

FUNDAMENTALS

Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund

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“You are the difference” in 2015 and beyond

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. Their research 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.

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“Volunteering gives you a perspective on the needs of others. It helps you develop respect and empathy. It helps you develop courage. These are tools we can use throughout our lives,” said Louis Kosiba, Executive Director of IMRF and a member of GSG’s Leadership Team.

Despite the benefits to both the individual and the community, 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 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. “The young can help the old, and the old can help the young. Retirees can help young people learn how to read, how to start businesses, how to work in a professional environment. Young people can help older people learn about social media and the Internet and using current technology.”

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.

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A few ways you can lend a helping hand

“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.

- 1. Join a charity or service organization.** “There are many, many people who have joined service organizations while they’re actively employed,” Kosiba said. “Lions International, Rotary Clubs and Kiwanis come to mind. There is a place for you within your community to help.”
- 2. Pass on your professional knowledge.** Seasoned professionals can do younger workers a great service by helping them learn how to start businesses or how to work in a professional environment.
- 3. Be sensitive to the needs of your environment.** “Is there an older couple who lives in your building? Is there an older couple who lives down the street? You can offer to shovel snow for them. 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?”
- 4. 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.”

“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 a \$1,000 donation from an anonymous IMRF staff member.

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. We look forward to hearing how you have made a difference.

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.” ■

Take 15 minutes and be confident in your future

When you receive your 2014 Personal Statement of Benefits, take a moment to look it over. The accuracy of your account is important to your future—resolving a problem now may save you time and aggravation when you're ready to retire. Please make especially sure to review the front and back pages of your statement for accuracy. Also make a point of reviewing your beneficiary information (found inside) to make sure it is up to date and reflects your wishes.

New! Your Member ID

Your Personal Statement of Benefits also includes your new Member Identification Number. To protect your information, you can use this number in place of your Social

Security Number when completing paperwork for IMRF.

When are statements sent?

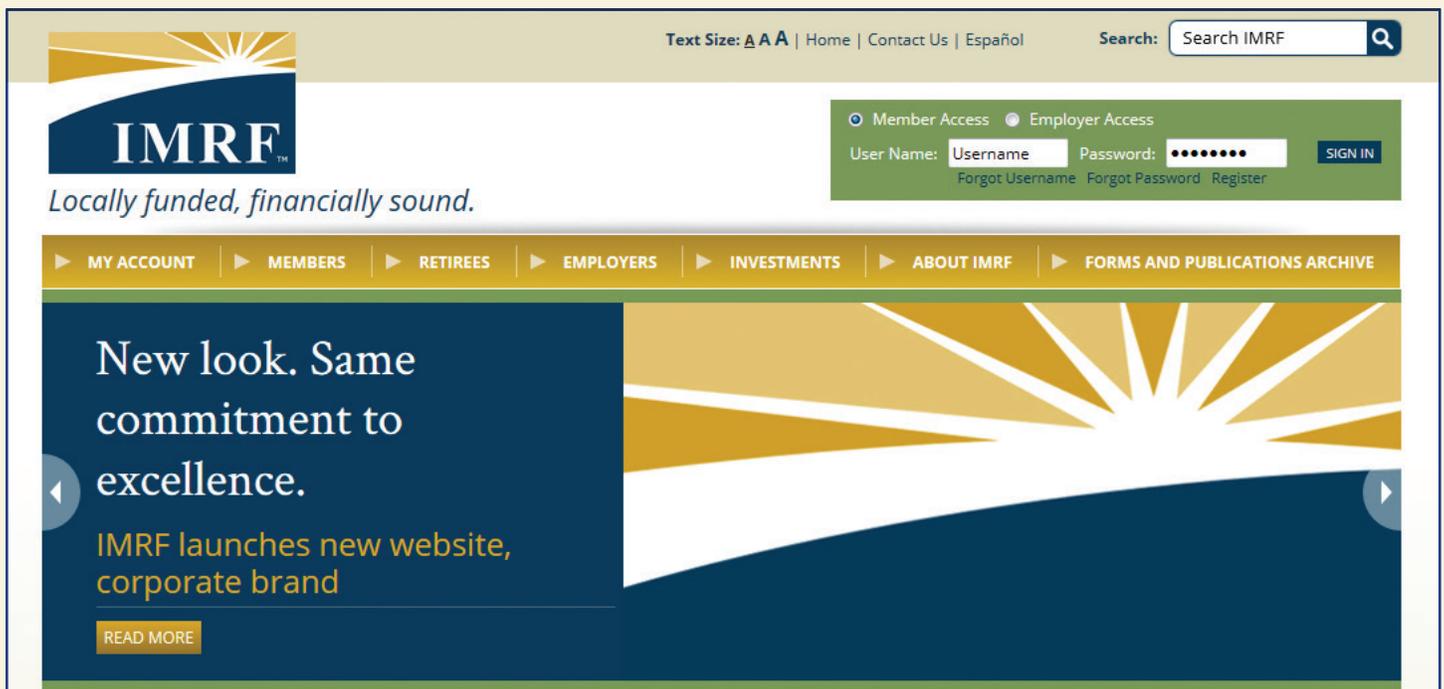
IMRF mails member statements to inactive members in two batches, on March 16 and March 23. You should receive yours in late March or early April. If you already received your statement but didn't have a chance to look at it when it arrived, you can find it in your Member Access account by clicking on "My Account," then "Documents," and then "Member Statements."

What's on your statement?

Your annual Personal Statement of Benefits provides detailed information about the benefits that may be available to you as an



inactive IMRF member, such as retirement and survivor benefits, as well as whether you are eligible for a separation refund. This statement includes an overview of past earnings, contributions, and employers. ■



The screenshot shows the IMRF website homepage. At the top right, there is a search bar with the text "Search IMRF" and a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar is a navigation menu with links for "Text Size: A A A", "Home", "Contact Us", and "Español". The IMRF logo is prominently displayed on the left, with the tagline "Locally funded, financially sound." below it. To the right of the logo is a login section with radio buttons for "Member Access" (selected) and "Employer Access". Below these are input fields for "User Name" (containing "Username") and "Password" (containing "*****"), a "SIGN IN" button, and links for "Forgot Username", "Forgot Password", and "Register". A horizontal navigation bar contains links for "MY ACCOUNT", "MEMBERS", "RETIREES", "EMPLOYERS", "INVESTMENTS", "ABOUT IMRF", and "FORMS AND PUBLICATIONS ARCHIVE". The main content area features a large banner with a sunburst graphic and the text "New look. Same commitment to excellence." and "IMRF launches new website, corporate brand". A "READ MORE" button is located at the bottom left of the banner.

What do you think of 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.



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Defending the IMRF pension model on *Chicago Tonight*

IMRF Executive Director Louis Kosiba recently participated in two panel discussions about Illinois pensions on *Chicago Tonight*, a news program that airs on local PBS affiliate WTTW.



The episode featuring the first discussion 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.

On February 19, Kosiba went on the show a second time to participate in a panel discussion of Governor Bruce Rauner’s 2015 Budget proposal, which aims to change the benefit structure of the state-funded retirement systems. While Governor Rauner’s plan does not include IMRF, Kosiba regularly speaks on issues involving the public pension landscape. ■