

Retirees In Touch Mike Dishnow Connects Students



Mike Dishnow retired in 1990 from the Mat-Su school district, where he was a guidance counselor at Wasilla High School the year Sarah (Heath) Palin graduated. He lived in several communities during his time in Alaska including Juneau, Galena, Anchorage, Wasilla, and Tok. He now resides in Soldiers Grove, Wisconsin.

Since retirement, Mike has continued to pursue adventures that keep him connected to education. He has been an international volunteer in Taiwan through *My Culture Connect* since 2010. The organization connects rural students from Taiwan with classrooms around the globe. In March, Mike spent four weeks volunteering in the Changhua County, Taiwan schools. During his trip, he visited 17 schools, met the Magistrate (similar to a Governor in the U.S.), Assistant Magistrate, and the Director of Education. The highlight of his journey was when he spoke to a large student assembly – an admirable finale to his trip.

Mike was instrumental in linking the rural Wisconsin De Soto School District to schools in rural Taiwan, allowing teachers and students to work directly with one another in the schools. To bridge the distance, the districts use social media, Skype, YouTube, email, videos, TV productions, and

Continued on page 2

Division Changes Focus on Excellent Service



The Division is undergoing changes to better serve you, our members. These behind-the-scenes changes are driven by the desire to offer excellent customer service through a pleasant, professional, personal, and polite participant experience.

Here's a breakdown of our quest to meet the 4P's:

Step One. Merge the Benefits and Retirement call centers into

Continued on page 3

In This Issue

Retirees in Touch: Mike Dishnow Connects Students.....	1
Division Changes: Focus on Excellent Service	2
Where Are You?	2
Seminar Schedule Now Available for Fall.....	3
Counselor Corner: Your Questions Answered.....	3
Alaska Retirement Management Board Meeting	3
Find the Division of Retirement and Benefits on Facebook.....	4

Where Are You?

Review this List from the Division of Retirement and Benefits

The Division of Retirement and Benefits would like to locate people who no longer have a correct address in our system. If you have a current address or any other information for anyone listed below, please contact Lyn Fiehler in the Accounting Section

toll-free at (800) 821-2251, ext. 5713 or (907) 465-5713.

Please note: Some people might have the same name as you or they may have a new last name due to marriage, divorce, or name change. Any information you can provide will be appreciated.

Adams, Wayne W.	Erickson, Elizabeth S.	Lawhon, James N.	Shryock, Patricia M.
Bickerstaff, Cherilynn K.	Henzl, Kelly M.	Liekoski, Kari	Silverman, Sharon
Birdsong, Kyle L.	Holbert, Carolyn D.	Millington Jr., Johnnie E.	Stevens, Colleen
Brown, Patricia A.	Holt, Richard M.	Osborne, Catherine B.	Taylor, Cindy S.
Chapman, Clark R.	Hughes, Amy	Reich, Frederick C.	Walters, Doris S.
Chevallier, Michel R.	Jacko, Kimberly A.	Rizer, Jennifer M.	Weiss, Debra K.
Durham, Benjamin W.	Lacefield, Donna	Rulon, Phillip J.	Weller, Thomas
Eades, Josiane	Lafayette, Susan J.	Sargent, Tamara S.	Zaragoza, Ernestine L.

Seminar Schedule Now Available for Fall

The Division of Retirement and Benefits offers Retirement Plan Education Seminars on a regular basis throughout the year. To see a complete list of upcoming seminars go to Alaska.gov/drb, and click on the purple “Seminars” button on the left side of the home page. Once on the seminar page, you can explore upcoming seminars in your area and you can

register online for the seminar that is right for you. To register over the phone or if you have additional questions, contact us at (800) 821-2251, in Juneau (907) 465-1443. Dates, times, and locations of seminars are subject to change or cancellation, depending on participation. ♦

Continued from page 1

Retirees in Touch: Mike Dishnow Connects Students

old-fashioned “snail-mail.” Mike and Luke Lin (the founder of *My Culture Connect*) continue to dream up different ways of bringing classrooms closer to each other as the program grows and evolves.

Students in the programs have learned many things, such as the meaning and customs behind the Chinese New Year, counting to ten in Mandarin, and writing to ten in Chinese characters. Students also learned the Lion dance, and shared their knowledge of Halloween and Christmas traditions. One thing they learned is how similar the students in Taiwan are to the students in Wisconsin. In fact, the similarities outweigh the differences by far, both in and outside of school.

Many people are surprised to see Chinese New Year’s couplets in De Soto and the names above DeSoto school district teachers’ desks written in Chinese. Mike says he never expected “such a wide variety of cultural exchanges” through the program. Luke Lin had not anticipated being

in the role of teacher in a classroom and never expected to be able to address the De Soto School Board via Skype, a key event in the development of the Taiwan-Wisconsin relationship.

Mike also produces educational videos and tapes for students and teachers to use in Taiwan. He has already completed six videos for his “Mornings with Mike” series. In the series, he offers instruction on using Web-based applications such as *Booksmart* for publishing books. *My Culture Connect* also produces televised news to help people around the world learn more about school events in Changhua, Taiwan. Mike volunteers to edit the English portions of newscasts.

Schools in rural Taiwan continue to seek partner schools through *My Culture Connect*. To find out more about getting your school involved, visit www.impactthrougheducation.us or www.impactthrougheducation.org. ♦

Counselor Corner: Your Questions Answered

Your Conversations are Safe with Retirement and Benefits



You know the saying, “What Happens in Retirement and Benefits, stays in Retirement and Benefits”—or is that Vegas? No matter—what happens here stays here!

Have you been thinking about retirement? Have you gone so far as to start some serious planning?

Here’s a comforting thought. When you call and speak with representatives from Retirement and Benefits or meet with us face-to-face, your conversations are kept strictly confidential. We will **not** notify your employer if you express any intent to terminate your employment.

When would the Division contact your employer?

If you are thinking of retiring, it is always a good idea to

verify your service and salaries prior to setting a retirement date and terminating employment to avoid any unwanted surprises when you retire. In order to verify service, we will need to contact your employer. We will only do this after you have met with our team members and you have requested verification. Otherwise, we may contact your employer after you have terminated and applied for retirement to receive the verification.

Vested Tier II members who want to have paid medical benefits before age 60 can receive them if they have 25 years of service through employment. In order to receive this benefit, it is important to have service confirmed before employment is terminated. The same applies to Tier I and II members who are retiring before normal retirement age based on service. In most cases defined benefit TRS members must have at least eight years of paid TRS service through employment to be vested and eligible for a pension. We strongly encourage you to meet with a counselor to confirm that you have met service requirements prior to terminating employment.

So tell us all your juicy plans. Your conversations are safe with us!

If you have other retirement questions you would like us to answer, make an appointment with a retirement counselor by calling toll-free (800) 821-2251 or in Juneau (907) 465-4460 or email us at doa.drb.retireme@alaska.gov. Stay tuned for Counselor Corner in the next Newsbreak. ♦

Alaska Retirement Management Board Meeting

December 6 to 7 | Anchorage Marriott

Alaska Retirement Management Board (ARMB) meetings are open to the public. Minutes of past meetings and meeting agendas can be found at alaska.gov/drb/boards/. If you have questions, contact Judy Hall, ARMB liaison, at (907) 465-3749. ♦

Continued from page 1

Division Changes Focus on Excellent Service

a single Member Services call center. Combining our two call centers began in July. This important step created more streamlined and effective communication with members.

Step Two. Cross-train call center employees to improve customer service and increase efficiency. When members place a call to the Division, our call center employees will

be trained to answer questions on the **first** call. If a question requires more in-depth information, a member will be connected with a subject matter expert within the Division.

As the Division moves forward with other improvements to customer service, we will keep you posted along the way. ♦

TRSnewsbreak

for TRS Tiers I and II members

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The Alaska Division of Retirement and Benefits is now on Facebook. "Like" our page to stay up to date on the latest happenings at the Division. You'll find posts on upcoming events, seminars, benefits fairs, and tips for planning your retirement.

The page can be found at
www.facebook.com/AlaskaDRB

