**IEA Awesome Podcast**

**Episode 24 – IEA Retired?**

00:00 KELSEY: Welcome to the Awesome IEA Podcast brought to you by the Illinois Education Association.

00:05 DIANA: The podcast for curious well-informed association members.

00:08 KELSEY: I’m one of your hosts, Kelsey Harms, a Computer Specialist from the IEA Program Development Department.

00:13 DIANA: And I’m Diana Zaleski, one of your Instructional Resource and Professional Development Directors from IEA Teaching and Learning.

00:20 KELSEY: The goal of this podcast is to educate our members about important new educational policy initiatives in a brief and hopefully entertaining format.

00:27 DIANA: Today we’re going to discuss IEA Retired with our special guest Jim Duffy, Chair of the IEA Retired Council, and Kim Riley, IEA Retired Paraprofessional. Jim and Kim, thank you so much for coming on the podcast!

00:40 JIM: Thank you for having us today.

00:42 KIM: Thanks!

00:43 KELSEY: Jim, can you please share with us what the IEA Retired is all about?

00:47 JIM: IEA Retired, our goal is to be the advocacy organization for all retired public education employees and serve as the primary information resource and voice on retirement educational issues and concerns. Our goals are to defend pensions and healthcare for retirees, fight to defend public education, and defend union rights.

01:13 We’re also very active in lobbying on these issues whenever there is legislation either for or against our interests, we’ll be engaged and lobbying on those. And, we have a number of people that have also worked very hard on IPACE recommended candidates. For example, Lauren Underwood, we had many retirees involved in and working on her campaign this past General Election.

01:38 KELSEY: Jim, I know that the IEA Retired has an amazing amount of committees. Can you share with us some of the committees and the type of work that they do?

01:46 JIM: We have a Legislative Action Committee which works to educate members about political issues that have the potential to affect public education and retirees. They have developed trainings for leaders and our local retired chapters, presented these trainings at SLA for several years now. We have a, well, we’re just developing, in fact, a Racial and Social Justice Committee. That’s very early in its formative stage but we plan to use that committee to educate our chapters on racial and social justice issues.

02:23 We have a Conference Committee whose function is to plan the retired portion of the ONE Conference. Then we also have a Membership Committee which looks at different ways to entice newly retired people to join the organization.

02:39 DIANA: What kind of benefits do we offer our IEA Retired members?

02:42 JIM: I think the number one thing that we offer people are information. We can keep them informed about what is happening with pensions, healthcare, what’s happening in terms of the tax on public education, on union rights. A second thing that we offer is for retirees that want to go back in the classroom and sub, they have liability insurance through their membership. And NEA Member Benefits, retirees continue to participate in any programs they were involved in while they were active. Or, there are new programs that maybe are more beneficial to retirees that they can participate in.

03:20 Retired members can find out about many of these things by attending local chapter meetings. We have twenty-six chapters, twenty-three here in Illinois. We also have one in Arizona and we have two in Florida, believe it or not. So, regardless of where our members are at, they can participate. Most chapters have at least three or four meetings a year, some meet on a monthly basis. If members are retired, they will be informed where whatever local chapter they join of when these meetings will be held so that they can participate.

03:51 DIANA: I’ve also heard about an IEA retired mentor program. Jim, can you tell us more about that?

03:57 JIM: Another thing that the retirees can do to keep them engaged with what is happening in schools is they can join the mentor program. We have, for many years now, had a program that matches retirees with our Student IEA members and this year we have 35 students matched with 35 retirees.

04:16 These retirees then stay in contact with the student throughout the year and give them advice, answer questions for them, make suggestions. And, one of the things I found very interesting about the program is that oftentimes these retirees stay in contact with these students long after the students have graduated and gone into the classroom. So, that’s the way that retirees continue to participate and help in public education.

04:45 DIANA: Kim, how can interested members join IEA Retired?

04:48 KIM: Well, we try to make it as easy as possible for anyone to join IEA Retired. Members can go online on the IEA website, click on Member Center, and then over to Retired. Members who have already retired should click on Join IEA Retired. Active members who want to join as Pre-retired members, and believe me, we encourage this, should click on Join Pre-retired.

05:10 However if someone wants a hard copy, click on Download Paper Form. This give everyone options that they feel comfortable with. And, of course, anyone should feel free to contact me and I will be happy to answer any questions and help you connect to a retired chapter.

05:25 KELSEY: So, Jim, do you mind sharing with us a just a little bit about your role as the council chair for our retirees?

05:33 JIM: Certainly. As Chair of the Council of Retirees, my job is to preside over the council meetings we have on a regular basis, usually one is September, another one in October or November. After the first of the year, before the RA we have our third meeting and then a fourth meeting in May. In addition, we have a special council meeting prior to the ONE Conference after the presidents’ training that we host in the front end of the ONE Conference.

06:01 In addition, I’m available to attend chapter meetings and talk to members and local chapters about the retired program, what we do, the benefits from the program for them. Work with my vice chair, Linda Walcher, on this sort of plan to divide up the state because Linda lives pretty far south and I’m pretty far north and Illinois is a long state. So, it makes it easier for us to cover the local chapters if we divide it up somewhere across the middle of the state.

06:33 In addition to being Chair of the Retired Council, by virtue of that position, I’m a member of the IEA Board of Directors so I represent retirees on the IEA Board of Directors and provide the board with information about the retired program and what we’re engaged in.

06:52 In addition to informing the board of directors what’s going on with the retired program, I report out to the council and report out to local chapters presidents what’s going on with the IEA Board, information that they need to know. We receive, all board members receive a weekly update, News You Can Use, and so I make sure that gets out to the council members, I make sure it gets out to the local presidents each week so they have an idea of all the issues that are affecting teachers, affecting support staff, affecting students, affecting schools.

07:33 DIANA: Kim, can you tell us a little bit about your role?

07:35 KIM: Sure. As the IEA Retired staff liaison, I work closely with all chapter presidents and really I feel as though I’m a vehicle of services for all of our retired members in that role. Anything the chapter presidents need, actually we communicate pretty regularly and I try to make sure they have whatever resources they that are available from IEA for our retired members.

08:01 In addition to that, I work very closely with the IEA Retired Council and we have an executive committee that regularly communicates. So, I’m really just the conduit of information for our retired members.

08:13 The one thing I think that differentiates my role is that for the last ten years, I’ve written grants to NEA Retired for the retired program and this allows our IEA Retired members to participate in some activities that our budget quite frankly might not allow without that.

08:30 KELSEY: Is there anything else our members should know about IEA Retired?

08:34 JIM: IEA Retired administers the IEA Bob Haisman Student of the Year Award and the Bob Haisman Teacher of the Year Award. And, we also administer the Mary Lou & Keith Hauge Retiree of the Year Award as well as raise funds for the Mary Lou & Keith Hauge Scholarship each year.

08:56 Most years we give three or four thousand-dollar scholarships to deserving students who have applied. The winners of those of those scholarships are selected by the student program. The Retired Council selects the Student of the Year, selects the Teacher of the Year, and selects the Retiree of Year.

09:16 KIM: I think the biggest misconception is that you need to be nearing retirement before joining IEA Retired. Join now as a Pre-retired member and have it all taken care of by the time you retire. That way you can enjoy the benefits of membership and pay while the dues are at their lowest rate.

09:32 Everyone wants to protect their retirement benefits and this offers you a way to continue to receive news that not only helps you stay connected, but helps you know when it’s most crucial to take action.

09:43 One other crucial piece of information that Jim touched on is please consider the liability protection that membership offers when you’re subbing in a public ed classroom. This truly differentiates us from the other retired organizations out there that do not offer similar protection.

09:57 JIM: I would like to ask all retirees to consider attending the ONE Conference. It’s held in the fall each year. We just held the 2019 ONE Conference the first weekend in October. So, we’re already beginning to talk about plans for next year’s conference. It is also tentatively scheduled for the first weekend in October.

10:22 It’s open to all retirees. It’s a minimal cost to attend and a lot of great sessions for people to choose from to be there and some fun with, learn more about issues facing retirees, or how they can be involved in the organization.

10:41 On the front end of that we have the presidents’ training where either the president or a representative from each chapter attend and receive training based on issues and ideas that they’re concerned about.

10:56 DIANA: Great, thanks so much. If you have any questions, comments, or feedback, please check out the contact section on the Podcast page on the IEA Website.

11:04 KELSEY: Special thanks to Mark for the audio help, Amanda for the transcription, and Dan for the website. As always, thank you so much for being a member, and thanks for joining us!

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