



Connections

Staying connected with Michigan's retirees

June 2022

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Retiree spotlight

Dance, dance re-evolution chalks in for retired Roseville teacher

Debra "Mickie" Gaffke is ever evolving.

It's why the 67-year-old retired teacher and Roseville resident is back to her roots, instructing dance classes at Recreation Authority of Roseville & Eastpointe (RARE) and Tonina's Dance Company in Westland.

"When I first started teaching dance on the west side of Detroit and Dearborn Heights in 1972, it was records, vinyl," Gaffke said. "I remember recording *Saturday Night Fever*, doing disco, ballet, jazz, tap, performing with a dance troupe and the (Detroit Police Department's) Blue Pigs."

But now, "I've got better stuff. Pow. I'm like a horse racing, running out of the gate, ready to go," laughs the Michigan Public School Employees' Retirement System pensioner and mother of one.

"I was brought up with a lot of culture," said Gaffke, daughter of a Massey Ferguson tractor factory foreman and a Civic Light Opera Association of Detroit singer. "Mom sang. She was in *Showboat*, *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Showbiz*. I would just start dancing to her music."

During her first dance career, Gaffke instructed, directed, and choreographed at Schoolcraft College, with community education programs including Plymouth-Canton Community Schools, and at her own Mickie's Dance Co.

When life got rugged in the 1990s, she taught as a substitute, in summer school, and English language learners' classes. That redirected Gaffke's path, who went on to earn a master's degree at Oakland University in reading and language. She worked

15 years in Detroit as a reading specialist with Oakland International and Joy Preparatory charter schools and as a Focus: HOPE adult educator.

"I loved it because I could be creative," Gaffke said of her educational tools, using PBS' *Between the Lions* and *Reading Rainbow*, disabilities-focused Described and Captioned Media Program, and stuffed animals. "I carried and shared my love of reading and writing with the students."

She breaks out in the Joe Walsh song *Life's Been Good*, adding: "It's all about music and dancing and making people feel good and happy."

Something else that cheers Gaffke: Her pension.

"My pension helps me feel secure about paying my bills because my Social Security only pays for part of them," Gaffke said. "I am able to live financially the same as when I was working. I'm thrifty. I can purchase the same things as before: records for my jukebox, music and CDs to teach dance, dinner at a restaurant, and more. I haven't changed any of my spending habits and I haven't touched any of my retirement savings — yet."

Do you have a story to share? Send it to ORS-RetireeStories@Michigan.gov.



Debra "Mickie" Gaffke strikes a pose.



“A little planning goes a long way ...”

From the director

Welcome to the June 2022 issue of your *Connections* newsletter.

Summer is a great time to get outdoors more, be healthier, and recharge.

It's also an excellent time to focus on your finances so you can truly enjoy this wondrous season.

Some ways you can take stock and improve your finances and financial situation:

- Revisit your short- and long-term goals.
- Take some time to **fine-tune your budget**.
- Take advantage of the longer days. Use the extra daylight to tackle a financial task; **increase productivity**; or dedicate time to your favorite hobby or **wellness habit**.
- Check your beneficiary information and evaluate your insurance coverages. Review what you own and how much coverage you have. Make sure your beneficiary information is up to date.

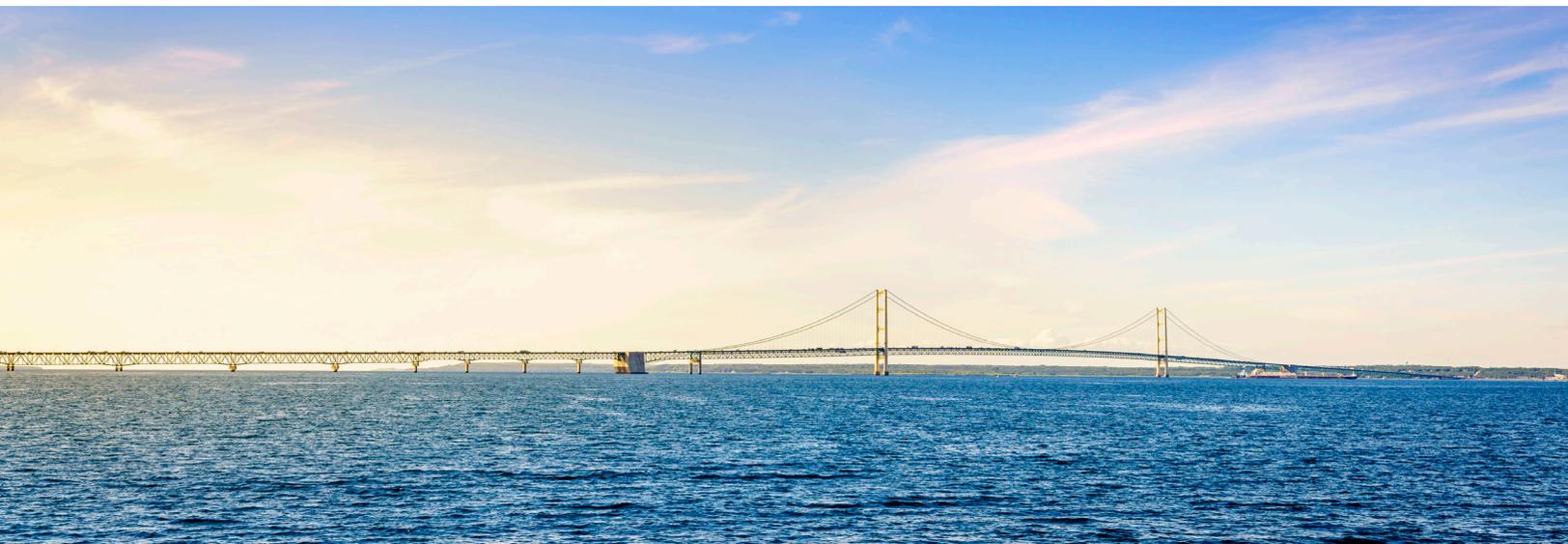
As we always say, big plans, small steps. A little planning goes a long way toward a more successful and more secure retirement.

We hope you gain financial insight from this issue of *Connections*. Read our stories about sinking funds and tips for budgeting on a fixed income. And, if you have a retiree story you'd like to share, please send it to ORS-RetireeStories@Michigan.gov.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Estell', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Anthony Estell, director

Michigan Office of Retirement Services





You're a new retiree: Now what?

Congratulations to the newly retired! Some things to keep in mind as you begin your next chapter:

Post-retirement increases.

You may receive annual increases in your monthly pension payments, depending on your benefit structure. If eligible, you'll receive your annual increase each October after you have been retired for one full year. Additional information can be found on your final pension award letter.

Your miAccount continues to offer many benefits.

Now that you're retired, you may have noticed that many of the features in your miAccount have changed. In miAccount you are able to:

- Obtain income verification.
- Obtain your monthly pension statement.
- Update your direct deposit information.
- Update tax withholding information.
- Make insurance enrollment changes for you and/or your dependents.
- Obtain a copy of your *1099-R* tax document.
- Update your contact information.

In addition to the above, you can continue to securely communicate with the Michigan Office of Retirement Service (ORS) by using the Message Board feature while you are logged in to your account.

Relocation on your mind.

Are you thinking about relocating? If so, consider taking your new destination on a **test drive** before making the big move. Instead of one of your normal vacations, take an extended leave and check on aspects of the new community that you are considering. Consider the total cost of your new home, which would include things like utilities, insurance, and maintenance. You'll want to make sure that you have access to recreational activities that you enjoy, grocery stores, parks, and medical care.

If you are relocating to another state and are enrolled in an ORS HMO insurance plan, you'll need to update your insurance enrollment and state tax withholding information before moving. Blue Cross Blue Shield is the only insurance option that ORS offers that provides coverage if you reside outside of Michigan.

ORS will only withhold state taxes for the state of Michigan. If your new state requires you to pay taxes on your pension payments, you will have to arrange to do so on your own.

Why sinking funds are a good idea

There are times when you need a little financial help, something to draw from. You can access that monetary assistance more readily with a sinking or emergency fund.

A sinking fund is when you know a planned expense or expected purchase is coming up. An emergency fund is money set aside for unplanned life expenses.

It makes sense to have *both* these types of funds for your financial plan and as part of your budget.

Sinking funds can help you avoid taking out loans, using credit cards, or tapping into your emergency fund.

A **sinking fund** can be used for:

- Celebrations.
- Vacations.
- Anniversaries.
- Weddings.
- Gifts.
- Automotive repairs.
- Home repairs and remodeling.
- Special activities.
- Trips.
- Taxes.

Saving money, including for **discretionary spending**, in one part of your budget can help you with other parts. Budgeting is a powerful tool which helps you manage your finances.

By using sinking funds, you save and make life more manageable with a monthly or biweekly amount.



Unlike long-term savings for retirement or a child's education, you may want immediate access to sinking funds. So, consider a bank or credit union savings or money market account, where withdrawals and deposits are easier. Also, consider automating with a direct deposit or automatic transfer and keep the account separated from your other money.

One option is creating multiple savings and/or money market accounts. Also, some financial institutions allow you to nickname funds, helping keep you motivated and on track.

While a sinking fund may be a good fit, be sure not to abandon **building an emergency fund**, paying off debts, or investing. Make **steps to set and achieve your financial goals**.

AARP and Michigan State University Extension's **MI Money Health** have resources and tips to help. Making any financial changes takes time, patience, and discipline.

New MILogin functionality

MILogin

HOME

MILogin Multifactor Authentication (MFA)

Hello John Smith,

Please select one of the following options to proceed with additional required authentication.

* Required

Text Message You will receive a passcode via a text message on your mobile XXX-XXX-5555

The Michigan Office of Retirement Services' miAccount uses MILogin, the state of Michigan's single sign-on standard, which also requires multifactor authentication to enhance security. This two-part process requires you to receive and then enter a code for access to your miAccount. Previously, you could only receive the code through email or text message. You can now receive your code by an automated call to a landline. You will need this code if you are registering for the first time, updating your profile, asking for a forgotten password or username, or reactivating your account.

On a fixed income? These tips may help

With inflation at a 40-year high, making sure your retirement dollars cover your costs of living can be challenging, especially when those costs are constantly changing.

Creating a budget will help you analyze and control your spending – if you stick to it. You'll be able to see what money is coming and going out of your household.

Some budget-friendly tips to consider:

Buying in bulk from warehouses like Sam's Club, Costco, or BJ's Wholesale Club may offer you significant savings. All three offer gas services that may provide additional savings, not to mention other services and amenities. Many stores also offer digital coupon savings on their loyalty apps. Meijer, Kroger, Aldi, and BJ's Wholesale Club are a few examples.

Meal planning can be budget-friendly and timesaving. Consider growing your own fruits and vegetables or buying seasonally to keep costs to a minimum.

Review your automated purchases. You may be paying for some memberships or subscriptions that you don't need or rarely use. If so, cancel them and put your money to better use. Remember to check for free trials that you forgot to cancel before the end of the trial period.



Participate in a challenge. A “no spend challenge” can help you save money by simply not spending it. You determine the time that works best for you. A “pantry challenge” is when you use the food on hand to feed your family. This would help decrease your grocery bill. Again, you determine the time that works best for you.

Secure location to deliver documents



The Michigan Office of Retirement Services (ORS) walk-in office is and will remain closed. The use of the miAccount Message Board is still an excellent way of getting answers to your questions without having to travel or call the office.

But what about getting forms or documents to ORS? Members can always choose to mail or fax documents to our office. ORS has also installed a secure drop box in the lobby of the Mason Building that will allow you to drop off documents.

If you want to bring your documents or forms to ORS in person, the drop box is available during normal business hours from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. ORS supplies envelopes on the top of the drop box. Make certain your member ID is on every page of the document and put the document in an envelope before placing it in the box. ORS staff will check the drop box daily to collect the content.

Ask our experts

Michigan Office of Retirement Services (ORS) experts answer frequently asked questions.

Can I get questions answered through either Facebook or Twitter?

The short answer is, yes, sometimes.

Although we appreciate the lively engagement on social media, there are some things that shouldn't be posted publicly on our pages due to security issues. Below are a few examples:

- Social Security number.
- ORS member ID number.
- Employee ID number.
- miAccount username and/or password.
- Work history.
- Financial account information.
- Pension payment information.
- Medical information.
- Address.
- Telephone numbers.
- Birthdate.
- Family members' names.
- Marriage or death information.

The best way to securely communicate with the ORS is through the Message Board feature located in your miAccount.

How can I obtain a copy of my direct deposit statement?

ORS is unable to send copies of your direct deposit statement. Direct deposit statements are sent five times during the year. You can go to miAccount to view and print any payment statement from 2002 to present.



Update ORS

It is critical that you report any of the following changes in personal information to ORS: address, email, tax withholding, direct deposit, death, divorce, marriage, and Medicare information.

The fastest, easiest way to report these and other life events is through miAccount.



Michigan.gov/ORS
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Pension pay dates

Pension payments are issued on the 25th of the month. If the 25th falls on a weekend or holiday, your pension will be paid the previous business day. In December, Pension payday is a week earlier. If your payment is not credited within three days after the scheduled payment date, check with your bank and then contact ORS.

Office Closures

July 4 Independence Day
Sept. 5..... Labor Day
Nov. 8..... General Election Day
Nov. 11 Veterans Day
Nov. 24-25 Thanksgiving