



SCARE Newsletter

Sonoma County Association of Retired Employees

Published Quarterly February 2025 Volume 325 Issue 1

Calendar of Events 2025

Membership Meetings

2/25/25, 5/27/25, 8/26/25,
11/18/25

Meetings are at 1pm at
Finley Center and by Zoom

Board Meetings

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

3/11/25, 5/7/25, 7/9/25,
9/10/25, 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.

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 Report by Kathy Young

Happy 2025! It is hard to believe we are already in the second month of 2025 when it seems we have just finished with the winter holidays. Our last membership meeting was informative as we heard Julie Wyne, CEO of the Sonoma County Employees Retirement Association (SCERA), give an update on her conversations with the County's Executive Officer and her annual report to the Board of Supervisors. She reminded us of the SCERA changes to their policies to make it easier for the Board of Supervisors (BOS) to move forward with COLAs. The CAO and BOS have asked for the cost of different COLA scenarios. The results of this information should go to the SCERA Admin Benefits committee in February. We will send out email to members with Zoom link to the Admin Benefits meeting once it is available.

At our next SCARE Membership meeting we will be discussing what has been done and the next steps towards securing COLAs. Our Membership meeting will be held on February 25, 2025, in person at the Finley Center Cypress room or by Zoom. More detail on page 4. The Zoom information is: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/8954632781?omn=83997314337>, Meeting ID: 895 463 2781, Dial by your location: +1 669 444 9171 US. We will also have an update on medical insurance rates which will increase effective June 1.

Five SCARE members were reelected/elected to the SCARE Board at the last membership meeting. The slate of officers remains the same for 2025. We have one seat vacant and we could really use another Board member. Please contact a Board member if you are interested or have any questions about being on the SCARE Board.

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

Julie Wyne Gives Update on COLAs

As mentioned above, Julie Wyne, CEO of SCERA, gave us an update on the pension fund and the continuing actions to try to get COLAs for retirees at our November 26th Membership Meeting. It was a lively meeting as there were lots of questions from members who were present. We recorded her presentation and it is available on our website on the home page under New on Site at <https://www.sonomacountyretirees.com/> We encourage you to listen to it.

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

John Pels

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](#)

County Contribution for Health Insurance to Decrease in 2026 under Settlement Agreement

Note: This only applies to those in the SCARE Settlement with the County, which means you must have retired prior to July 1, 2016.

One of our members asked me to put this reminder in the newsletter. For those of you affected by the settlement, the County contribution to your health insurance will decrease from 'up to \$500' as it is now to \$200/month as of June 1, 2026, and it will continue at that rate until 2041. It is likely that most people affected by this will be on Medicare but the \$200 will not cover cost for any of the Medicare plans for a single retiree, much less if you are covering a spouse.

Those who retired on or after July 1, 2016 are covered by whatever MOU was in effect at the time they retired. So far, they get 'up to \$500' with no end date or a flat \$500 for Safety members.

The only way that the settlement can be changed is if both parties (SCARE and the County) agree to the change. As we are talking to the Board of Supervisors about COLAs, we are also asking them to modify the settlement agreement and increase their contribution from the \$200. But it would help if those of you affected by this would write to your representative on the Board of Supervisors as well as your lack of a COLA.

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

Money Saving Ideas

Discovery Rehearsal for the Santa Rosa Symphony is once a month at 2 pm in Weill Hall at the Green Center on the SSU campus. It costs \$20 and it is open seating. It generally lasts about 2 hours. The symphony has clearly rehearsed a lot before this rehearsal. Sometimes, they play straight through the whole number and other times stop so the conductor or the guest musician can make suggestions to get it just right. It is quite enjoyable and much less expensive than the evening tickets.

You can get information on programs at <https://www.srsymphony.org/event-calendar/> and you can buy tickets online or at the door.

I've put money saving ideas in several newsletters and asked members to submit their ideas for saving money. If you like this feature, I could really use some of your ideas for saving money.

Phyris

JLMBC Report by Phyris Tobler

Health Insurance Information

Annual Enrollment will be from March 24 to April 11, 2025. **Be sure that HR has your current address so that you get the Retiree Benefits Guide with information on open enrollment.**

We have tentative new rates for changes going into effect June 1, 2025 except for CHP (under 65 only), Anthem Medicare Preferred, and AARP/UHC plans which are individual plans so they vary.

Kaiser continues to be the highest except for CHP. While there will be another attempt to get Kaiser to give us lower rate, this is what they are likely to be. Kaiser under 65 is going from \$1132 to \$1220 for an \$88 increase for one person. For those on Medicare, the rates are much less but they will go from \$332 to \$356 for a \$24 increase. Just double those rates if you are covering 2 people.

Sutter continues as the lowest option for those under 65. Their premium will go from \$406 to \$428 for a \$22 increase. No Medicare option.

Western Health Advantage will go from \$397 to \$421 for a \$24 increase. No Medicare option.

All these plans have higher deductible plans available for less money for those under 65. You can get full details in the Retiree Benefits Guide

Anthem Medicare Preferred is the new plan introduced in 2025. We don't have final cost on it's 2025/26 rates but it shouldn't be any higher than \$305/month. The coverage is great and you can go to any doctor who takes Medicare. Plus they cover things like Healthy Meals after surgery or for chronic illness, wearable health and fitness trackers, Personal Emergency Response System, and more. More info available at <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/anthem-medicare-preferred-ppo>—look for Anthem booklet.

AARP/UHC insurance for those on Medicare are individual plans based on age and area of residence. It is very good coverage except for prescriptions that can be very high if you are on expensive drugs. You may want to compare your cost for medical & prescriptions under this plan with the Anthem plan. *Cost of prescriptions capped:* Good news for those on Medicare. As of January 1, 2025, out of pocket cost for prescriptions cannot exceed \$2,000 for the year. This change is most likely to affect those with the AARP/UHC plans as some prescriptions under that plan can be very costly.

Dental insurance is not changing.

Fitness Plans included in Insurance: these include many if not most of the fitness centers in Sonoma County as well as other locations. This is a valuable benefit as they are often expensive and exercise has been shown to be valuable for both physical and mental health.

One Pass: Kaiser is adding free membership in One Pass Fitness to their benefits for Medicare eligible retirees. One Pass is a health and wellness program that gives you access to gyms, fitness locations, studios, online workouts, brain health tools, and social events and activities. You can get more information at <https://www.youronepass.com/#gym-search-link>. There is a section with Frequently Asked Questions that gives a lot of information on program. **This program will not be available until June 1, 2025**

Silver Sneakers: Medicare recipients who are in the Anthem plan get Silver Sneakers which covers many fitness clubs for free. It covers places like 24 Hour Fitness, Curves, Planet Fitness, and more. This is a great savings. If you go to <https://silversneakers.com/>, you can put in your zip code to find locations near you. Silver Sneakers may also be available to those on AARP/UHC.

February 25th Membership Meeting

We are trying to get a representative from Social Security to speak at our February meeting since there have been some changes in Social Security but it is looking unlikely that they can join us.

Our backup plan is to strategize how to involve our members in our attempt to get COLAs. We really need member's help through writing letters to the Board of Supervisors (see page 2 for email addresses of Board members) and attending Board of Supervisors meetings and speaking up. We will talk more about these at our Membership Meeting.

If you are writing to your Board member, the very best thing you can tell them is your personal story and how the lack of a COLA has affected you.

SCARE Board members have met with all members of the Board of Supervisors to ask them to seriously look at ways to give retirees a COLA. We are also meeting with County CAO, Christina Rivera. We were encouraged as our response from all supervisors has been generally positive although as always, it's the budget that's the problem. These are some of the points we made to the Board members.

- ◆ Sonoma County's Ad Hoc COLA is not working. Sonoma County retirees have not gotten 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.
- ◆ About half of retirees get \$2,500 or less—sometimes much less. There are people who retired in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Most of these people had very low salaries compared to today's salaries and therefore have very low pensions. There are over 800 retirees who retired before 4-1999 who have lost 74% of their Purchasing Power as of March 2024 on what started out as already low pensions.
- ◆ 32% of Safety retirements and 5% of General retirement are due to 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 usually many years away from being eligible for Medicare.
- ◆ 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 care costs.
- ◆ As retirees age, their costs go up as their health deteriorates and they are unable to continue doing everything they did earlier.
- ◆ The Board of Supervisors has shown that they care about older people as they adopted a comprehensive Master Plan for Aging, ensuring that their swelling aging population can age with dignity, resources and independence. But they seem to forget about retirees.
- ◆ The Board of Supervisors has shown that they care about low-income workers by setting a Living Wage and increasing it regularly.

Please attend the February 25th meeting, either in person or by Zoom, to take part in this very important discussion.

JLMBC continued from page 3

Insurance available through Pacific Group Agencies (PGA): PGA offers several different kinds of insurance to SCARE members. Since about 20 other counties, including LA, are included in this group, they are able to offer lower cost insurance. They offer vision and dental insurance as well as many others like Travel, Pet, ID Shield, Legal Shield and others and this year, they are adding long term care. You will get a separate booklet from PGA at about the same time you get the Sonoma County Benefits Guide. You cannot apply for vision and dental except at open enrollment but you can apply for the others at any time. If you are interested, you can go to the PGA website (pgagencies.com/scare) and complete application online.

Alphabet Soup by Bill Robotka

ICPC: The last ICPC meeting was December 5th, and I was unable to attend. The committee was briefed on the Annual "Status of the Pension" report to the BOS. Julie Wyne was present and discussed the report, and the latest on SCERA/CAO activities around the pension COLA subject (similar to what she presented to our membership at the 11/26/24 meeting). She also provided an updated overview of the pension plan. I've attached a copy of that report for any interested in reviewing. The next ICPC meeting will be on 3/6/25.

NBLC: The CLC leadership has committed to supporting us in lobbying the BOS on COLA and Health benefit issues, and is waiting for SCARE to develop a plan for this and provide them with guidance on when/how to best support us.

SCCLO: No activity until very recently for SCCLO. I've been discussing getting SCCLO re-energized with SEIU folks and we will hopefully find a reenergized SCCLO soon.

Change in Requirements for Drivers License Renewal for those 70+

*If you are 70 years or older when your driver's license expires, you are required to renew your driver's license in person and pass a vision test unless otherwise instructed by DMV. **Change:** Knowledge tests are no longer required for most senior drivers as long as you have had no accidents or citations.*

If you are required to pass a knowledge test, select "eLearning" when completing the online application for a fast, no fail option. You can start your renewal and make an appointment at DMV online at <https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/senior-drivers/> This will save you a lot of time at DMV.

Sonoma State University Scholarship Winners

SCARE gives scholarships to SSU students who are a child or grandchild of a Sonoma County retiree or employee. They must be attending full time.

These are the scholarship winners for the 2024-25 academic year:

Adrian Avalos – Fourth year, Psychology. Working toward Master's degree to become a licensed therapist. He says "growing up from a Mexican background I've seen a lot of negative stigma surrounding mental health and I aim to change this in my community".

Riley West – Third year, Kinesiology. Will graduate with a BS and then plans on entering a dual program in which to get both a Master's in Athletic Training and a Doctorate in Physical Therapy.

Lucas Hurley – Third Year, Sociology. Goal is to get Master's in Social Work. He is the first person in his family to attend college. He says "I am committed to making a positive difference in the lives of other, particularly those who may face systemic barriers and injustices as I have".

Dawson Bell – Graduate student, Biology. He is doing research in forest ecology and wildfire dynamics. Specifically his research focuses on the California Bay Laurel's resprouting response to wildfire. When he graduates, he wants to work in conservation and restoration in Sonoma County.

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 member - **Cecilia Proschold**. 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@sonoma-county.org/ 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:

| | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| Cecil Bauman | Arletta Dawdy |
| Robert Endicott | Eva Fischer |
| Carol Hunter | Gladys Jennings |
| David Jensen | Curt Lowe |
| Sara Long | Gerald Missey |
| Donald Moser | Leslie Wm. Shank |
| Virginia Vonderscher | |



Council on Aging Awarded Fall Prevention Grant

Council on Aging has been awarded one of nine prestigious Innovations in Fall Prevention grants from the National Council on Aging. This grant aims to address the needs of seniors who are at risk of falling and are homebound, ensuring they receive the necessary support to improve their safety and mobility.

The program spans eight weeks and involves an in-home Coach who will meet with participants twice weekly. These sessions will focus on customized exercise routines and flexibility/mobility programs tailored to each senior's needs. The Coach will guide participants through the exercises, ensuring they are performed correctly and effectively.

To assess the program's success, participants will undergo pre-and post-testing, providing valuable data on their progress. Additionally, each participant will receive exercise equipment and an Emergency to-go bag to enhance their safety and preparedness.

Throughout the eight weeks, seniors will have ample opportunities for learning, education, and movement, contributing to their overall well-being. This initiative not only aims to prevent falls but also to improve the quality of life for homebound seniors.

Seniors at high risk for falling and who are homebound are encouraged to participate. For more information, please contact **Denise Johnson at 707-525-0143 ext. 119** or via email at djohnson@councilonaging.com.

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



| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Airoldi, Melissa | Sheriff's Office |
| Arnau, Ricardo | Human Services |
| Bartling, Rebecca | Fairgrounds |
| Buegler, John | Sheriff's Office |
| Cameron, Andrea | ACTTC |
| Carroll, Jennifer | Superior Court |
| Clarke-Bisagno, Amanda | Probation |
| Delgado-Flores, Rosalba | Health Services |
| Ehrlich, Neil | Behavioral Health |
| Evans, Stacy | Health Services |
| Field, Joanna | Health Services |
| Fijalkowski, Marta | Health Services |
| Gorin, Susan | Board of Supervisors |
| Green, Norman | General Services |
| Haugen, Justin | Sheriff's Office |
| Jeane, Pamela | Water Agency |
| Jones, Frederick | Human Services |
| Lindley, Lynda | Health Services |
| Mannina, Marianne | Human Services |
| Marusic, Rados | Clerk Recorder |
| Mendoza, Mary | Human Services |
| Messenger, Douglas | Water Agency |
| Moore, Dawn | Human Services |
| Naumann, LeAnnore | Superior Court |
| Nelson, Steven | Sheriff's Office |
| Nema, Paul | ISD |
| Nieto, Maria | Superior Court |
| Patterson, Linda | Clerk Recorder |
| Repp, Tracy | Human Services |
| Silveira, Anna | Human Services |
| Thompson, Janice | Son Public Infrastr |

Continued:

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Uyehara, Douglas | Health Services |
| Viruet, Luis | Human Services |
| Waner, Robert | District Attorney |
| Wojcik, Gregory | District Attorney |
| Woldemar, Heather | Health 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>

Getting the Newsletter —If you would like to get the newsletter both by email and by USPS, contact Lou Maricle (maricles2@gmail.com) and let him know that. You will still get all of our hot topic emails.

Redwood Credit Union celebrated its 75th anniversary in January with almost half a million members. Many of you may not know that it was started by Sonoma County employees and the first office was in the County complex across from the Human Services building. Now it has spread to several counties.

Board and Membership Meeting Minutes can be viewed at our website

SCARE Membership and Financial Information

SCARE currently has 1708 members and 157 associate members for a total of 1865 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 February 25, 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

Then 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=83997314337> , Meeting ID: 895 463 2781, Dial by your location: +1 669 444 9171

MEMBERSHIP MEETING AGENDA

- **REPORT ON MEETING WITH BOS MEMBERS RE COLAS AND PLANNING FOR FUTURE ACTIONS—see page 4 for more information**
- **JLMBC REPORT—New rates coming in June**
- **SCCLO/NBLC/ICPC REPORT**
- **DRAWING FOR GIFT CARDS (3 for those at Finley and 3 for those on Zoom)**

MUST BE PRESENT TO WIN