

# FUNDAMENTALS

IMRF

ACTIVE MEMBER OVER 40 EDITION

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FALL 2016

## AgeOptions workshops help older adults manage their health

According to the National Institute on Aging, approximately 85% of older adults have one ongoing health condition, and 60% have at least two. Oak Park-based non-profit AgeOptions is working to provide a way for those who are dealing with this challenge to manage their conditions and thrive.

Because IMRF cares deeply about the health of its members and retirees, it has informally partnered with AgeOptions to spread the word about the organization's no-cost workshops for older adults with ongoing health conditions.

These workshops aim to help participants:

- Learn strategies to better manage their conditions.
- Benefit from the knowledge and companionship of other people in similar positions.

### An evidence-based approach

AgeOptions offers two types of no-cost workshops:

- *Take Charge of Your Health* (including a Spanish-language version, Tomando Control de su Salud)
- *Take Charge of Your Diabetes*

An evidence-based program developed by the Stanford Patient Education Research Center, these workshops offer information and self-management skills for older adults with diabetes, or other ongoing health conditions, and their caregivers.

Research shows that participants in these

workshops are hospitalized less and maintain a higher degree of healthy eating, physical activity, and communication with their families for up to a year after attending the program.

### Adapting to the challenges of an ongoing health condition

Maria Oquendo-Scharneck was inspired to become the program's coordinator due to her experience of growing up with her mother's poorly managed diabetes, which limited her mother's life and contributed to her premature death at age 70.

"I saw how devastating it could be to be overwhelmed with all the things that happen to you when you have a chronic condition," Oquendo-Scharneck said. "So to be able to help other people learn things that could improve their ability to be more independent was something that meant a lot."

Elaine Danner, a workshop facilitator and former participant in the Take Charge of Your Diabetes program, says that many people who enter the program struggle with negative emotions around their diagnosis. "The three biggest issues



**TAKE  
CHARGE**  
of your health

are fear, anger, and trying to dispel internalized misinformation," Danner said. "They've seen a lot of bad outcomes; those are the ones that get people's attention. But they rarely see the people who are living and striving and moving on."

### Offering help and hope

In the process of coordinating the program, Oquendo-Scharneck trained to become a facilitator for both types of workshops. She was quickly encouraged when she saw how the program was helping those connected with it.

One participant with diabetes and high blood pressure had never been able to figure out how to make exercise part of his daily routine. The workshop provided

*continued on page 2*

For a calendar of upcoming Take Charge of Your Health workshops, visit:  
[www.ageoptions.org/TakeChargeofYourHealth.html](http://www.ageoptions.org/TakeChargeofYourHealth.html)



## Tips for managing your ongoing health conditions

**Get educated about your condition.** “Ask questions about your health, about your medication, about how you feel,” Oquendo-Scharneck said. “It is as important how you feel about what’s going on with your body as much as what your doctor tells you. It’s becoming a champion for your own health.”

**Learn about nutrition and healthy eating.** “The impact that healthy eating can have on any condition is very significant, so it’s important that you look at what you’re eating and how you feel when you’re eating it,” Oquendo-Scharneck said. She recommends meeting with a dietician or nutritionist at your local hospital to review your diet and make modifications if needed.

**Figure out an exercise plan that works for you.** “Exercise for where you’re comfortable,” Oquendo-Scharneck said. “I’ve met people who felt like they couldn’t exercise, because maybe they’ve had arthritis or other issues, who started just making sure they walk the course of their house or their apartment.”

**Find a health care team you trust.** According to Danner, it’s critical to have a team of health care professionals “that you’re comfortable with and have confidence in.”

**Enlist your support network.** “You need to reach out to other people for support and encouragement,” Danner said.

**Establish habits that promote your health.** “If you do nothing, yes, your life is going to change and become increasingly more limited,” Oquendo-Scharneck said. “But daily doing something to say ‘how do I keep myself healthy?’ will help you avoid eventualities.”

*continued from page 1*

him with a framework to explore different types of exercise. By the fourth session, he had discovered that walking in the morning and stretching in the evening before bed helped him feel better and sleep better, and also kept his blood pressure more stable. Enthused and hopeful, he told Oquendo-Scharneck that now he couldn’t imagine not exercising this way.

A 70-year-old participant at another workshop already seemed to be doing everything right—exercising regularly, eating properly, and regularly seeing her doctor. But after the session on medication, she began to wonder if the reason she had been feeling unusually poorly was related to a change in one of her prescriptions’ appearance.

She went to the pharmacist, and upon learning that the coating had changed, she arranged to go back to the previous version of her medication.

Almost immediately, she started feeling better. Over the course of the workshop, she had learned that by paying attention to her symptoms and bringing up concerns, she was becoming an equal partner in her own care.

“She was overwhelmed by the fact that she suddenly was empowered to ask questions,” Oquendo-Scharneck said.

It’s not only participants that benefit from the program. One facilitator-in-training said that when she was diagnosed with diabetes, she was sure that the end was near. But upon going through the training, “she said that for the first time in a couple of years, she didn’t feel hopeless,” Oquendo-Scharneck said. “She felt as though she could live a regular, good, full life—that she could do things that other people could, and this wasn’t a death sentence for her.”

Family members are encouraged to attend in order to learn how best to support their loved one. “Once there was a sister pair—one sister had diabetes and the other one was a chef,” Danner said. “The chef sister was going to learn all about this and help her sister. It was really just so sweet.”

### The workshop experience

The six- to eight-week interactive workshop series meets weekly for 2-½ hours. Each workshop is conducted by two trained facilitators—one of them a lay individual and one of them a healthcare professional or social worker—who have a personal connection to a chronic health condition, whether firsthand or through a loved one. Workshops are tailored to the community in which they take place—for example, rural, Spanish-speaking, or people with disabilities.

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## Becoming a workshop facilitator

Oquendo-Scharneck says facilitators should have “at least a 10<sup>th</sup>-grade literacy level, feel comfortable around groups, and have a personal connection with a condition.”

The training takes place over four full days and is delivered by two master trainers who have gone through the same training but at a higher level. “It’s treated like a mock workshop,” Danner said. “It’s very easy and straightforward.”

Facilitators in training receive a detailed manual outlining each activity. “It’s a relatively scripted process,” Oquendo-Scharneck said. “There are places where people can use their own words, but because it’s an evidence-based program, the content is very specific.”

After facilitators successfully complete two practice teaching sessions, they work with AgeOptions to set up the program at locations where they think people would benefit from it, like local churches, libraries, or community centers. How often facilitators present workshops and how far they’re willing to travel is up to the individual.

**To learn more, visit [www.ageoptions.org](http://www.ageoptions.org) and click “Volunteer,” or contact the organization at [takecharge@ageoptions.org](mailto:takecharge@ageoptions.org) or 800-699-9043.**

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Topics covered by the Take Charge of Your Health workshop include healthy eating and nutrition, physical activity and exercise, how to work with your healthcare providers and healthcare organization, medication responsibilities and guidelines, communicating with your support system, and dealing with negative emotions.

The Take Charge of Your Diabetes workshop covers the above topics, but also menu planning, good carbs, good proteins, blood sugar monitoring, foot care, and what to do when your blood sugar goes up (or down).

Participants learn behavioral techniques that include:

- *Weekly action planning.* Participants set a health goal for the week, then talk with others about how it worked for them and how to modify it.
- *Feedback and problem solving.* Participants note what in their life has changed that might be negatively affecting how they feel and figure out what to do about it.
- *Brainstorming.* Participants discuss challenges and share actions they have taken that helped them feel better, whether physically or emotionally, such as writing or dancing.
- *Decision-making.* Participants develop a practical framework for making and implementing decisions to improve their health.

### **The power of community**

Not only do the workshops offer tools for making healthier choices, they provide a community of people in the same situation to help them succeed.

“Sometimes people just haven’t had the opportunity to talk to other people who are living daily with ongoing health conditions. You get overwhelmed because you’re in your own world,” Oquendo-Scharneck said. “But when you’re with people, looking for solutions and learning about how to be better, it gives you more inspiration and motivation to stay healthier.” ■

## *From the Executive Director:*

# The benefits of mentoring

*Because I work for a public pension fund, I think about its effect on members, employers, and taxpayers on a daily basis. Because I am over age 40 (way over), I also think about the importance of Social Security and my IMRF pension once in retirement.*



Louis W. Kosiba  
IMRF Executive Director

### **How members think about IMRF**

I am guilty of having a general impression that most IMRF members think about the relevance and importance of their IMRF pension in the same way I do, but, of course, that is not true. How (or why) you think about your membership in IMRF is often a function of age.

I mentioned age 40 (above) because that is when a “retirement benefit” began to feel tangible to me. It is when I “buckled down” and thought it might actually happen. I am not working for retirement, but I understood once I retired there would be a financial safety net for me through IMRF and that I needed to supplement it.

### **A lack of understanding**

So what does all this have to do with mentoring? I’m afraid many younger or new employees at your place of employment simply do not understand the role of IMRF in their compensation package.

Additionally, they may not understand how saving a little extra can result, over time, in a meaningful income once they stop working. They may need a little nudge in their thinking.

So, if you ever find yourself in a conversation with a younger or newer coworker about IMRF, here are some suggestions:

- Encourage them to look at their annual member statement and compare it to prior years (watch the benefits grow).
- Refer them to the IMRF website ([www.imrf.org](http://www.imrf.org)) for information about their benefits or suggest they call 1-800-ASK-IMRF (275-4673).
- Remind them of the Voluntary Additional Contributions plan, which pays 7.5% interest.
- Tell them about IMRF’s “Your Glass is Half Full” workshop for young and new members (see [www.imrf.org/member-workshops](http://www.imrf.org/member-workshops) for more information).
- Recommend they attend a pre-retirement workshop at least 10 years before retirement. (Too often attendees say they wish they had done it sooner.)
- Suggest they read this newsletter once it arrives at home (or suggest their spouse read it, too).

Knowledge can be powerful, and a little nudge from a friend and mentor can be mutually rewarding. ■

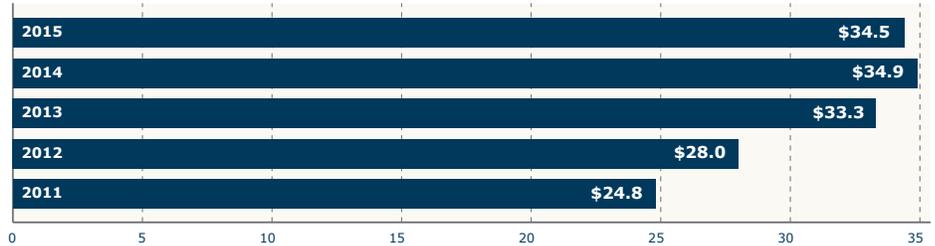
*“I am guilty of having a general impression that most IMRF members think about the relevance and importance of their IMRF pension in the same way I do, but, of course, that is not true. How (or why) you think about your membership in IMRF is often a function of age.”*

# IMRF finances maintain their strength

Fiduciary net position up \$9.7 billion over the past five years, despite 2015's underperforming global market.

## FIDUCIARY NET POSITION

IMRF's fiduciary net position—total assets minus liabilities—was \$34.5 billion as of December 31, 2015, about a 1% decrease from 2014. Most of the decrease is attributable to flat 2015 investment returns. Over the last five years, IMRF's fiduciary net position has increased by \$9.7 billion.



## FUNDING STATUS

IMRF's funding status is a key indicator of its financial health. It reflects the percentage of benefit promises that IMRF has assets to pay. IMRF strives toward full funding because it guarantees that the system can meet its obligations. Full funding is also most cost effective for taxpayers.

One method to determine funding status is market funding status. This describes the percentage of assets IMRF has to pay all current and projected benefits, as of a specific date in time. As of December 31, 2015, IMRF was 87.4% funded on a market basis. This decreased from 2014 to 2015 due to flat investment returns.

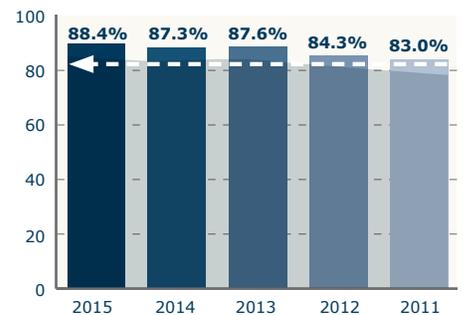
Another method to determine funding status is the actuarial funding status. Under this method, independent actuaries determine the actuarial value of IMRF assets using a "smoothing" technique that recognizes investment gains and losses over a five-year period. As of December 31, 2015, IMRF was 88.4% percent funded on an actuarial basis. It increased from 2014 to 2015 due to the recognition of prior years' investment gains.

MARKET FUNDING STATUS: PAST 5 YEARS



7.2 PERCENTAGE POINT GAIN FROM 2011-2015

ACTUARIAL FUNDING STATUS: PAST 5 YEARS



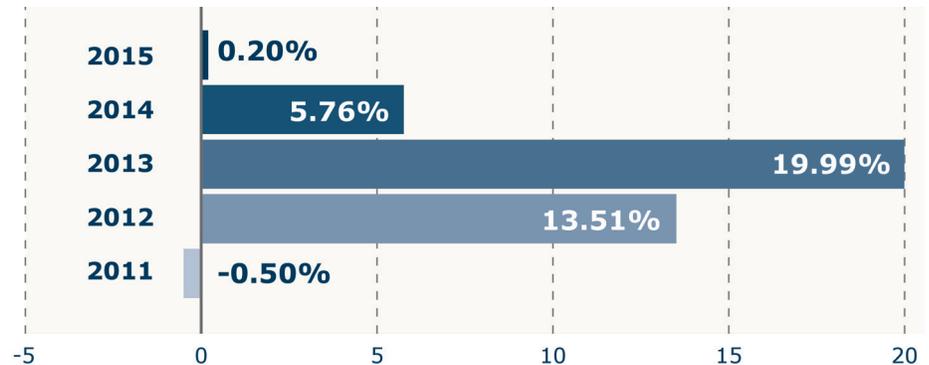
5.4% PERCENTAGE POINT GAIN FROM 2011-2015

## INVESTMENTS

The 2015 total fund return of 0.20%, after investment management fees, reflected the underperformance of markets globally. International and U.S. equities, in addition to fixed income, produced flat to negative returns, essentially neutralizing strong gains from IMRF's real estate holdings and alternative investments.

While IMRF fell short of achieving its 7.5% long-term investment goal during 2015, performance over the last five years has met expectations. IMRF's five-year, annualized, total fund return is 7.54%, after paying investment management fees.

TOTAL FUND RETURNS FOR THE PAST 5 YEARS



# Special Employee Trustee election to be held this fall

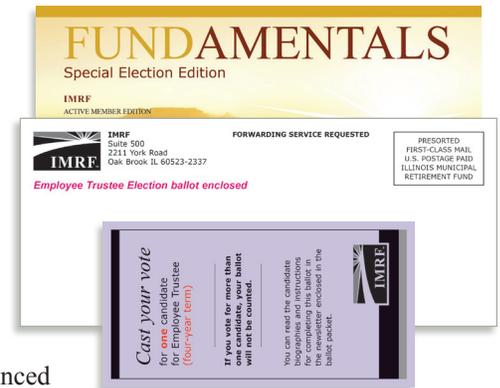
IMRF is planning a special Trustee election this fall due to the retirement of Employee Trustee John Piechocinski.

IMRF is scheduled to hold two Trustee elections this fall:

- Active members like you will elect one Employee Trustee for a four-year partial term, which will run from January 1, 2017, through December 31, 2020.
- IMRF employers will elect one Executive Trustee for a five-year term, which will run from January 1, 2017, through December 31, 2021.

If there is more than one candidate for Employee Trustee, you will receive a ballot this fall. It will arrive in an envelope with your Winter issue of *Fundamentals*, which will include voting procedures and candidate biographies. Election results will be announced at [www.imrf.org](http://www.imrf.org) after the December Board meeting and in next year's Spring issue of *Fundamentals*. If there is only one candidate, the Board will confirm that candidate as your new Trustee; their confirmation will be announced in the Winter issue of *Fundamentals*.

IMRF is governed by an eight-member Board of Trustees. Three are elected by actively participating IMRF members like you, four by IMRF employers, and one by IMRF annuitants (retirees). The IMRF Board remains the only public pension fund board in Illinois that is fully elected by its membership; IMRF has no appointed or *ex-officio* trustees. ■



## Trustee John Piechocinski retires

IMRF is proud to thank outgoing Employee Trustee, John Piechocinski, for his 5-1/2 years of service to the Board of Trustees.

Piechocinski retired on June 30, 2016, from the Plainfield Community Consolidated School District. As a result, the law requires he step down from his Employee Trustee position. Piechocinski exits the Board after having served for 5-1/2 years.



During his tenure, Piechocinski served on multiple committees and held all three Board officer positions (serving as Board President in 2015). His work supported the development of IMRF's 2014-2016 Strategic Plan, investment strategies that grew the portfolio by more than \$9 billion, the introduction of new customer-service technologies, the replacement of IMRF's website, and more.

At Piechocinski's last Board meeting in May, he said that he regretted having to step down from the position.

"I will miss working with the Board and the staff at IMRF," Piechocinski said. "I enjoyed my time representing all members at IMRF."

The Board has appointed Alex Wallace, an employee of Oswego Community Unit School District 308, to fill the vacancy effective July 1 through the end of 2016. IMRF active members will elect a candidate to fill the remainder of Piechocinski's term, which runs through December 31, 2020. ■

## IMRF needs you!

**Interested in running for the Board of Trustees? IMRF is accepting nominating petitions August 1 through September 15.**

First and foremost, serving as an IMRF Trustee is about trust. Trustees are fiduciaries responsible for the governance and oversight of IMRF. They are obliged to act solely for the benefit of IMRF members and beneficiaries.



Candidates for Trustee should be willing to devote at least five hours to preparing for each Board meeting and meeting of individual committees in which they participate. Trustees must prepare by reading reports from IMRF's Chief Financial Officer, financial and investment publications, and a variety of other materials. They must also undergo at least eight hours of training per year.

### To run for Employee Trustee, you must:

- Have accumulated at least eight years of IMRF service credit as of December 31, 2016;
- Gather at least 350 signatures from those who participated in IMRF during July 2016; and
- Submit your nominating petition at IMRF's Oak Brook or Springfield office between August 1, 2016, and September 15, 2016.

Download nominating petitions, procedures, and everything you'll need to run for Employee Trustee at [www.imrf.org/employee-trustee-election](http://www.imrf.org/employee-trustee-election)!

# Learn critical facts about IMRF's retirement benefits by attending a Pre-Retirement Workshop this fall!



It's almost September, and there are a limited number of workshops left this year. Register online today through your Member Access account (the best and fastest way) or by calling IMRF. These workshops can benefit you no matter how close you are to retirement. We recommend attending a workshop as soon as you're vested, then a second time five years before your earliest possible retirement date, and once more when you're ready to retire. But the closer you are to retirement, the more important it is that you attend. Many first-time attendees tell us they wish they'd gone to one sooner.

## Workshop topics include:

- How and when to file for retirement.
- How earnings and service affect your retirement benefit calculations.
- How to purchase past service credit.

## Who should attend?

- Vested members who want to learn about benefits.
- Members within five years of retirement.
- Spouses, partners, or others who assist with your retirement planning.

## 2016 Pre-Retirement Workshop Dates and Locations

### September

DATE	LOCATION	START TIME
(Thurs) 9/01	Woodstock	9 AM
(Tues) 9/06	Makanda	5 PM
(Wed) 9/07	Aurora	9 AM
(Wed) 9/07	Peoria	6 PM
(Thurs) 9/08	Collinsville	9 AM
(Thurs) 9/15	Carol Stream	1 PM
(Thurs) 9/15	Bolingbrook	5 PM
(Sat) 9/17	Belleville	9:30 AM
(Tues) 9/20	Yorkville	1 PM
(Wed) 9/21	Rockford	9 AM
(Tues) 9/27	Beach Park	9 AM
(Tues) 9/27	Marion	1 PM
(Wed) 9/28	Wheaton	9 AM

### October

DATE	LOCATION	START TIME
(Tues) 10/04	Princeton	9 AM
(Wed) 10/05	Geneseo	9 AM
(Thurs) 10/06	Champaign	9 AM
(Wed) 10/12	Oak Lawn	10 AM
(Tues) 10/25	Effingham	9 AM
(Tues) 10/25	Elk Grove Village	1 PM
(Tues) 10/25	Bloomington	5 PM
(Tues) 10/25	Moline	5:30 PM

(Thurs) 10/27	Kankakee	1 PM
(Thurs) 10/27	Tinley Park	1 PM

### November

DATE	LOCATION	START TIME
(Thurs) 11/03	Mt. Vernon	1 PM
(Sat) 11/05	Peoria	9 AM
(Wed) 11/09	Danville	1 PM
(Tues) 11/15	Elmhurst	5 PM
(Wed) 11/16	Aurora	9 AM
(Sat) 11/19	Palatine	10 AM
(Wed) 11/30	Decatur	5:30 PM

### December

DATE	LOCATION	START TIME
(Thurs) 12/01	Oak Park	5 PM
(Sat) 12/03	Rockford	9 AM
(Mon) 12/05	Mt. Prospect	1 PM
(Tues) 12/06	Robinson	5 PM
(Thurs) 12/08	Naperville	5 PM
(Sat) 12/10	Springfield	9 AM
(Tues) 12/13	Tinley Park	9 AM
(Sat) 12/17	Moline	9 AM

Additional dates and locations will be added throughout the year at [www.imrf.org](http://www.imrf.org)

# Is an optional Personal Benefits Review right for you?

Do you have a particular issue about your account that wasn't covered at the retirement planning workshop you attended? A Personal Benefits Review is an optional, one-on-one, 15-minute meeting with an IMRF Field Representative to discuss specific account issues. We know your time is precious—if you don't have particular questions or concerns about your account, there's no need to attend one of these sessions. **Remember: Before you schedule a Personal Benefits Review, you should already have attended a retirement planning workshop.**

## Do you need a Personal Benefits Review?

- Have you already attended a retirement planning workshop?
- Have you begun to make retirement plans and have specific account questions that weren't answered in the workshop?

If you answered yes, a Personal Benefits Review might help you answer your remaining retirement questions.

## What to bring to a Personal Benefits Review

- Bring a pension estimate or your Personal Statement of Benefits—available through your Member Access account or by calling 1-800-ASK-IMRF (275-4673).
- Bring the questions you have that are specific to your IMRF account.

Personal Benefits Review time is limited; make sure you are on time and prepared!

**Does a Personal Benefits Review sound right for you?  
Dates, locations, and registration information are available at [www.imrf.org](http://www.imrf.org).**

## 2016 Personal Benefits Review Dates and Locations

### September

DATE	LOCATION	START TIME
(Tues) 9/06	Bartlett	3 PM
(Thurs) 9/08	Bloomington	10 AM
(Tues) 9/13	Nashville	10:30 AM
(Wed) 9/14	Woodstock	9 AM
(Wed) 9/14	Schaumburg	10 AM
(Wed) 9/21	Peoria	10:30 AM
(Wed) 9/21	Collinsville	11 AM
(Tues) 9/27	Aurora	9 AM
(Tues) 9/27	Bolingbrook	9 AM

### October

DATE	LOCATION	START TIME
(Tues) 10/04	Lemont	1 PM
(Tues) 10/04	Marion	1 PM
(Tues) 10/04	Zion	1 PM
(Tues) 10/04	Montgomery	3 PM
(Thurs) 10/06	Ottawa	3 PM
(Sat) 10/15	Waterloo	10:30 AM
(Wed) 10/26	Moline	9 AM
(Thurs) 10/27	Princeton	10 AM

### November

DATE	LOCATION	START TIME
(Tues) 11/01	Oak Lawn	10 AM

(Tues) 11/01	Nashville	10:30 AM
(Wed) 11/02	Bloomington	2 PM
(Thurs) 11/03	Elk Grove Village	10 AM
(Thurs) 11/03	Effingham	5 PM
(Tues) 11/08	Champaign	1 PM
(Thurs) 11/10	Bradley	10 AM
(Wed) 11/16	Peoria	10:30 AM
(Tues) 11/22	Aurora	9 AM
(Tues) 11/22	Palatine	10 AM
(Tues) 11/22	Benton	10:30 AM
(Tues) 11/22	Danville	NOON
(Tues) 11/29	Oak Brook	10:30 AM

### December

DATE	LOCATION	START TIME
(Thurs) 12/01	Decatur	9 AM
(Wed) 12/07	Olney	10:30 AM
(Thurs) 12/08	Rockford	9 AM
(Tues) 12/13	Naperville	10 AM
(Tues) 12/20	Fairview Heights	10:30 AM

Additional dates and locations will be added throughout the year at [www.imrf.org](http://www.imrf.org)



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**FUNDAMENTALS**

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of IMRF over age 40.

Erin Cochran, editor, [ecochran@imrf.org](mailto:ecochran@imrf.org)  
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**Inside: Important Trustee election news**

- Special Employee Trustee election to be held this fall
- Employee Trustee John Piechocinski retires, steps down from Board
- How you can become a candidate for Trustee

Visit [www.imrf.org/elections](http://www.imrf.org/elections) for more information.

**New! Trustees can attend Board meetings from Springfield**

IMRF wants to make it easier for IMRF Trustees across Illinois to attend Board meetings.

Beginning in 2017, IMRF Trustees will have the option to attend Board and committee meetings via videoconference from the Springfield Regional Counseling Center.



Trustees who live more than 50 miles from the Oak Brook office will continue to have the option of arriving the day before the Board meeting, with lodging provided by IMRF. ■