

FUNDAMENTALS

IMRF

RETIRED MEMBER EDITION

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“You are the difference” in 2015 and throughout your retirement years

IMRF is partnering with Generations Serving Generations (GSG) to support and promote “2015: The Year of the Volunteer.” Led by GSG, “The Year of the Volunteer” is a statewide initiative that will celebrate the accomplishments of Illinois volunteers, challenge Illinois residents to get involved in their communities, and educate those who rise to meet that challenge about the volunteer opportunities that are available to them.

In giving, we receive

Generativity, the term that scientists use to describe the capacity to give of oneself, is one of the most studied traits in science, according to *Why Good Things Happen to Good People* by Stephen Post, Ph.D. and Jill

Neimark. The book’s examination of existing research in this area found that across income levels, neighborhoods with the highest levels of volunteerism had less crime and happier residents. The research they studied also showed surprising benefits to the individual volunteer, including increased longevity and better health, along with less tangible but very real benefits to the spirit.

“Retirement is more than getting a check from IMRF. It’s an opportunity for individuals to build a legacy,” said Louis Kosiba, Executive Director of IMRF and a member of GSG’s Leadership

Team. “When you’re in retirement, if you’re physically healthy, you have the opportunity to help others, which pays back to the individual in a better feeling of self-worth and more engagement in the community.”

Despite the benefits to individuals and the world around them, the recently published *Volunteering in America* report for 2014 shows that volunteerism is on the decline nationally. In Illinois, only 26.7% of the population, or 2.57 million

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From the Executive Director:

My Life—Book II

Congratulations—you have survived the best and worst that life has brought your way. The rigors and responsibilities of adult life are largely in the past. With retirement there are new challenges and opportunities.



Louis Kosiba
IMRF Executive Director

In Illinois, 2015 has been designated the “Year of the Volunteer.” This is a year-long effort to improve the volunteer structure already in place throughout the state. It also recognizes that volunteers make the difference in their communities. If you currently volunteer, I want to personally “thank you” for your good work. If you have not been asked to volunteer, I want to personally ask you to consider volunteering. There are people and organizations in your village or town which need a little help—help which you may be uniquely qualified to give.

In this issue of *Fundamentals*, you will learn more about volunteerism and how to contact organizations needing your time and expertise. You have skills and experience which can benefit others. The trick is to match your skill sets to the right opportunity.

What’s in it for you? I think this is an opportunity to write “My Life—Book II”. Now, more than in the past when you had other responsibilities, you can focus on what you want to do. You can build new friends; stay socially engaged, enjoy “working” by helping others. The medical evidence already

exists that volunteering will lead to a longer, healthier, more physically independent life.

Perhaps more importantly, it helps you build a legacy—to be remembered and cherished by friends and family for who you are and what you have contributed. It gives you an opportunity to do something worthwhile and important for yourself and others.

Please follow through with the resources IMRF will be identifying in this issue and future issues. You get to “redo” your life building on your experiences.

“Now, more than in the past when you had other responsibilities, you can focus on what you want to do. You can build new friends; stay socially engaged, enjoy ‘working’ by helping others.”

You deserve the retirement you earned through hard work. But, you still have an opportunity to make that retirement “sing” to provide you with joy and purpose. You do get to write “Book II”—you are the difference. ■

2015 IMRF Legislative Agenda

Each year, the IMRF Board decides which legislative proposals it will pursue through the Illinois General Assembly over the course of the coming year. These agenda items must be introduced by a legislator as a House or Senate bill and do not yet have a sponsor.

In 2015, IMRF will put forward the following proposals:

- Correct a reference in Section 7-141.1 of the Illinois Pension Code.
- Allow Board decisions to be made at the committee level, rather than requiring a formal Board meeting. This would not change the number of votes required for passage.
- Reduce the time required before IMRF can begin the offset process with the treasurer or comptroller from 90 days delinquent to 60 days delinquent. ■



IMRF Book Club—Book #5

Drop Dead Healthy

by A.J. Jacobs

Feedback due date: **April 3, 2015**

Send your feedback to:

Louis Kosiba, IMRF Executive Director

(We welcome all feedback, whether by email, written letter, or conversation on our discussion boards.)

Email: louiskosiba-executivedirector@imrf.org

Letter: IMRF, 2211 York Road, Suite 500
Oak Brook, IL, 60523-2337

In *Drop Dead Healthy*, the author of *The Year of Living Biblically* and *The Know-It-All* embarks on a new quest: perfect health. The result takes the reader on a hilarious journey through a year of his experiments with fad diets, exercise regimens, and the most extreme health advice, because as Jacobs explains, “only by exploring the limits can you find the perfect middle ground.” Along the way, he explains how the body works, and how it betrays us in our attempts to achieve not just short-term but long-term survival. ■



A few ways you can lend a helping hand

If volunteering isn't an option for you, or if you're looking for ways to help out in addition to the activities you already engage in, you can make a difference in areas beyond a formal volunteer position. "This can be a 'do it yourself' program. You can make a difference in your community; you can make a difference to yourself. There are mutual rewards here," said IMRF Executive Director Louis Kosiba.

- **Pass on your professional knowledge.** "Retirees can help young people learn how to read, how to start businesses, how to work in a professional environment."
- **Be sensitive to the needs of your environment.** "If you're a member of a church, is there someone who needs a ride to church? Is there someone who needs a ride home? Do you have nieces or nephews or grandchildren that you can spend some time with?"
- **Help a child—or an adult—learn to read.** "Illinois has a significant problem with people not graduating from high school, and in today's society, if you can't read well and at a level technical enough to find a good-paying job, you're almost doomed to be lower income and always struggling."

people, volunteered their time in 2013, ranking Illinois 26th among the 50 states and Washington DC.

However, those relative few made a big difference. "Just 2.57 million people gave \$7.2 billion in service, so if we can increase that number only a few percentage points, we're talking about hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars of impact," observed Scott McFarland, Executive Director of the Serve Illinois Commission.

GSG, a project led by the Illinois Department on Aging and the Serve Illinois Commission, has taken on the task of communicating the importance of civic engagement to retirees, educators, employers, and the public. "IMRF learned about Generations Serving Generations several years ago, and it occurred to us that it would be a natural partnership," Kosiba said. "IMRF has a pool of retirees that, if they want to, might have time to share their experience and expertise and wisdom with others, and similarly, to receive the experience and expertise and wisdom of other individuals. I don't think any of us want retirement to be the final chapter, so to speak. For individuals it becomes an opportunity to grow, to learn, to engage in life, to enjoy themselves, and to write not a last chapter, but a new book."

The broader initiative

Jane Angelis, director of GSG, envisions "The Year of the Volunteer" as a time to celebrate current volunteers and encourage new ones, but also as a time to build infrastructure for better communication between service organizations.

"Right now there's a lot of people doing the same thing in parallel, right next to each other. The big goal is to do a better job of connecting volunteer efforts throughout the state," Angelis said.

She hopes that serve.illinois.gov and its volunteer search engine will play an increasing role in bringing



volunteers and service projects together. GSG will continue working with the Illinois General Assembly to develop public policy that supports the organization's overall efforts. That may take the form of a Senate Forum, or "we may have a bunch of different hearings and projects all over the state to emphasize the lessons that we're learning," Angelis said.

How IMRF will contribute

The theme of "The Year of the Volunteer" is "You are the

difference." Over the course of 2015, IMRF will celebrate the ways you make a difference by asking IMRF members and retirees to share their stories of how they have served in their communities. Seven volunteers will be profiled, with one winning spotlight story to be unveiled in December. We will share their stories on social media, in this newsletter, and the "Year of the Volunteer" subsection of our website at www.imrf.org/volunteer-stories. For the

spotlight story, the winning volunteer's service organization will receive \$1,000 donated by IMRF staff.

You can find Kosiba's video message kicking off IMRF's participation in "The Year of the Volunteer" at www.imrf.org. Additionally, you can help IMRF learn more about volunteerism among its membership by filling out an initial survey at www.imrf.org/volunteering.

To tell us how your volunteer work has made an impact in your community, write to us at volunteer@imrf.org. (See page 6 for more details.) We look forward to hearing how you have made a difference.

"Your life doesn't end when you stop working. There's a whole world out there that wants you and is looking for you, and that's the stage you get to play on."

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Share your story of service



Tell us how you make a difference!

- IMRF will highlight the volunteer efforts of seven members or retirees on social media and the “Year of the Volunteer” subsection of our website at www.imrf.org/volunteer-stories, with one winning volunteer spotlight story to be unveiled in December.
- The volunteer featured in our spotlight story will **win \$1,000 for their service organization!**

Tell us your story! Write to us at volunteer@imrf.org!

How you can join in

Aspiring volunteers can begin their journey of service by visiting the volunteer search portal at serve.illinois.gov. There you can search for your location and area of interest, and the search engine will return local volunteer opportunities that have registered with serve.illinois.gov.

“Any survey that comes out, you’ll see that the two top reasons why somebody does not volunteer is either because they did not know where to go to volunteer, or no one asked them to volunteer,” McFarland said. “Well, we’re asking everyone to volunteer, because right now in Illinois there are at least 10,000 open volunteer

opportunities at any given time: 10,000 organizations, 10,000 projects that are looking for volunteers and don’t have enough to fill what they’re trying to do. It’s a matter of people searching out those organizations, finding one that fits them, and volunteering their time.”

“We want our retiree group to know that IMRF respects the work that they did, respects their contributions to society, and wants to help them live a fuller, happier retirement,” Kosiba said. “I’m reminded of my mother. She retired at a relatively young age, at age 60. She was a blue collar worker, doing dirty and hard work. She felt that she earned her retirement and

it was opportunity for her to relax. I didn’t recognize it at the time, but I have subsequently come to understand that she probably went through a period of depression after retirement, because she missed the social interaction, she missed the intellectual demands of the position, she missed the challenge, she missed being needed.

“Your life doesn’t end when you stop working. One definition of who you are ends, but there’s a lot more to you than just the job that you performed and the people you knew when you worked. There’s a whole world out there that wants you and is looking for you, and that’s the stage you get to play on.” ■

Defending the IMRF pension model on *Chicago Tonight*

IMRF Executive Director Louis Kosiba recently joined a panel discussion on Illinois pensions on *Chicago Tonight*, a news program that airs on local PBS affiliate WTTW. The episode in which the discussion appeared broadcast on January 8.

Dubbed “The Great Pension Debate,” the segment addressed the underfunding of the Illinois pension systems and explored possible strategies for reducing their unfunded liabilities. Kosiba described why IMRF’s pension model has been so successful and sustainable while other systems have struggled. He also explained why switching from pensions to 401(k)s would not solve the problem. ■



Like our new look?

Do you have thoughts on the new look and feel of the *Fundamentals* newsletter or www.imrf.org? Share them with Communications Manager John Krupa at johnkrupa-communications@imrf.org.

Next issue...

- More about the upcoming 2015 Annuitant Trustee election.
- A look into the day-to-day duties of an IMRF Trustee.
- How to run for the Board of Trustees.

See you next time!



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is published quarterly for active members of IMRF under age 40.

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1-800-ASK-IMRF (275-4673) • www.imrf.org

Got Member Access?

Get ready for 2015 retiree workshops with a Member Access account!

We are currently planning two types of retiree workshops to be held in late summer/early fall 2015:

- Lifestyle workshops taught by educators at the University of Illinois extension.
- Financial workshops taught by financial educator and speaker Karen Chan.

Seating will be limited and workshops can fill up fast. While you can register for a workshop online or by phone, registering online through Member Access is the best way to register. Member Access users have early access to retiree workshop locations and registration, and your spot is reserved immediately when you register online.

Sign up for an account today at www.imrf.org and be ready to reserve your spot! ■