



Connections

Staying connected with Michigan's retirees

March 2022

Vol. 25 No. 1

Retiree spotlight

Retirement bridge

Staying engaged was Rick Johns' biggest desire when his 32-year career ended with state of Michigan environmental programs.

Nineteen years later, the 74-year-old Okemos resident, who retired as assistant division chief for air quality of what is now Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy, is exceeding expectations.

"Like many retirees, I have spent a lot of my retirement playing golf, traveling, and playing with grandchildren — no story there," Johns said. "Unlike most retirees, I am a dedicated duplicate bridge player."

For Johns and his wife of 51 years, Karen, a retired Michigan Department of Health and Human Services juvenile delinquent caseworker, time with their two granddaughters and two sons' families is prime. They travel to national parks, Myrtle Beach in South Carolina, as well as Europe and South America.

With their travels, Johns' digital photograph collection expanded to 20,000-plus images, including family slides and photos dating to the Civil War. Last fall, he realized a dream by purchasing a 2002 Aston Martin DB7 Vantage Volante convertible and joined the **Capitol City Old Car Club**. He also holds season tickets to Michigan State University football and men's and women's basketball.

The Southfield native's devotion, though, remains supreme for bridge, a trick-taking card game with two two-player teams.

"I've been playing bridge my whole life, and I still feel like I'm learning something," Johns said. "It's definitely a great exercise for your mind."



Karen and Rick Johns posing in Machu Picchu.

The **Bridge Center of Greater Lansing's** volunteer manager since 2010, he is also a club director and board member. He is a paid part-timer as an **American Contract Bridge League**-certified teacher and game director at the 100-plus-member center, which has games most weekdays.

"The good news is, my wife goes to bed much earlier than me, so I have free time in the evening," Johns laughs.

While he earned retirement, he feels fortunate.

"I appreciate the benefits of retirement from the state of Michigan," Johns said. "The security of a regular monthly check and good health insurance provides my wife and me the opportunity to comfortably travel and pursue our interests."

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



“Retirement is control over the content and the pace of your life.”

From the director

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

Let's spring forward. Helping you move forward on or in retirement is what we do at the Michigan Office of Retirement Services (ORS).

That is the foundation in our Voya Financial relationship and our partnership highlighting women's need for retirement planning.

Our ongoing Women & Retirement campaign points out women need to prepare for their future more. On average, women live longer with lower wages, later workforce entrances, and more career interruptions and years in retirement than men.

As the father of college- and high school-age daughters, my spouse and I taught each of our daughters to “live below your means:” pay yourself first, invest, save, and donate. Whatever income they receive, like allowance or work, gets divided into four buckets: donate to charity or causes; invest for rainy days; save for specific goals; and spend on whatever. Donate and invest buckets were set, but save and spend buckets are discretionary.

We wanted them to learn opportunity costs and delaying gratification to manage finances and reach goals. To save for a tablet or game, they could use spending money. Or they could use saving money for a giant pack of gum or something else. We wanted understanding on choices' implications.

In conversations, it might go: “Well, if you spend it all on that toy you just saw, that's fine. And it will take longer to get that tablet you want.” On the converse: “If you put all into save, you get that faster. But there's not as much to spend when we go shopping.”

ORS promotes these principles. Your retirement success might involve foregoing some current spending for a better future.

“Retirement is control over the content and the pace of your life.” That adage sticks with me because it's personal. Working in retirement differs when it's a choice instead of a must.

Please check out (or revisit) our **Women & Retirement** campaign and share with others who might benefit.

Your wellness, security, and well-being are most important to us. ORS is here to help you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Estell', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Anthony Estell, director
Michigan Office of Retirement Services

Campaign focuses on women's retirement savings health

While it is important for everyone to plan for their future, this is particularly true for women.

The reasons:

- Women may enter the workforce later than men.
- On average, women make less in the workforce than men.
- Women are more likely to take time off to care for elderly parents, family caregiving or to raise children.
- Women tend to live longer than men, with the Social Security Administration estimating a 65-year-old woman lives, on average, to age 86½.
- On average, women spend more years in retirement than men.

To help women close financial gaps in their savings for retirement, Voya Financial and the Michigan Office of Retirement Services (ORS) are partnering on the Women & Retirement awareness campaign. Launched in November 2021 and running through October 2022, the topics include deciding when to retire, preparing for risks, investing in oneself, budgeting, caregiving, tax benefits, and the costs of waiting to save for retirement.

You can help others on their journey toward retirement by letting them know about **Women & Retirement** on the ORS website. The campaign is also being shared on the ORS **Facebook** and **Twitter** social media accounts.



Keep the retirement conversation going

You've reached the end of your public school career and are retired. But that doesn't mean the retirement conversations with your loved ones should end too.

If you're married, keep the lines of communication open with your spouse during retirement so you're on the same page when it comes to your finances.

And that includes understanding whether your pension payments and insurance benefits will continue for your spouse after your death so they can **plan accordingly**.

When you applied for your pension, you made an important decision about your pension payment options.



If you elected a survivor option, upon your death your pension and insurance benefits, if eligible, will continue for the lifetime of the person you named as your survivor pension beneficiary.



If you chose the straight life option, no ongoing pension payments or insurance benefits will be provided to your survivors — including your spouse.

After your retirement effective date, you can't change your pension payment option or your designated survivor pension beneficiary.

However, if you marry after you started receiving your pension, you may be able to **name your new spouse as a survivor pension beneficiary**.

It's important that you and your spouse discuss and plan for what happens next in your retirement journey. You may want to talk about your situation with a financial advisor and make any needed adjustments to your retirement plan.

If you have questions, log in to the **miAccount** Message Board, where you can get secure, direct access to one of our customer service representatives.

Check in on your investments

The end of the first quarter is always a good time to check your investment portfolio to ensure everything is OK, especially this year.

Although it's good to check your portfolio periodically, it's good not to check too much because of day-to-day fluctuations. Experts recommend you check your portfolio no more than quarterly. The reason for this is to guard against either unwarranted optimism or pessimism. When the market is going up, you're happy and when it's going down, you're sad. For your peace of mind, you'll want to avoid that kind of whipsaw approach to your investment strategy.

Stock market volatility is normal. There have been 12 bear markets since World War II. A bear market is when stocks lose 20%, or more, of their value. During the same period, however, the long-term gain was more than 10%.

Since your pension is invested in the stock market, it's good to keep this in mind to avoid worry.

For your own portfolio, you can check your holdings to determine if you need to change anything. See our companion article on the right for ideas on what to do about inflation.



Inflation concerns

In a recent survey, 71% of respondents said that inflation is the greatest concern for investors who are either retiring soon or already retired.

This concern is not misplaced. The consumer price index — the federal government's measurement of changes in prices of goods and services — increased to an annual gain of 7.9% over last year as reported through February. The Federal Reserve also expressed concern that inflation may extend through 2022. The world situation being what it is, we could have uncertainty in the market for even longer.

We know that, if we have knowledge about a thing, we can avoid harm that may come from it. To say that inflation is here to stay is stating the obvious. Play around with the [U.S. inflation calculator](#) to underscore that reality.

What can retirees do to mitigate the risk of inflation on their retirement income? Here are some things to consider:

- Your fixed income may not keep up with inflation. This means your pension, but also other fixed income investments.
- Remember that Social Security payments are automatically indexed to the inflation rate. That's a good thing.
- Carefully consider equity investments. The stock market, over the long term, has consistently beat the rate of inflation, even after decreases in value due to external circumstances
- Be very careful with your investment strategy. Don't be afraid to seek the professional help of a qualified financial planner to assist you with your beat-inflation investment strategy.

These are things that can help you navigate the uncertainty we see both in the investment markets and on the world stage today. Go slowly. Think clearly. Do some research. Be careful not to react. Where necessary, seek out advice from a professional investment advisor.



2021 ORS year in review

Customer Service



176,143
phone calls
answered

61,145

questions
answered on
Message Board



7,373
applications
processed

Schools and Reporting Units



10,545
phone calls
answered

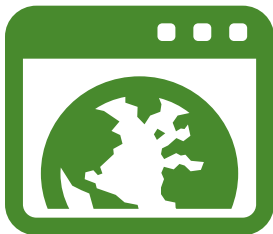
11,739

requests
completed
within 10
business days



12,730
emails
answered

ORS works on websites' updates



Changes are coming to all **Michigan.gov** websites, including 10 websites managed by the Michigan Office of Retirement Services (ORS).

These changes have been years in the making. The multi-year, state-wide content replacement project replaces a 20-year old platform. Along with making content easier

to manage on the back-end, for you on the front-end, the main benefit is more streamlined site navigation and expanded accessibility to the information you need.

Yes, this is a good thing. As with any changes in technology, the new navigation system will make the page look slightly different. Instead of a navigation bar on the left side of the screen, a more condensed navigation screen spreads across the top of the page. All the same information is included, plus we'll be able to integrate our social media channels directly on the website.

The transition to the new web platform began in January, with completion expected on April 22.



Let us know

Do you need to update your direct deposit information with the Michigan Office of Retirement Services (ORS)?

The fastest way to access and make changes to your account is in miAccount. You can have your pension deposited into one (primary) account or two (a primary and secondary) accounts.

To update your information, follow these easy steps:

1. Log in to **miAccount**.
2. Click **Pension Payments**.
3. Click **Direct Deposit**.
4. Edit your primary direct deposit account information, including your account number, account type, and routing number.
5. Click **Continue**.
6. Review the direct deposit information you entered. If it's correct, click **Save**.
7. If you want part of your pension deposited in a secondary account, enter that account information. Remember to save your changes when you're done.

Ordinarily, if we receive your direct deposit change by the first day of the month, your next deposit should be deposited to your new account. If you plan to close your old account, wait until your pension payment has been successfully deposited in your new account.

Below are some other changes that would require contact with ORS, including when you should report these changes.

Address change:

Right away. Be sure we have your current mailing address, physical address, and email address so you don't miss important updates about insurance benefits, tax documents, and pension payments.

Email change:

Right away. As communications continue to go paperless, it's more important than ever that your email address is up to date with ORS. We won't be able to reach you through your former employer, so make sure we have your personal email address.

If you have a Defined Contribution (DC) plan or the Personal Healthcare Fund (PHF), don't forget to contact Voya Financial with any changes to your street address, phone

number, email, and dependent information. You can update your information by logging in to your **Voya account** or by calling **800-748-6128**.

Death:

Right away. Let ORS know if a pension beneficiary or anyone enrolled in your health, prescription drug, dental, or vision insurance plan dies. Your survivor should contact ORS upon your death. If you have an account with Voya, your survivor should also contact Voya upon your death.

Divorce:

Right away. Former spouses aren't eligible for continued insurance coverage, even if a court rules the retiree is obligated to provide coverage.

Marriage:

If you marry after your pension began and you want to add your new spouse to your insurances or as a survivor pension beneficiary, report the marriage to ORS right away. If you're in the DC plan or have a PHF account, contact Voya to report the marriage.

Medicare:

Right away when you, your spouse, or anyone covered by your insurance becomes eligible for Medicare. Be sure to have the Part A and Part B effective dates and Medicare number ready when you contact ORS.

You also can use the miAccount Message Board to contact an ORS representative with your changes.

Ask our experts

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

I think I might need a 1095-B form for my taxes, like in previous years. How do I get one?

The 1095-B health coverage form is not required to compute federal tax liability or file an income tax return with the IRS. This is in accordance with *IRS Notice 2020-76* (Page 7, paragraph B). If you would still like a copy of the form, you may request it through the **miAccount** Message Board. Once requested, you will receive it in 30 days.

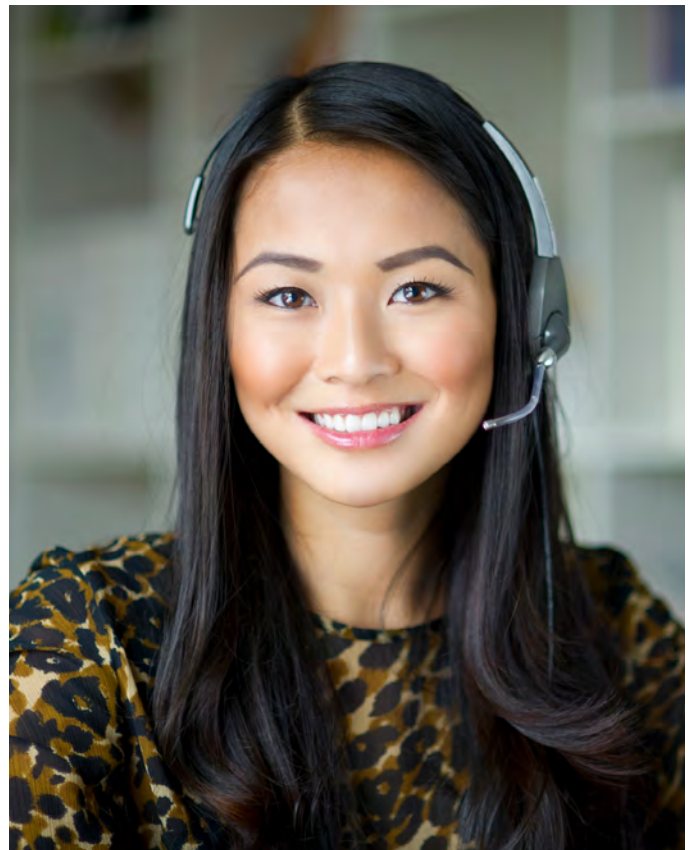
My miAccount is disabled. How can I reactivate it?

You can reactivate miAccount yourself if your account was disabled due to one of the following reasons:

- You incorrectly answered security questions as part of the “Forgot your password?” process.
- Your account has been inactive for at least 18 months.

If you receive a message that says Account is Disabled, follow these steps to reactivate your account:

1. Click **Activate Account**.
2. Select your account activation option (either email or mobile phone).



Update ORS

It is critical that you report any changes in personal information to ORS. The fastest, easiest way to report these and other life events is through **miAccount**.

You can also contact us at:



Michigan.gov/ORS
Facebook.com/MichiganORS
Twitter.com/MichiganORS



PO Box 30171
Lansing, MI 48909-7671



Phone: **800-381-5111**
Fax: **517-284-4416**

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, it's a week earlier. If your payment is not credited within three days after the scheduled payment date, check with your bank first, and then contact ORS.

Office closures

May 30 Memorial Day
June 20 Juneteenth
July 4 Independence Day
Sept. 5 Labor Day
Nov. 11 Veterans Day