

# PRESIDENT TO PRESIDENT

January 2021

**Happy New Year!** The word on everyone's lips seems to be: "Good-bye 2020--- good riddance; so glad you're gone and *Welcome 2021!*" While I, too, am glad to see this pass, I must admit that we learned a lot about ourselves and others and above all have been able to continue our good work in spite of! We can't wish our lives away as we know the reality of a "normal" way of life is still at a distance. I am so very grateful for your willingness to work virtually and to do what needed to be done. Thank you for your advocacy and plain old hard work! It has not been easy, but I now find myself with a better attitude. I simply refer now to myself as your virtual president!

**Conference:** By now we have faced the reality of our March 14-16 Post Summit NEA Retired Conference being virtual, too. I've been a part of the planning committee, along with our NEA Retired Board members and a few other Board members Becky has appointed, and I must sincerely say, I think we'll have a good conference. ***Registration will not appear on our website until the first OR second week of January.*** Just watch our website for the announcement of the opening and #1 read directions carefully, #2, read all the possibilities for workshops BEFORE registering, taking notes so you're prepared when you choose workshop sessions, and #3 be prepared for a unique conference with great speakers, good workshops, and some fun making gumbo and New Orleans cocktails and "mocktails". The conference is limited to 500 so many more of our members can participate. There is a \$30 fee for the Retired Conf. and the same for the Summit, BUT if you register for both, it is \$50. Think of the money your state is saving by it being a virtual conference. *Please* get some **new** members involved!

**AND, of course, there will be a virtual PAC auction** with a good number of items if each state sends a picture of a donated item OR perhaps two persons (or more) would like to join efforts and give a more expensive item. Please remember dues dollars cannot be spent for PAC! Your choice in donating, but certainly each state is expected to donate an item. Since the donor is responsible for sending the item, you might want to consider size and postage rates. Of course, we don't

want all gift cards---let's be creative with items. Remember that alcoholic items must be sent from the company and not from the donor...federal laws. This can be a really fun time for all, but we need lots of items and even more bidders! Send a picture of your item to Julie Horwin, [julie.horwin@gmail.com](mailto:julie.horwin@gmail.com). Do not send the item until we know who had the highest bid and then mail that item to the highest bidder. After holiday sales are a great opportunity to get a lovely item and still save.

We also need you to collect from states and individuals for the **Jack Kinnaman Scholarship Fund**. We did not do this last year as the committees decided that the giving should be emphasized for PAC since it was an election year. We certainly want to continue to give 5 scholarships at \$2,500 each so this needs an emphasis in your state. You might even already have someone appointed to be in charge of this. I am confident your love for our Aspiring Educators will bring in the needed funds. Thank you in advance for your support.

**Election Year Work:** There are not enough words to thank you for all you did during our efforts to elect Friends of Education in every local, state and national position. While we saw some disappointments, all in all, we can celebrate our many victories due to your efforts! Thank you to our six Board members and others who led in the efforts to Get Out the Vote. We may never know how many phone calls, e-mails, face to face contacts, editorials, etc. were made, but we do know what it means in the end to have hope and see possibilities. THANK YOU for your part!

**NEA Retired Annual Meeting:** You also have already been informed that the NEA Board of Directors overwhelmingly voted to hold the 2021 Representative Assembly virtually also. While not what we wanted, we can applaud the Board for their vigilance and concern for everyone's welfare. The matter of financial investment obviously played a part in the decision, too. Reservations for hotels, buses, the convention center--- all come with a price and the uncertainty of multiple possibilities could cause major financial expenses. NEA and NEA Retired will be using a new platform which will allow for debate on NBI's, our By-laws, etc. I will keep you informed as these plans unfold. I believe we will have an even better Annual Meeting as these new methods will allow for more participation, debate, and good old democratic practices.

## **Membership:** A word from Membership Chair, Tom Wellman

This pandemic has presented us with challenges that have placed a wide array of obstacles in our path to organize for membership. Yet somehow, we manage to use those challenges to build a better and stronger organization. Perhaps one of the things that you should consider as your organization adapts to the changes is that this is a great time to develop your strategic plan. This plan is an important part of identifying the priorities for your organization and letting members know what your mission, vision and goals are for your programs. Far too often we hear that one of the challenges state retired associations face in selling membership into your organization is that members can't identify what the program stands for and how the local will best represent them. If you have written a strategic plan, it might be time to get it out dust it off and make sure that your board members know what and how that document serves to represent your members. Make sure your members know and understand what this plan represents and how it can best be used to serve the members of your program. If you don't have a strategic plan, it may be time to pull out those easels, flip charts, and markers and develop your own plan. This can be a very scary undertaking, but don't worry; you do not need to do this alone. We are here to help! Feel free and with your retired staff member. Many of them have been trained in how to develop a strategic plan and can prove to be a valuable asset.

Since you already have those flip charts and easels out, consider using those markers to develop a membership plan. This a rich and very valuable tool that will help provide your membership committee the information and tools that they need to promote membership into your program. This is another one of those important tasks that require direction and assistance. Specific steps break down the work into specific actions. Don't be afraid to ask for assistance; your NEA officers and elected leadership are here to help! Please remember that the staff from your state association has been trained in this area and can be a great assistance in getting this job done.

Over the years I have heard our members talk about being marginalized and ignored by their state associations. Well, it's time that your program takes control of that narrative and changes the story. Make the effort to work on and develop the relationship with your association. Meet with your state president and leadership team and ask questions about what they want and what they expect from your program. Take the time to let them know what your program needs in order to be strong and successful. How can you incorporate their wants with your program's needs? This takes time and is not easy but you will see rewards in the end. Again, this is an issue that we can help with as you move through the process. Please don't be afraid to ask for help.

**Communications:** Recently I received a packet of newsletters and a booklet from Maine's Annual Retired Meeting, Kay Grindall, President. I wish you each could read of their good work throughout the year: of recognitions, of community and local school projects, of their activities throughout the Covid 19 pandemic. Kudos to them. I know many of you are doing some of the same things, but you haven't shared them yet. Please do so. It not only encourages me in my role, but it plants ideas I can share with others. Please remember to send a copy (electronically is

fine) of your newsletters and publications. I cannot emphasize enough how very important it is to communicate with ALL your members. Don't forget the possibility of a phone call to those who are not as active as some of us. ALL members need to hear from you and the possibility of calling can be real if you just divide that work among several willing members.

**Leadership:** Years ago, then NEA Executive Director, Terry Herndon, wrote a book about leadership. One chapter in particular always spoke to me: "Leadership versus Office Holders". I believe the following quote from John Maxwell about summarizes the entire essence of that chapter. I know it speaks to me.

"A leader is one who *knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.*"

**HAPPY NEW YEAR,**

Sarah, NEA Retired virtual President