

The Connection

Fall 2025 **NEWSLETTER**

<p>Patty Anthony President 28 Autumnbrook Lane Conway, AR 72032 501-514-8899 Pea160325@gmail.com</p>	<p>Julie Hart Sr. Vice-President 8311 Alvin Lane Little Rock, AR 72227 501-237-0709 2dogsnecat@gmail.com</p>	<p>Vacant Vice-President</p>	<p>Ronnie & Kit Smith Secretary/Treasurer 6396 Bernice Avenue Springdale, AR 72762 501-837-8453 smith2312@sbcglobal.net</p>	<p>Lorie Tudor Member-Retirement Board 1834 Tudor Lane Benton, AR 72019 501-317-0170 1960lorietudor@gmail.com</p>
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Greetings to all ARDOT retirees. Wow! This year is really going by fast. It’s been a busy time for my family watching and helping grandchildren grow up (by spoiling them) and dealing with family issues.

As you are aware, the last few years have been hard on the World, our Country, and our Association. The District chapters are meeting again, and we will have our fourth Statewide meeting since the pandemic at the Bishop Park Recreation Center in Bryant on Thursday October 23, 2025, beginning at 11:00 a.m. Our speaker this year is Jay Townsend, Chief of Public Affairs for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Little Rock District. Further details are included in this newsletter.

Membership and participation in the Association allows us to continue the fellowships developed over our years of service. But there are other reasons for joining and participating. Among them are:

- To stay informed on what is happening at ARDOT. This includes getting updates about retirement benefits, health insurance and financials.
- To promote or oppose legislation which affects retirees. Although the Association is not a registered lobbying organization, informing retirees about proposed changes to laws and regulations allows retirees to let their local representatives know about their informed opinions of the changes.
- To persuade all retired employees to act as goodwill ambassadors to promote the activities and traditions of ARDOT.

I was reading some of the messages from the past presidents and found this “Message from the President” by Mike Limbird in 2019:

“There is always some news that we would like to ensure retirees know and the best way to get that information to all retirees is through the local retiree chapter meetings. Each District has a Retiree Chapter with set meeting dates, times, and locations. The northwest corner of the state has a Chapter made up of retirees who worked in that corner of the state for District 4 or District 9. This Newsletter has that information in the Chapter Reports section of the Newsletter; this information is also found on the Department’s website (ardot.gov). Once on the website, the information can be found at Divisions/Benefits and

Compensation/Association of Retired ARDOT Employees. The website also has several Newsletters, Member Retirement Board, Chapters and Officers, Assembly Officers and Charter Members. Please visit the site; if we can get additional useful information on the site, let one of the officers know and we'll see if it can be done. The Department has been very supportive in making this information available. The basis of the Retiree Association is the District Chapters; the officers of those District Chapters often struggle to keep the individual Chapters viable. Statewide, we have more dues paying members than we have meeting attending members. Several of the Chapters have gone from monthly or bimonthly meetings to quarterly meetings and still may have low attendance at the meetings. A Chapter is not very effective for the members if no one attends the Chapter meetings. Items will be brought to the attention of the Retirement Board through the Retirees' Representative more effectively if the concerns come through the Chapter/Chapters. Check with your Chapter officers to see what you can do to help maintain attendance at Chapter meetings. This could include carpooling with a friend(s) or starting a call around to remind folks of upcoming meetings."

The article is still relevant today. Information about the Association is on ARDOT's website under the Benefits and Compensation Divisions tab.

<http://www.ardot.gov/divisions/benefits/association-of-retired-ardot-employees/>

After 1 year serving as the President of the Association, I will be handing over the Presidency to Senior Vice President Julie Hart.

We are still in need of members to serve as the Senior Vice President and Vice President for the coming new terms. Also, our Secretary/Treasurer combo of Ronnie and Kit Smith will be retiring at the end of their term. I have volunteered to take over that role for the upcoming term. Please contact Julie or me if you are interested in serving as Senior Vice President or Vice President or be ready to nominate someone at the Annual Meeting in October.

Patty Anthony, President



STATEWIDE ANNUAL MEETING

Come and join your fellow retirees at the ARDOT Association of Retired Employees Annual Statewide luncheon and meeting beginning at 11:00 a.m. on October 23, 2025, at the Bishop Park Community Center, 6401 Boone Rd, Bryant, AR. King Kat of Lonoke is catering the event with fish, chicken, and all trimmings.

Our guest speaker this year is Jay Townsend, Chief of Public Affairs for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Little Rock Division. Come and enjoy his comments

Tickets (\$15.00) can be purchased by mailing the form attached to this newsletter with your payment to Ronnie/Kit Smith, 6396 Bernice Ave., Springdale, AR 72762 or at the door. Please let us know if you are planning to attend.

This will be a great time of fun and fellowship.



Jay Townsend serves as the Chief of Public Affairs for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Little Rock District. Townsend began this assignment in June 2019 and is responsible for planning and executing the district commander's communication strategy through corporate communication, media and stakeholder engagements and community outreach.

Townsend's previous assignments within USACE include Public Affairs Officer for the \$5.3 billion Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 (Hurricane Harvey Supplemental), Deputy Chief of Public Affairs and Regional Public Affairs Specialist for the Southwestern Division and Public Affairs Specialist for the Little Rock District. He's also completed developmental assignments as the Chief of Public Affairs for the Southwestern Division in Dallas, Texas in 2021 and as the Executive Officer for the Little Rock District in 2022.

Townsend is a two-time graduate of the U.S. Army Defense Information School for Broadcast Journalism in 2004 and the Public Affairs Qualification Course for military officers in 2013. He also studied broadcast journalism at Arkansas Tech University from 2000-2002 and 2004-2006. He graduated from the Army Basic Combat Training Center in Fort Jackson, South Carolina in 2004 followed by Advanced Individual Training in Human Resources. He completed the Geospatial Information Systems for Journalism Program at the University of Texas, Knight Center for Journalism in 2017 and holds professional certifications in Adobe Premier, InDesign, Illustrator, Lightroom and After Effects. He's also a graduate of the Army's Warrior Leader Course, Advanced Leader Course and Senior Leader Course.

Address and Beneficiary Changes

Attention all retirees, if you move, please notify RoShunda Watson at the Arkansas State Highway Employees' Retirement System (ASHERS) office at (501) 569-2532. Besides keeping your address and phone number current, you also need to keep your beneficiaries current. You should contact the Group Insurance Office at (501) 569-2417 for beneficiary updates on your life insurance. Since 2001, the Retirement System provides an additional lump-sum benefit of \$7,500 payable to your beneficiary at the retiree's death. If you have any questions about this benefit or the beneficiary for this benefit, please call (501) 569-2532.

Update from the Secretary and Treasurer

We were honored to serve as Secretary and Treasurer for the last three years.

We enjoyed the work and the trips to the District Chapter meetings every year.

We were able to meet many more retirees than we would have met just by going to our local District meetings and the annual meeting. Thank you for electing us to the offices. During our tenure, we have noticed a trend in membership and the resulting income. Membership revenue in Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021 during the pandemic decreased from previous years. Our income from membership dues was a little over \$6,000 in 2020 and almost \$9,000 in 2021. After two years of not being able to meet in person, everyone seemed to have a renewed interest in the Retirement Association when it announced in our Fall 2022 newsletter that we planned to have a statewide meeting in October of that year. Our membership revenue grew to over \$13,000. However, since that time it has been slipping back to pandemic levels. Membership revenue in 2023 and 2024 dropped to \$8,000 and \$5,280 respectively. 2025 looks to be heading in the same direction.



Newly Elected Board of Trustees Member Lorie Tudor



Retiree, Lorie Tudor, was elected to represent the ARDOT Retirees on the Board of Trustees. Tudor began her 41-year career with the Department in 1981 as a Clerk Typist. Tudor promoted several times from 1983 to 1990. In 1995, she resigned to obtain a degree in civil engineering. Tudor returned to the Department in 1998 as a Civil Engineer I in the Planning and Research Division. Following a civil engineering career path, Tudor advanced numerous times from 1998 to 2011, promoting to Division Head of Programs and Contracts in July 2011. She served as Assistant Chief Engineer for Planning from September 2011 until November 2014 when she was promoted to Deputy Director and Chief Operations Officer. Tudor was appointed as ARDOT Director in March 2020. She retired in January 2025. As Director, she was an ex officio member of the ASHERS Board for five years.

NEWS FROM THE ASHERS OFFICE



COLA: The Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) for Fiscal Year 2026 is 2.77%. This increase is reflected in your July 2025 benefit payment.

DIRECT DEPOSIT: Please consider changing from paper warrants to direct deposit for your annuity benefits. Contact the Retirement Office for more information. 501-569-2532

DISABILITY AUDIT: ASHERS has recently conducted an audit of disability benefits. Our System is required by Legislative Audit to periodically review the status of individuals who are receiving early retirement benefits due to a disability.



Open enrollment for the 2026 plan year will take place from November 1 to November 30, 2025. There will be no major changes to the health plans for 2026. However, retirees on Medicare will see a slight rate increase. A rate sheet will be mailed out soon.

Other updates:

- MetLife insurance rates will increase.
- We will have a new dental provider effective January 1, 2026. If you are currently enrolled in Delta Dental, your coverage will automatically transfer to Blue Cross Blue Shield Dental.
- We are also introducing a new benefit this year: an ambulance service plan, which will be available to retirees during open enrollment.

More details on these changes will be included in the open enrollment packet, which you can expect to receive in your mailbox in late September or early October.

For any questions, please contact Ronda or Lauren in the Insurance office at 501-569-2420.

Upcoming District Chapter Meetings

At these meetings, representatives from the Association, Benefits and Compensation Division, and the Insurance Section will give a presentation and be available for questions.



District 1- Roy Morris, President

Thursday, September 4, 2025: Catfish Island, Colt

Meets Quarterly

District 2- Kelly Slater, President

Thursday, September 18, 2025: Leons Catfish and Shrimp, Pine Bluff

District 3- Jim Blackwell, President

Meets the second Wednesday of every month: Big Jake's BBQ, Hope

District 4- No contact information

District 5- "Shorty" Coles, Vice-President

Meets the second Tuesday of every month: Lost Lamb Diner, Moorefield

Central Office/District 6- Mike Selig, President

Monday, October 6, 2025: Whole Hog on Markham

Meets the first Monday of every month.

District 7- Mike Nelson, President

Thursday, September 11, 2025 & Thursday, November 13, 2025: Cardinal Café, Camden

Meets the second Thursday of every *other* month.

District 8- Janet Boozer, President

Tuesday, October 14, 2025 & Tuesday, December 9, 2025: Check-H Grill & Buffet, Russellville

Meets the second Tuesday of every *other* month.

District 9- Jeff Wheeler, President

Jeff Wheeler has volunteered to be President and Jannell Davidson has volunteered to be Secretary/Treasurer.

Friday, September 19, 2025: Western Sizzlin, Harrison

District 10- Alan Walter, President

Meets the third Thursday of every month 11:00-1:00: Grecian Steak House, Paragould

Northwest Chapter- Sam Turner, President

Tuesday, September 23, 2025 @ 1:00: Golden Corral, Fayetteville

Meets the second Tuesday every 3-4 months.

In Loving Memory

Alexander, James	Duncan, Arthur	Jackson, Albert	Purifoy, Charles
Alford, Bobby	Eskridge Jr., Floyd	Jester, Michael	Randall, Ed
Andrews, Anna*	Everidge, Myrtle*	Johnson, Anita*	Rapier, Jerry
Andrews, John	Fife, Thomas	Johnson, Richard	Riley, Charles*
Arnold, Alice*	Fletcher, Marsha	Johnson, Virginia	Robison, Dena
Arnold, Billy	Foster, Tracey	Jones, Ronald	Rouse, Donald
Baker, Jearl	Garlington, Carl	Jordan, Kenneth	Sasser, Nelda*
Barbee, Donna	Gates, Jimmie	Kimes, Nickey	Shaddox, Harold
Bartlett, Jeffery	George, Beninia*	Kizer, Samuel	Sherrill, Michael
Bates, Bazzel	George, Jeanette*	Langston, Margaret*	Sherrill, Sandra*
Belcher, Bonnie*	Gerloff Jr., John	Lashley, Jimmy	Shook, Faye
Bisbee, Larry	Gibson, Cloyce	Lively, Dale	Smith, Albert
Bledsoe Jr., Carley	Glenn, Danny	Locke, William	Smith, Edgar
Bohannon, Linda*	Godfrey, Juanita*	Lunsford, Leroy	Smith, Hershel
Bradshaw, Mike	Graham, David	Mahl, Mona	Smith, William
Bragg, Earl	Graham, Lisa*	Major, Anita*	South, Jimmy
Bulloch, Gary	Griffin, Mary*	Martin, Brewin	Stephenson, Jackie
Burks, Ronald	Griffin, Robert	May, Sylvia*	Stewart, Virginia*
Burton, JH	Guess, Michael	McCandlis, Neal	Stone, Glenda*
Butler, Kenneth	Harbison, William	McCoy, Leonard	Stuart, Robin
Calahan, Doris*	Harper, Tommy	McFadden, David	Sullivan, Pat
Calloway, Grayson	Harris, Victor	McKinney, Norma	Taylor, Billy
Cantrell, Jerry	Harrison, Jason	McMillian, Charles	Taylor, Jerroll
Carmack, Alan	Haygood, Ginger	Mosley, Harold	Tims, Darlene*
Carson, Edward	Haynes, John	Parton, Claude	Tuggle, Bobby
Carte, Gary	Hinshaw, Maurice	Pate-Vickers, Debra	Vance, Carolyn
Clark, Jackie	Hoggard, Billy	Pearson, Bobby	Vannatter, Roy
Cline, Lois*	Hogue, Wayne	Pergeson, Alma*	Wall, William
Clowers, Patti	Holland, Joseph	Peterson, Harvey	Waters, David
Crift, Lawrence	Hollis, Thomas	Petty, Bobbie*	Weston, Betty
Dailey, John	Hoover, Oletha*	Pillow, Thomas	Williams, Galen
Davidson, Joe	Huie, Clara	Pittman, Ernest	Wilson, Rickie
Day, Nancy*	Huie, Thomas	Pitts, Roy	Wilson, Robert
Denney, Floyd	Hyde, Dairl	Plunkett, Mary*	Woodall, David
Doherty, Oscar	Inman, Thomas	Price, Ronnie	Wright, Margrette*

*Spouse**

“We regret any omissions”



Tickets for Statewide Annual Meeting
11:00 a.m. October 23, 2025
Bishop Park, Bryant Arkansas
\$15.00 Per Person
MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
AHTD Retirees Association
PLEASE RSVP BY OCTOBER 9

King Kat of Lonoke
is catering the event
with fish, chicken, and
all the trimmings!

District / Central Office Division _____

Name _____	Member _____	Spouse _____
Name _____	Member _____	Spouse _____
Name _____	Member _____	Spouse _____
Name _____	Member _____	Spouse _____

Address to send tickets to: _____

Phone Number: _____

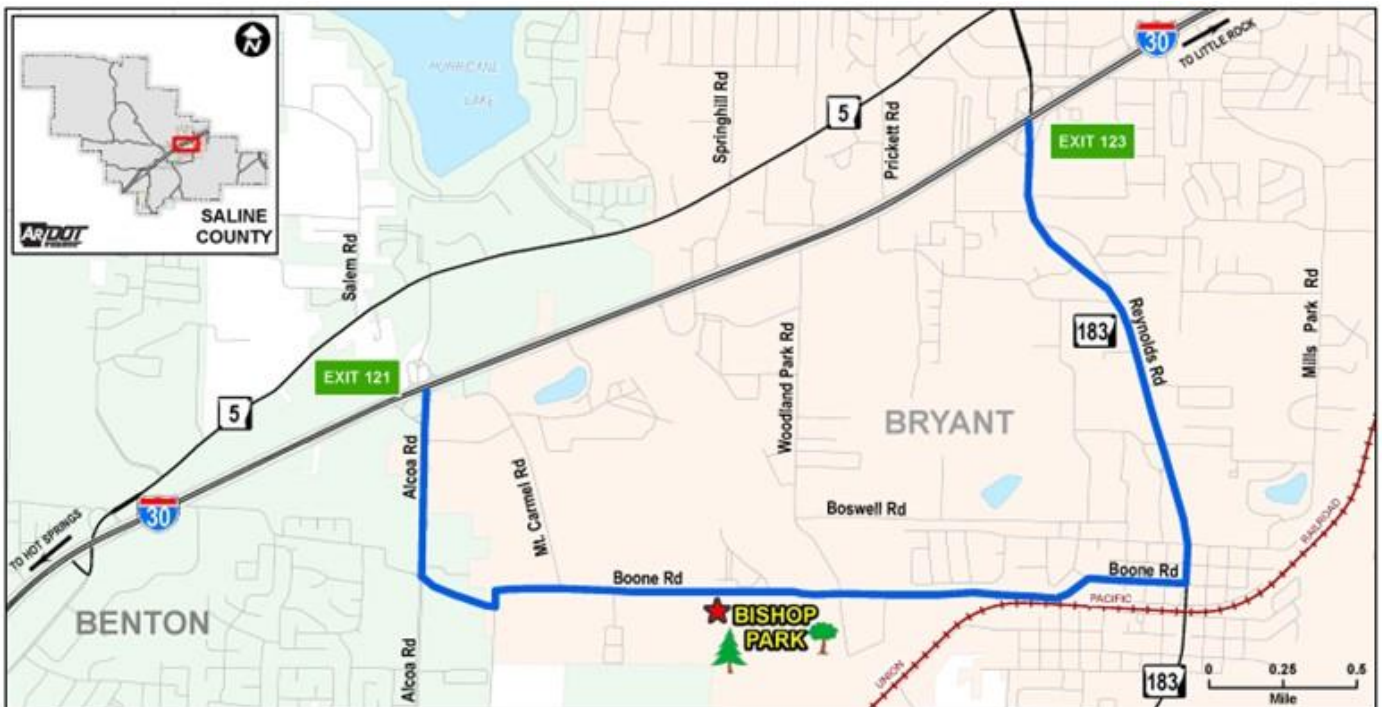
Mail this form with your check to: Ronnie and Kit Smith, 6396 Bernice Ave., Springdale, AR 72762



Our guest speaker this year is Jay Townsend, Chief of Public Affairs for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Little Rock District.

Do not miss out on food, fun, fellowship, door prizes and valuable information!!!

BRYANT COMMUNITY CENTER AT BISHOP PARK



ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED
ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION EMPLOYEES
INC.



Ronnie and Kit Smith
Secretary/Treasurer
6396 Bernice Ave
Springdale, AR 72762

Return Service Requested

Presort Standard
U. S. Postage
PAID
Permit # 645
NLR, AR
72114

We urge you to fill out the Membership Application Form below. You can turn it in to your local Chapter Secretary/Treasurer or mail application and \$15.00 annual membership dues or \$10 annual spouse dues to: **Ronnie and Kit Smith, Secretary/Treasurer, 6396 Bernice Ave., Springdale, AR 72762.** Make your check payable to: **AHTD Retirees Association.**

2026 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Retiree Name _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$15 Fee Enclosed
Spouse Name _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$10 Fee Enclosed
Phone Number (optional) _____	Year You Retired _____	Central Office Division/ District No. _____
Address _____	City _____	State _____
Street or Route & Box No.		Zip Code _____
E-Mail Address _____		