President’s Message
Chapter Volunteers Engage in NARFE’s Future

Most people are going to live another 30 to 40 years past age 50. So, as an organization, we need to think about the wants and needs of people 50-plus as they move forward in life. Increased longevity is creating a whole new life stage. Times have changed, and NARFE’s members’ needs and lifestyles have changed. Many start part-time work or volunteering. People see this part of their lives as a time to find meaning and purpose. We need to take the value of age and experience and pair it with energy.

The theme for our chapter which I established last year when I became President of Springfield Chapter 893 is “Honor our History, Engage in our Future.” During the 2014 NARFE National Convention, members voted for a Strategic Planning Process to identify critical issues and cast vision for change. As a result, a Standing Strategic Planning Committee was established. That Committee will distribute a Strategic Plan organizationally by July 2016.

We may think to ourselves that this concept is all well and good for the over-arching NARFE organization. However, the decisions made on the future of NARFE will drill down and impact every level of the organization from Headquarters, to Regions, to Federations, and to Chapters. The Strategic Plan is being designed to ensure that NARFE’s advocacy program mission is maintained as strong and respected and that grass-roots efforts are enhanced.

We must be prepared at the chapter level to have the staff and resources in place to support the Strategic Plan. We intend to continue to provide needed services to our members, to engage others to support NARFE’s mission, and to empower members by building trust and goodwill.

To that end, my efforts and the efforts of your Executive Board have been directed to filling elected and appointed positions in 2016. Our recruitment plan will focus on recent retirees, active employees who see retirement approaching and want to be involved now, and on retirees experienced in providing services to our members. We are committed to ensuring that a succession plan for this year and the near future is in place.

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The good news is that we are making headway. A Vice President, and an At-Large Director were recently elected, and current Board members will continue to serve. After the Board takes a strategic look at positions we believe are essential to our operation and mission, these opportunities will be announced in the January newsletter, reflecting work done by the new Board to realign our human resources.

I am encouraged by current members’ recruitment efforts which have resulted in increased membership, increased attendance at our meetings, and active participation to support the chapter’s goals and objectives. After all, advocating for the protection of our earned benefits gives each of us meaning and purpose.

Please join us by choosing to accept an appointment in your area of interest. Share your energy and experience so that we are ready to meet the challenges of the future of NARFE, as we continue to honor our history.

Deanna Shepherd
President, Springfield Chapter 893

The following article by Jonnelle Marte was printed in the Washington Post on October 25, 2015, under the title, “Social Security benefits don’t match expenses.” It is printed in its entirety so that you may consider Ms. Marte’s perspective on where we stand today:

“It’s official: Tens of millions of retirees receiving Social Security benefits will not get a raise next year.

The situation comes up any time inflation is low, a shift that was driven largely by low gas prices this year.

This marks the third time in the past six years—the other two instances occurred in 2010 and 2011—that benefits will stay flat for retirees. But retirement experts say the measure of inflation that is used to calculate changes to Social Security benefits, the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers, does not accurately match the expenses typically faced in retirement. Some costs that are counted heavily in the index, such as gas and transportation, do not matter as much for retirees who are no longer commuting. Other expenses that are a major part of a retirees’ budget, such as Medicare premiums, are not counted in the index.

Many retirees have found that their bills—including health-care costs, housing and utilities—have been climbing faster than Social Security benefits.

For example, Social Security benefits grew by 43 percent between 2000 and 2015, according to calculations from the Senior Citizens League. Over that same period, Medicare Part B premiums grew by 131 percent. Monthly housing costs rose 44 percent for people who own their home and even faster, 56 percent, for renters. The price of a gallon of heating oil used in boilers rose 159 percent, and the price of electricity increased by 63 percent.

So, the next time a prospective member asks, “Why should I join NARFE,” you are more than ready to answer.

In the December 2015 issue of the NARFE Magazine, NARFE National President Richard G. Thissen reports that, “...NARFE achieved two significant legislative victories. Both came about as part of a bipartisan budget deal. First, the budget pact does not contain any cuts to the federal community. Second, the agreement limits the increase in Medicare Part B premiums for enrollees whose premiums are not taken out of Social Security benefits—including nearly a million federal retirees—who had been facing an unprecedented 52 percent increase in Part B premiums in 2016.”

FLAT SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

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cost of basic landline phone service has grown by 52 percent.

Of course, some of the expenses that have been rising for workers and are counted in the inflation index—such as college tuition and rent—may not cause as large a burden for retirees.

Still, people receiving Social Security benefits have seen their buying power fall by 22 percent since 2000, according to an estimate from the Senior Citizens League. Average Social Security benefits have grown to $1,166.30 a month in 2015, from $816 in 2000, according to the report. But retirees would need a monthly benefit of $1,418 to have the same purchasing power they had when they first retired, the survey found.”

♦ CONGRESSMAN CONNOLLY’S OPEN SEASON WORKSHOP ♦

On Saturday, November 14, 2015, your President joined Area Vice Presidents Jim Little (Area IX) and Wilma Grant (Area X) to staff the NARFE table at the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA 22035.

According to Congressman Gerry Connolly (D-11th), one of the largest groups of attendees, compared with previous years, participated in this workshop. The active federal employees, retirees, spouses, etc., attended an expert panel discussion. They also received information from representatives of various FEHB health plans and Medicare who were located, along with NARFE, in separate meeting rooms.

We were very pleased to have a large number of current and retired federal employees and their spouses visit our table. We answered questions about membership in NARFE, shared “NARFE goodies,” handed out a large number of membership application packages along with chapter newsletters, and talked to prospective members about benefits, legislative issues, and chapters in their residential areas.

Prospects at the NARFE table.
Springfield Chapter 893’s Holiday Party and Luncheon will be held on Wednesday, December 9, 2015, from 11:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., at American Legion Post 177, 3939 Oak Street, Fairfax, VA 22030. The party begins with a “meet and greet” social hour from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., including complimentary appetizers. A cash bar will be available during the social hour and continuing through the event. Wine and beer will be $3.00 per serving, and imported beer will be $4.00.

A total of two hours of musical entertainment will be provided by The Old Dominion Trio during the social hour and subsequent to the luncheon from 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. The Old Dominion Trio has been performing professionally for the past ten years. Their repertoire includes familiar pop and jazz standards—mostly from the 40’s, 50’s, and 60’s—and features vocal stylings reminiscent of Frank Sinatra, Nat King Cole, and Elvis Presley. John Cropp (guitar and vocals), Eduardo Garcia (bass and vocals), and Norm Cole (saxophone and clarinet) will entertain us. The music may encourage you to enjoy the dance floor in the Banquet Hall. Vocalist Pat McArtor will precede the Pledge of Allegiance with her rendition of “You’re a Grand Old Flag.”

The Buffet Luncheon includes: Tossed salad, sliced turkey breast with stuffing, baked honey glazed ham, mashed potatoes, mixed vegetables, green beans almandine, assorted rolls and butter, pumpkin and apple pies, coffee and hot tea.

ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY AND LUNCHEON

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By request, diabetic and vegetarian entrees and table service for special needs will be accommodated. To allow for table set-up and room preparation, early seating will not be available.

The total cost for the Buffet Luncheon is $18 per person.

Distinguished guests have been invited to join us for the party, and Chapter Officers for 2016 will be installed. In addition, certificates recognizing volunteers’ outstanding contributions in 2015 will be presented.

For those with mobility challenges, it is recommended that you park in spaces near the Oak Street driveway, adjacent to the flag pole. A graduated walkway leads from the parking lot to the main entrance.

Please mail your completed registration form (included in this newsletter) and non-refundable check, payable to NARFE Chapter 893 for $18 per person, to Joe Bush, 6110 Roxbury Avenue, Springfield, VA 22152. Payment is due no later than December 4, 2015. Questions concerning our event should be referred to Joe at (571) 422-0451.

\* NEW STATE LEGISLATION NEWSLETTER \*

The November 2015 issue of the State Legislation Newsletter (Issue #6) has been placed online by Patricia Downs, State Legislation Chair, NARFE-Virginia.

Subject articles include NARFE’s State Political Account Fund (“State PAC”) distributions, results of the November general elections, chapter advocacy activities, and high-priority advocacy needs.

You may access the newsletter by this direct link: http://www.vanarfe.org/State%20Legislation/Nov%202015%20Newsletter%20SL.pdf.

\* THE LITTLE THEATRE OF ALEXANDRIA \*

There will be a December production at The Little Theatre of Alexandria.

“A Christmas Carol” will be presented on December 3, 2015, at 8:00 p.m. This is the familiar tale of Ebenezer Scrooge, a bitter Victorian miser as he travels through Christmas past, present and future to find the true meaning of the holidays. The production is complete with special effects, Victorian carols, and Tiny Tim. “A Christmas Carol” is a must for the whole family.

Chapter 893 members who would like to attend this production should contact Jesse Hill at 703-569-5118 or <jdrewh@verizon.net> as soon as possible.
SPRINGFIELD CHAPTER 893’S
ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY
AND LUNCHEON

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2015
11:30 A.M TO 3:00 PM

AT
AMERICAN LEGION POST 177

3939 OAK STREET FAIRFAX, VA 22030
TELEPHONE: 703-273-2250