



**Northern Illinois  
University**

# THE NIU ANNUITANT

published with support from the **NIU Foundation**

**November 2023**

## **NIUAA IS 35 YEARS STRONG!!!**

2023 was a great celebratory year for the Northern Illinois University Annuitant's Association as we celebrated our 35th Anniversary as a SUAA Chapter at our Spring Membership meeting in June 2023. We offered a free buffet luncheon to those in attendance, complete with cake! (Pictures throughout Annuitant) Over 60 members attended, making this event our "first effort to socialize" since covid changed our world. We hope those who attended enjoyed the update on the association and were able to meet and greet old and new friends. We hope to do something again in June 2024 that is special for members. Our social and membership committees are also working together to plan other social opportunities over the year for informational meetings and get-togethers, so stay tuned!



*Thank You for Celebrating!*

## **President's Report**

By Toni Tollerud, NIUAA President

Hello to all of my fellow huskie retirees and their spouses or families! My name is Toni Tollerud and I retired from the College of Education in 2017. It is my honor to serve as your NIU Annuitant's Association President and I am hopeful that we will be able to assist you in advocating for the work of our association and SUAA.

I am always renewed and revitalized in the fall of the year, as it continues to remind me of the excitement of returning to the university, greeting new students and promoting learning and community at NIU. I want to share some of our 2023-2024 goals and encourage you to participate with us as much as you can. We have a wonderfully committed board that meets four times a year. Our meetings for this term are scheduled for December 6, 2023; March 6, 2024; and June 26, 2024 (our annual membership meeting). You are always welcome to attend any board meeting and if you are interested in serving on the board, please contact me. We'd love to have you there!!

Our priority goal this year is to build our membership and serve our members. We are blessed to have Steve Cunningham, a member of our chapter, as the SUAA President this year. Andrew Small, our current past president, also serves as co-chair of the SUAA membership committee, so we are well represented at the state level with SUAA. Membership is critical, as it enables us to lobby in Springfield and keep an eagle eye on our pensions and benefits. Here is where you can help:

- Be sure to renew your membership and encourage others to do so as well.
- You can add to our cause by having your spouse or partner join. This is important so that, when you need to receive or change benefits, your spouse is informed.
- Finally, you don't need to be retired to join NIUAA. No matter what your pension plans might be, SUAA is the primary organization who looks out for us, and to do that effectively they need our membership and support.

Other goals we hope to accomplish this year are to increase social opportunities for members to come together and learn about, revise, and update NIUAA's bylaws, increase our scholarship giving to serve NIU students, and strengthen our presence and connection with NIU's campus and administration. Be sure to watch for the possible NIU-Annuitants

Basketball game and attend if you can. Also, if you have ideas for a good program or something you can present or want to know more about, please contact me.

Finally, I want to close my musings by acknowledging the contributions of one of our long-time members, Deborah Haliczner. Deborah was the past president for the past two years and is stepping off the board for now. At the June 2023 annual membership meeting, Debbie was awarded the Outstanding Contribution Award to NIUAA—an honor well deserved. I think most people remember her dedication to NIU colleagues while she served NIU for over 30 years in the Human Resources department. Debbie is a valued friend who often remembers and calls people by their names. We are fortunate that she is staying on as chair of the Professional Development Committee. Congratulations, Deborah, on your honor!

Mark your calendars now for the June 26, 2024 NIUAA Annual Membership Meeting so you can attend. More details will be coming soon. I look forward to hearing from you if you have any questions or comments on how we can better meet your needs. Spread the word about membership! Enjoy your fall and winter holidays with family and friends.

Best,  
Toni Tollerud,  
NIUAA President

## Notes From the VP

By Paul Stoddard, NIUAA Vice President

Hello all! As I'm assuming the role of Vice President of this organization, it seems fitting to introduce myself and offer some thoughts.

I taught in the Geology Department (primarily plate tectonics and planetary geology) here at NIU for 29 years, retiring at the end of the Fall, 2017 semester. In terms of shared governance, I served in several capacities, most notably on the General Education committee, as Faculty/ Supportive Staff Personnel Advisor, and as Faculty Senate President/University Council Executive Secretary for five years. Currently I serve on the NIUAA Board and on the SUAA Foundation Board.

The NIUAA serves several functions:

- It provides annuitants (and future annuitants!) a voice in Springfield. While our pensions are currently well

protected by the Illinois State Constitution, we cannot take for granted that that will always be the case. Every 20 years, the question is put to the voters of whether we should hold a Constitutional Convention, during which amending the Constitution becomes much easier. The next such vote will be in 2028. With groups like the Illinois Policy Institute constantly attacking our pensions, we must be ready to defend this hard-earned benefit.

- Scholarships. Children and grandchildren of NIUAA members are eligible for \$1000 scholarships from the SUAA foundation. This past year one child and two grandchildren of NIUAA members were awarded these scholarships.
- Maintaining connections. We will be hosting social events throughout the year where members can catch up with old friends and colleagues and hear about the latest doings on campus. We look forward to seeing you at one or more of these events!

Paul Stoddard  
Vice President, NIUAA



Andy Small Salutes NIUAA



## A Membership Plea From the Past President

By Andy Small, SUAA Membership Co-Chair

As most of us know by now, Linda Brookhart is retiring from the State Universities Annuitants Association (SUAA). There is currently an active search being conducted for her replacement that should be finalized in the next few months. The new administrator will have increasing our membership as one of their top priorities. With multiple factors driving membership totals down in the past few years, it is now time to reinvigorate our association. Please contact me at R0101533@mail.niu.edu with your ideas on how NIUAA can remain one of the top leaders in the state on membership.

*Andy Small*

*NIUAA Past President, SUAA Membership Co-Chair*

## Legislative Report Update

A legislative report is not available at this time. As soon as there is something to report, Jim Lockard will send out a memo that will come to all members. Remember to let Chris Doe (cdoe@niu.edu) know if your email has changed.



*Former President Debra Haliczzer*



*Incoming President Toni Tollerud*

### In Memoriam

|                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| Linda Beachey        | Mary Larson         |
| Mary Bell            | Donald Lieving      |
| Alberta Berkes       | James Miller        |
| Ildiko Carrington    | Donald Polzin       |
| Franklin Court       | Paula Rebert        |
| Wanda Giles          | Delores Roach       |
| Darryl Grayson       | Lois Seitzinger     |
| Barbara Griffiths    | Mary Irene Stephens |
| Joseph Grush         | James Townsend      |
| Rita Hammett         | William Williams    |
| Mitrick (Rick) Johns |                     |

## SUAA Board Report

By Steven Cunningham, SUAA President

As of the date of this report, I am completing a year and a half as SUAA's President and again appreciate the endorsement and support of NIU's Chapter leadership. This has been a very eventful year for our Association as we plan for the future. Following Linda Brookhart's announcement of her retirement as of January 1—concluding 17 years of exceptional service—we are in the process of conducting a search for our next Executive Director.

It's a good time to reflect on the success of the SUAA organization under Linda's leadership. Thanks to her initiatives, SUAA has established an active Headquarters Office in Springfield that serves our members extensively every day. SUAA's legislative and governmental relations programs are exceptionally effective, representing our members' retirement security interests as the advocate and defender for SURS participant benefits. The SUAA also has excellent working relationships with SURS, CMS, and other state governmental agencies that also facilitate representation of SUAA member interests. SUAA has been at the forefront in all respects, with outcomes directly reinforcing SURS participants' retirement security, including the landmark Illinois Supreme Court decision (*Kanerva v. Weems*, 2014) that confirmed and clarified the full scope of the Pension Protection Clause in the Illinois Constitution. So, our organization stands ready to serve, advocate, defend, and represent our members (and effectively all SURS participants). At the same time, we will take this opportunity to reinforce our strengths and engage new ideas and capabilities with our next Executive Director. Please stay tuned for news of our next Executive Director announcement following the Fall Delegates Meeting at ISU.

Despite SUAA's many attributes, our Association is challenged with membership trends. SUAA is not unique in this regard, as most organizations and associations are experiencing membership challenges generally. However, membership is directly related to the strength and capability of SUAA to represent and defend member retirement security and benefits. SUAA maintains an exceptional service and advocacy organization in Springfield to advance member interests. Nevertheless, our organization is almost entirely reliant on our college and university chapters to recruit and maintain SUAA membership. In this regard, NIU has long been an exemplar of successful participation and integration of NIU faculty and staff retirement security interests with the culture and leadership of the institution. NIU's leadership, faculty and staff organizations, and HR systems have consistently reinforced a partnership with SUAA. The NIU chapter is among the most successful in the state and we appreciate the continuing support of the NIU administration.

In closing, I would like to reflect on the outstanding career of our late friend and colleague, Joe Grush. Joe was very involved with SUAA in many capacities, defending and advancing SURS participant benefits, throughout the nearly 30 years that we had the opportunity to work together. Joe understood and practiced the career/retirement relationships shared by all university personnel. SUAA membership facilitates these associations and reinforces the sustainability of the career "life cycle" benefits that we all rely upon. Joe saw this long-term ("big picture") correlation very clearly, and this perspective precisely reflects the mission of SUAA.

Thanks again (especially NIU) for your support and confidence in the SUAA organization from both the institutional and state-wide perspectives.

*Steven Cunningham*  
SUAA Board President

## Recent Travels

Our trip to Colorado in September was almost perfect (it only rained at night). We rode on 6 historic trains (including Pike Peak cog wheel train) and visited Rocky Mountain National Park and also Black Canyon National Park.

NIU retirees included: Kathy and Bob Higgerson, Rowene and David Linden, Julie and Tom Weber, Nancy Allen, Bill Cummings, and Steven Johnson.



*SUAA Board President Steven Cunningham*



Group in Colorado



## Trips and Travel Schedule

Organized by Steven Johnson, Culture and Travel Committee Chair  
Director, LA&S External Programming (retired)

### 2023 Schedule

November 26 - December 1: Biltmore Estate (value trip, \$797)  
December 6 - 10: Christmas in Newport

### 2024 Schedule

January 12 - February 3: Polar Vortex escape cruise 2024  
February 17 - March 16: Amazon Explorer cruise  
March 29 - April 9: Tulip Time on the Rhine and the Glacier Express  
April: New York City & The Statue of Liberty trip (value trip, \$1,125)  
June 9 - July 7: Ultimate Alaska cruise  
July 22 - 26: Stratford Festival of Canada  
August 17 - 25: Rocky Mountaineer, Journey through the Clouds  
October 23 - November 7: Flavors of India (plus Nepal)  
December 17 - January 3: Holiday cruise to Hawaii

### 2025 Schedule

Date TBD: Mekong River cruise

## Scholarship Fund Report

This academic year our scholarship was awarded to Evan Pinsel, a student in the College of Law. That brings the total number of scholarships awarded to nine (9), providing \$14,250 to assist students in meeting the costs of their education.

We can be proud of the caliber of students we have supported through the funding of scholarships. A recent recipient shared some of her activities that included being a resident care assistant at Lincolnshire Place (a memory care facility), participating in a nurse extern program at Loyola University Medical Center, and packing meals for children as a volunteer for Feed My Starving Children.

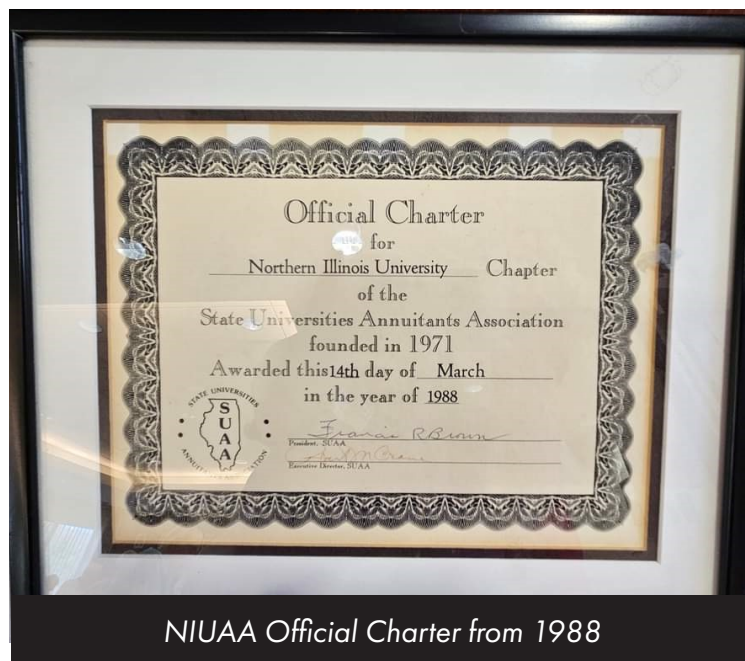
These scholarships would not have been possible without the generosity of the members of this association. Your continued support will add to the endowment, which will support increases in the amounts awarded and the number of scholarships provided each year.

To make a donation, please click on:

<https://www.niu.edu/annuitants/pdf/annuitant-association-scholarship-donate-form.pdf>



Former President Linda Schwarz



NIUAA Official Charter from 1988

## University Benefits Committee

By Terry Borg, Chair, Benefits Committee

The University Benefits Committee (UBC) has started its Fall 2023 meeting schedule. John Boswell, Director of Retail Campus Dining, has been elected Chair for the 2023-24 academic year.

Items discussed at our recent meetings include:

- For those enrolled in the TRAIL program, Aetna's notification of Federal CMS rules has "literally no impact to TRAIL members" per Linda Brookhart's SUAA email of 8/25/23. More information will be forthcoming during the 2024 TRAIL Medicare Advantage Prescription Drug (MAPD) Open Enrollment Period (October 15 – November 15, 2023).
- New NIU employees after 7/1/23, as a default, will have an additional 3% withheld for the SURS Deferred Compensation 457B Plan. Employees can opt out at any time.
- The UBC is proposing that NIU Announcements be emailed to all NIUAA members' university Outlook accounts to keep annuitants apprised of NIU news and encourage engagement. Stay tuned.

Should you have any questions, new benefit ideas, and/or concerns, please contact the Annuitant UBC Representative Terry Borg (tborg2@niu.edu).





Steve enjoying the Fall weather!



NIUAA 2023–2024 Officers, Directors, and Committee Chairs

Officers

|                          |                          |  |                          |                        |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|------------------------|
| President . . . . .      | Toni Tollerud . . . . .  | 1622 Carlisle Lane, DeKalb, IL 60115 . . . . . | (815) 501-4784 . . . . . | tonitollerud@gmail.com |
| Vice-President . . . . . | Paul Stoddard . . . . .  |  |                          | prs@yahoo.com          |
| Treasurer . . . . .      | Cynthia Nelson . . . . . |  |                          | cnelson@niu.edu        |
| Secretary . . . . .      | Pat Wielert . . . . .    |  | (815) 739-1858 . . . . . | pwielert63@gmail.com   |
| Past President . . . . . | Andy Small . . . . .     | 1512 N 1st St., DeKalb, IL 60115. . . . .      | (815) 762-5971 . . . . . | asmall1@niu.edu        |

Directors

Terry Borg  
(815) 762-1310  
tborg2@niu.edu

Ferald Bryan  
(815) 753-7100  
fbryan@niu.edu

Michael Fortner  
212 Fulton St.  
West Chicago, IL 60185  
mikefortner@earthlink.net

Diane Johns  
(815) 758-6259  
ladybugdj@aol.com

Andy Small  
(815) 762-5971  
asmall1@niu.edu

Holly Nicholson  
hnicolson@niu.edu

Mike Peddle  
(815) 501-3913  
michaelpeddle@comcast.net

Pat Vary  
(815) 762-1505  
pvary@niu.edu  
  
Scott Wickman  
(815) 762-2964  
scott.wickman@gmail.com

Clair Williams  
cdw0845@comcast.net

Ex Officio  
Matthew Streb

Parliamentarian  
Ferald Bryan  
(815) 753-7100  
fbryan@niu.edu

Committee Chairs

Audit & Finance  
Michael Fortner  
mikefortner@earthlink.net

Benefits  
Terry Borg  
(815) 762-1310  
tborg2@niu.edu

Campus Parking  
Ferald Bryan  
(815) 753-7100  
fbryan@niu.edu

Communications:  
Newsletter Editor  
Diane Johns  
1621 Carlisle Lane  
DeKalb, IL 60115  
(815) 758-6259  
ladybugdj@aol.com

Education  
Deborah Haliczzer  
108 McCormick Dr.  
DeKalb, IL 60115  
(815) 793-1487  
dhhaliczer@gmail.com

Legislative  
Jim Lockard  
141 Mason Ct.  
Sycamore, IL 60178  
(779) 222-6882  
jalockard@gmail.com

Member SUAA Board  
Steve Cunningham  
cunninghamstevend@gmail.com

Membership  
Andy Small  
(815) 762-5971  
asmall1@niu.edu

Public Relations/Events  
Steven Johnson  
236 W Locust St.  
DeKalb, IL 60115  
sjohnso11@niu.edu

Representative SUAA  
Foundation  
Paul Stoddard  
prs17@yahoo.com

Scholarship  
Clair Williams  
cdw0845@comcast.net

Social  
Pat Vary  
(815) 762-1505  
pvary@niu.edu

University Liaison  
Christina Doe  
815-753-1508  
annuitantsassoc@niu.edu