is scheduled for November 14th this year. SCARE also sponsors this event and myself and Andre Bercut will be attending.

CLC leadership has been supporting us in lobbying the BOS on COLA and Health benefit issues and continues working with SCARE to develop a plan for this and provide guidance on when/how to best support us.

SCCLO: No activity for SCCLO.

Updating Contact Information

If you move or change your email or phone number, you need to give your **updated information** to the following organizations. They do not share information.

SCARE - send changes to Lou Maricle via email at maricles2@gmail.com, or address to 4720 Santa Rosita Ct, Santa Rosa, CA 95405, or call 707 538-7342. We also need changes of phone numbers and email addresses. SCERA, the Retirement Board, does not share information with us. And if we don't hear from you, this is what happens: Mail and newsletters were returned with no forwarding address for the following members - **Cecilia Proschold, Katherine Brackett, and Mitchell Holcomb**. Board member, **Alix Shor**, attempts to contact these people by phone and/or email but has not been able to reach them so we have no way of contacting them. If anyone knows how to reach her, would you please contact them and ask them to contact Alix Shor at alixshor@sonic.net or 707 495-4992 or give her the number and she'll call them.

SCERA - You get your pension check from them. Contact them to report changes at 433 Aviation Blvd., Suite 100, Santa Rosa, CA 95403, or call them at 707 565-8100.

Sonoma County Human Resources Benefits Unit - They handle health, dental, and life insurance and send out **Annual Enrollment Booklets**. Contact them at 575 Administration Drive, 116C, SR, 95403, or benefits@sonomacounty.gov / 707-565-2900

SCARE has its own Facebook Page

This is a private (closed) group meaning that the public may not view the contents, and membership must be requested and approved. For those of you already on Facebook, it can be found by searching for Sonoma County Association of Retired Employees (SCARE)" or using the direct link:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/socoretirees>
To join the group, go to the page and at the top you will see a box that indicates "Join Group." Once we verify you are indeed a member of SCARE, or are a spouse of a member, you will be added.

Bob Bulwa and Paul Klonsky

In Memoriam

Our deepest sympathy is extended to the family and friends of the following retirees:

Jackie Goolsby
Shirley Rodata

John Pels
Ronald Wilson



Fact Checking Social Media Posts

There have been a lot of misleading posts on social media for a long time. But with AI, they are getting much more sophisticated. For instance, they now show photos of people saying and doing things that are not real but it looks like the person and sounds like them. Sometimes there are little clues that it is a fraud but not always. These then get circulated as if they are the truth.

Snoopes.com is a website that tries to check these out and debunk the ones that are not true and it also shows ones that are true. This will not help if someone is out to scam you in particular but it will allow you to check things that are circulating on social media.

While there have been many warnings about scams, we have to be even more careful now as there are so many ways to mislead us.

For other major stories, circulated on the news or on social media, you can go to **FactCheck.org**. They cover stories that are happening on a national level and often go into a lot of detail.



**Board and Membership Meeting Minutes
can be viewed at our website**

You may be able to pay less for prescription drugs by skipping insurance and paying cash. Using discounts available from websites like [America's Pharmacy](#), [Blink Health](#), [GoodRX](#), [Optum Perks](#), [SingleCare](#), [RXSaver](#) (by RetailMeNot), and [WellRX](#) may make your costs lower than

***Congratulations New Retirees and
New SCARE Members (in bold)***



Angela Abraham-Velasquez	Probation
Peter Albers	Ag Commissioner
Mark Azzouni	District Attorney
Michele Bendyk	Human Services
Brian Britton	Public Infrastructure
Scott Busby	Sheriff's Office
James Cleveland	Clerk Recorder Assr
Kevin Cline	Human Services
Christing Condon	County Admin
Randy Crouch	Fairgrounds
Deborah Curle	UC Cooporative Ext
Michael Daly	Superior Court
Janeene DeMartinez	Child Support Svcs
Dale Dunlap	Water Agency
Robert Gretter	Superior Court
Jennifer Hainstock	Human Services
Leslie Harford	Health Services
Joan Hultberg	Water Agency
Lori Gilman	Human Services
Jose Gonzalez	Public Infrastructure
Carlos Hernandez	Health Services
Jonathan Kajeckas	Information Systems
Debbie Latham	County Counsel
Joanna Lutman	County Administrator
James McKenney	Information Systems
Joy Mozdy	Health Services
David Nichols	Health Services
Sherry Parr	Human Services
Nicole Powers	Probation
Cynthia Rader	Public Infrastructure
David Ricetti	Public Infrastructure

Continued:

Carolyn Safford	Permit Sonoma
Noel Slattery	Probation
Richard Stabler	Permit Sonoma
Scot Stanley	Public Infrastructure
James Terrell	Probation
Joanne Tunzi	Auditor/Cont/Treas
Tara Underly	Human Services
Brandon VanCamp	Sheriff's Office
Philip Wadsworth	Water Agency
Sharon Walters	Information Syst
Harold Wetjen	Water Agency
John Tennis Wick	Permit Sonoma
Michael Wieling	Water Agency
Steven Yeager	Sherrif's Office
Kathie Zirretta	Human Services

Encourage Fellow Retirees to join SCARE!

We only have about a third of retirees as members. When we are approaching the Board or Supervisors to ask for a COLA, we are in a much stronger position with more members. If you know any retirees who are not members, please encourage them to join. They can get a copy of our application form on our website at <https://www.sonomacountyretirees.com/application.pdf>

SCARE Membership and Financial Information

SCARE currently has 1708 members and 160 associate members for a total of 1868 members. We do not include our financial information in the newsletter, but if you are interested, contact me and I can provide you with a copy of our financial statement (contact information on page 2).

Phyris Tobler

Sonoma County Association of
Retired Employees (SCARE)
P.O. Box 5513
Santa Rosa, CA 95402

Address Service Requested

General Membership Meeting November 18th, 2025

Join us at 12:30 for an in-person meeting at Finley Center, 2060 W College Ave, SR in the Cypress Room. There will be snacks and drinks and the opportunity to visit with friends.

Vaccinations encouraged if attending in person

For those of you who can't attend in person, join us at 1:00 pm for the meeting on Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/8954632781?omn=83007426292>, Meeting ID: 895 463 2781, Dial by your location: +1 669 444 9171 US.

MEMBERSHIP MEETING AGENDA

- **PRESENTER JULIE WYNE with an update on our pension fund and on status of COLAs**
- **ACTION NEEDED TO GET THE BOS TO REVIEW OUR SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT**
- **VOTE FOR SCARE BOARD MEMBERS**
- **SCCLO/NBLC/ICPC REPORT**
- **DRAWING FOR GIFT CARDS (3 for those at Finley and 3 for those on Zoom) Must be present**