



THE CLARION

The Newsletter for Retired Educators
Maine Education Association Retired Vol. 134, No. 3

April 2022

From our President



Gary McGrane

As I finish reading “Why Teachers Are Dropping Out” in *The Nation* magazine, I cannot help but wonder what is going to happen to our educational system if the exodus of educators continues.

From what I have been seeing, the “great resignation” more aligns with substitute teachers, school bus drivers, and paraprofessionals. Teachers are thinking about leaving, but that does not mean they are actually leaving in great

numbers. Not yet anyway.

Every month I receive a list of teachers and support staff who have retired. That number has remained fairly constant. Approximately 20-25 educators retire each month. The shortest month of the year saw a spike in that number to 42 in February.

Every month I send these lists to our local affiliate presidents. Some have joined our ranks as MEA-Retired dues-paying members, but others need to be nudged into becoming a retired advocate.

That’s where we come in. MEA staff do a wonderful job in advocating for their continued involvement, post-career. Maintaining a social interest and connecting with like-minded individuals are the reasons most retirees join.

That one aspect is a draw for many to become more actively involved with countless opportunities for service through volunteerism or taking on leadership roles by becoming an officer or chair

See President, Page 2

Make plans for our 70th!

By Rhea Michaud, Chairperson
Convention Committee

Hooray! An in-person convention is happening this year. We will celebrate together as retired educators at the Augusta Civic Center where we are NOT required to wear masks.

See our schedule on Page 8. Come early at 8:30 to view the agenda, visit the vendors and affiliate displays, buy crafts and PAC raffle tickets, chat with friends, enjoy good food, and be delighted with special music provided by

harpist Isleen Halvensor from Dover-Foxcroft,

There will be coffee, fruits and Danish available in the morning. Free goodies and raffles will be available throughout the day.

We are celebrating Maine’s 202nd Birthday, past and future. Our main speaker Dr. Libby Bischof will enlighten us about Maine’s past.

The various breakout sessions have historian Mark Leslie discuss his book, *The Underground Railroad*. He will have books for sale.

For avid travelers, see and hear what our members, Phil Gonyar and Carl Daiker of Waterville, enjoyed on their memorable trip to Antarctica.

Dr. Tracy Michaud will explain what is happening now and the future plans of Maine’s tourism industry—especially focusing on Iceland and Greenland.



Dr. Libby Bischof

For you physically fit members who want to learn a new line dance or just enjoy dancing, Jim and Lynn Lubas will keep you moving to the beat!

Remember PAC, our political action fund that takes no money from dues. The wonderful raffle will fund the expenses for our delegates to the NEA-Retired annual meeting and NEA Representative Assembly in Chicago this summer.

Don’t forget the free book exchange. Bring books for others to enjoy. Then you take some home.

Vendors on a variety of topics will be there for your information. Affiliates will have displays. You can find out what other members are doing to give you new ideas for projects. You may be very proud of your affiliate and want to “showcase” it. This is a good way to inspire others.

Our annual meeting is important for its members to take care of the basic business. All are encouraged to

See Convention, Page 8

MEA-Retired

“Happy 202nd Birthday,
Maine: Proud Past,
Bright Future”

70th Convention and
Annual Meeting
Augusta Civic Center
May 5, 2022

Pre-Retirement sessions host record attendance

By Susan Grondin
Pre-Retirement Chairperson

The spring pre-retirement sessions for our active MEA members were held on Zoom and ended in March. Each session had at least 200 members registered with attendance between 100-150.

Since September, approximately 900 active members attended the sessions and materials were sent in advance on email to more than 1,200 registrants.

A participation survey was sent to each active member. Responses indicated the convenience and success of the Zoom format and the information presented.

Although the sessions were an overview, members agreed the presenters reviewed the most important aspects of retiring and provided contact numbers for posing individual

See Pre-Retirement, Page 8

**Teacher
Appreciation
Week
May 2—6**

**Teaching is the one
profession that creates
all other professions.**

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Legislative Update \$\$ for retirees at stake

By Crystal Ward
Legislative Committee Chairperson

(News as of March 1, 2022)

Augusta is back in session, and we are watching several bills. One would decrease the amount of taxable income on which you would pay Maine state income tax by \$5,000 per year—until it matched what is already provided at the Federal level which is currently the first \$35,000. In Maine, it is currently only the first \$10,000 in income that is not taxable for retirees.

Two almost identical bills address this issue—LD.1413 and LD.1227.

MEA-Retired and MEA believe the State should fund the full 5.4 percent (2021) Cost-of-Living (COLA) adjustment for all current retirees. Furthermore, we believe the full 5.4 percent COLA should be added to the **base** in order to lift the base amount for the COLA calculation in future years.

In January 2022, the Consumer Price Index (CPI)—which is the source used to compute the COLA—was approximately 7 percent!

This proposal is not cheap; in fact, providing the full 5.4 percent COLA for all retired teachers, qualified ed. techs, state employees, and other public servants will cost the state approximately \$148 million.

The reason for this cost is the constitution states that the full cost of changes must be paid in full all at one time. But we know the state has over \$800 million in excess revenue, and let's not forget the deep and devastating cuts to our pensions en-

acted under the previous governor.

In 2011, the budget proposed by Governor LePage and passed by the Legislature made huge cuts to our pensions (\$300 million). These cuts will be felt by current and future retirees for generations.

The least our elected officials can do is provide the entire COLA by adding the 2.4 percent we deserve to our pension earnings. Governor Mills' proposed budget allows for a one-time payment of the 2.4 percent—costing about \$15 million. However, it does not add it to the **base**.

We need help to convince the committee to make a plan to get the COLA placed on our whole pensions as was the custom before 2011 when harmful changes were made.

REMEMBER THIS WHOLE MESS WITH MAINEPERS PENSION COLA IS THE MAN-MADE NEGATIVE

CHANGES IMPLEMENTED IN 2011 THAT ARE DOING GREATER HARM OVER TIME!!

Down in Washington, D.C. there has been no movement on the Social Security Offset issue. However, there are several bills directed at offering relief to the WEP or GPO but they are in committee and going nowhere as of this writing.

There are many ideas about changes in Medicare and Medicaid, but it is still just a lot of talk and fighting—going nowhere for now.

There seems to be some light at the end of the tunnel in the area of prescription drug relief. However, big corporations are fighting hard to stop them; as they stand to lose big profits to which they have been accustomed for years.

Free COVID home test kits are available free with your insurance and free N95 masks are at many drugstores.

Stay safe. Spring will be here by the time you read this.

President, from Page 1

of one of several committees within their county or state organization.

More often than not, educators need to be asked—about seven times before saying, “Yes.” It's up to all of us as retirees to speak to a newly retired member. Ask

for their advice; ask for their opinion as to how we can grow or strengthen our voice

es at the local, state and national levels.

As your president I encourage everyone to remain active in their retirement and invite our newly retired educators to join our ranks as active MEA-Retired members. That is my ask of you.

Until we meet again, keep up the good work and keep talking to one another. Don't be afraid to ask because we are stronger together.

NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA RA

June 30—July 6, 2022
Chicago, IL

June 30—July 6, 2023
Orlando, FL

July 1—July 7, 2024
Philadelphia, PA



MEA-Retired is here for you!

April 4, 2022 @ 9:30 a.m.
Board of Directors Meeting
Best Western Hotel & Zoom
375 Main St., Waterville

May 4, 2022 @ 5:30 p.m.
Executive Committee Meeting
The Senator Inn & Spa
284 Western Ave., Augusta

May 5, 2022 @ 9:30 a.m.
70th Conv. & Annual Meeting
Augusta Civic Center
76 Community Dr., Augusta

June 6, 2022 @ 9:30 a.m.
Board of Directors Meeting
Location: TBA
375 Main St., Waterville

Contact affiliate leaders with ideas and concerns.



May 8, 2022

The Clarion is published bimonthly by Maine Education Association Retired. Readers are encouraged to submit feature stories, news articles, notices of events and activities, and opinions of statewide interest by the fifth day of the month preceding publication. Please send articles to kay_grindall@yahoo.com. Questions? Call Kay at 207-512-0027.

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New to the Virgin Pulse program? How to get started:

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MEABT. Sign up with your name as it appears on your Anthem card.

OR you can download the Virgin Pulse mobile app for iOS or Android. Then, you are able to access your account and track your activity anywhere, anytime.

Good health is its own reward, but that doesn't mean we're going to leave you empty-handed. When enrolled, you are able to earn up to \$250 per year by completing program activities.

Then, you are invited to visit the Virgin Pulse store to redeem your Pulse Cash for gift cards, fitness accessories, and more!

The Pulse Cash is yours to accumulate and redeem



Fitness programs designed for you

By Jennifer Kent
MEABT Executive Director

when you're ready, and it doesn't expire.

Eligibility: Everyone enrolled in an MEABT health plan will be eligible to join this free service—including enrolled spouses, domestic partners, and dependents ages 18-26.

Questions? Contact Virgin Pulse Customer Service at this telephone number: 1-855-689-6884.

MEA Benefits update

The first few days hinting of spring has encouraged me to get off my comfortable couch. As MEABT members, we have the benefit of several programs to help us maintain and enhance our healthy lifestyles.

I encourage all of you to revisit the MEABT webpage at www.meabt.org and reacquaint yourselves with the programs available to members and their families. If you click on the wellness link, you will see a program drop list. Each listed item has a brief explanation of the program and a description of how easy it is to access it. The MEABT staff are always happy to assist you with any questions or concerns you may have.

A number of these programs are classified as Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) which often include services for family members as well as the employee/retiree. EAP's are overseen by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Check out www.opm.gov.

MEABT Executive Director Jennifer Kent and Anthem Representative Michele Skadberg recently reported to the MEABT Trustees about the creation of a new Emotional Support program called

By Faith Campbell, MEA-Retired Liaison
Maine Education Association Benefits Trust

“Learn to Live.”

This program is available to employees and their families and includes members who are not part of the MEABT provided health plans. This program provides confidential mental and emotional support for depression, stress/anxiety, social anxiety, insomnia and substance abuse.

The program includes interactive and coaching components. Individuals can opt in and out of the program at any time. You can find out more about this program by visiting www.anthem.com and logging into your account or creating an account and searching “Learn to Live.” You may also contact the MEABT office and Anthem for assistance at anytime.

It has been my pleasure to be working with Belinda Micucci and the MEA-Retired Healthcare Committee. Jennifer Kent and Northeast Delta Dental Representative Marie Bridges joined our January meeting. Ms. Bridges informed us of the benefits of “Health Through Oral Wellness” (HOW).

MEABT is continuing to assess the current Anthem Medicare Advantage Program performance as it relates the membership needs and overall well-being. July will

mark the two-year anniversary of the current system. As always, contact the Trust with any questions, concerns and suggestions. Please stop by the MEABT table at the MEA-Retired Convention and Annual Meeting on May 5, 2022. Our representatives are looking forward to seeing and speaking with you.

Stay up to date! Download the MEA App

Go to the App Store



Mid-Coast classroom grant program

By Molly Smith,
Mid-Coast Ret. Educators Assoc.

After reading and ranking the eleven 2022 Classroom Grant applications, a group from the Executive Committee of Mid-Coast Retired Educators Association (MCREA)

awarded four \$200 grants to educators for their classroom enhancement projects. The following educators have been presented checks by Molly Smith and Janice Driver.

Christine Egan, 4th grade teacher at Bowdoin Central School, "Project-Digital Classroom Viewer Microscope"

Shannon Baker, Kindergarten teacher at Bowdoin Central School, "Project-Kindergarten Geology"

Celina Reed, Phippsburg Elementary School, "Project-Music Keyboard Centers"

Carolyn Nichols, Morse

High School in Brunswick, "Project - Beekeeping at Morse High School"

The following grant recipient was certainly excited when presented with the news and a check that she had received one of the classroom grants! She writes:

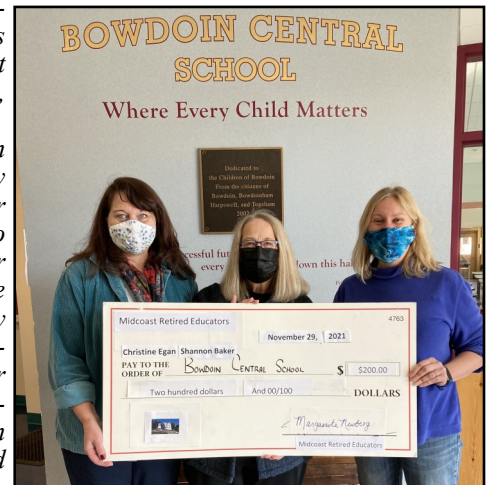
Good evening, Thank you so much for choosing us to receive your generous gift. This came at the most opportune moment, Cyber Monday.

I didn't even realize it until my teaching partner and I started to shop online after school. We were wondering why prices were changing right before our eyes. Then, we became excited when we found we could buy two for the price of one, the digital viewer microscope. Now we can each have one

in our classes!

We are both so very excited about this as we are very passionate about teaching science. I am looking forward to sharing with you how our students will be using the microscopes. Thank you!

*Sincerely,
Christine (Egan)
Classroom Educator*



Educators accepting classroom project checks from Mid-Coast Retired Educators Association are (L to R): Christina Egan, Molly Smith of MCREA, and Shannon Baker.

PAC Auction is back! Yea!!

By Corley Anne Byras
PAC Auction Chairperson

How exciting!!!!

We're going to be back together at the Augusta Civic Center in May for our 70th Convention and Annual Meeting! We can offer our Political Action Committee (PAC) raffle again.

Yeah!!!

If you think I'm pumped up about this, you are correct! Two years are a long time not to join with colleagues and fellow retired educators from across Maine in person for our convention. And I love coordinating this raffle for PAC!!!

When our MEA-Retired delegates attend the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA Representative Assembly in Chicago in June and July, our Maine delegates are encouraged to each contribute over \$200 to this PAC fund.

At the convention we will have more than 50 items available for a raffle to support our delegates in their contribution to PAC at the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA Representative Assembly.

Tickets sell for \$1 for one, \$5 for ten, and \$10 for twenty-five. No item being raffled off will have a value of less than \$5, and some may be worth as much as \$50.

This gives you the opportunity to support PAC as well as our delegates who represent us at the convention. They give up nearly two weeks to represent us. Let's support them!

We've had members purchase 25 tickets and win as many as five prizes. Come join the fun and be involved in this worthwhile project. The raffle is only held in the morning, and the prizes are given out at lunch time.

Bring items for the auction. Make certain I see you at the raffle table at convention!

Register today and join fellow retirees as we gather for fun, food, and memories.

Wanted: Books to Swap

Once again tables will be set up at our MEA-Retired convention in Augusta for our **FREE** book swap. Bring books you have read and take books donated by others. You do not have to bring books in order to take books.

Children's books will also be available. We always need new books to read to our grandchildren now that we have more free time. For more information, contact our coordinator, Bob Jean, at 207-593-6597 or send an email message to vegas04861@yahoo.com.



Items needed for PAC auction at convention!

Great projects for the slow winter months:
Knit? Sew? Crochet? Wood or metal creations?
Bake? Unique crafts?

Bring to convention to sell for PAC

Contact Corley Anne Byras, Auction Chairperson
207-213-6880 or corleybyras@gmail.com



Back in 2007, I had decided that I had enough. The constant pressure from administration to teach to the test, to "assess" students, took away the pleasure of teaching for me, a career that I had wanted to pursue since the early 1960s.

If I had been allowed to teach, instead of being micromanaged, I might still be in the classroom. However, it was not to be. At least not in middle school, and not in Maine.

In June, 2007, I retired, after teaching social studies (later what I called "U.S. history") for 39 years in Grades 6, 7, or 8 at the Messalonskee Middle School in Oakland.

I hated the "social slush" moniker, and called myself a HISTORY teacher.

Well, after a full and fulfilling career in the same school system, I sold the snowblower and moved south.

A friend of mine had a son in Kentucky, and we visited. I fell in love with Danville, a city similar to Waterville. I was totally surprised. It has a first-rate liberal arts college, hills around it, a lake nearby, and it just felt like home.

On moving here, I began to do "my thing" researching local history and genealogy.

In Oakland I was a charter

member and president of the Oakland Area Historical Society for a number of years. (I still run an Oakland history website.)

So, it was natural that upon moving to Kentucky, I would become involved in history and genealogy. I joined the Kentucky Historical Society and our local genealogical society. I soon found that most of the research that was done was "white" genealogy. If one were black here, there was almost nothing.

So in 2011, I set out to change that. I began researching Black history and families. I began to amass vital records, newspaper clippings, obituaries, and any other documents that could tell the story of African Americans in this county. I remembered that in my 39 years of teaching more than 9,000 students in Maine, I only had ONE Black student in my entire career!

In December 2013, I became one of the charter members of the Danville Boyle County African American Historical Society (DBCAAHS). At the same time I was president of the Boyle County Genealogical and Historical Society. So I had feet in both the Black and white camps!

Over time, however, my interest leaned toward whatever I could do to pursue and advance Black history and genealogy. In that pursuit, I met so many wonderful Black folks whom I consider to be my best friends.

I feel accepted and welcomed and valued by the Black community

because of the work I have done. To this day the president of the DBCAAHS consults ME on matters of Black history and genealogy in our county.

For three semesters, I taught "The African American Experience" at Eastern Kentucky University. In one of my semester classes half of the class was Black and over 60. I was repeatedly told, "I never knew that!" more times than I can count.

In my small part, I am teaching the African American community about its own past history—a past they did not learn while they were in school.

The DBCAAHS has now established a "History Center" where we can share with the whole community our discoveries about Black history. This Center is located in an area in Downtown Danville that was spared the racist wrecking ball of "urban renewal" which destroyed the meaningful connections members of the African American community had with each other and their past.

We were profiled as part of an hour-long video by the Kentucky Historical Society wherein about 100 societies all over Kentucky were asked how they survived the pandemic. We were one of seven chosen to profile.

With members of the Black community, I am writing a book for Arcadia Publishers entitled *African Americans in Boyle County* which will be a pictorial history of Blacks in our county.

Every day now, I spend hours researching history and genealogy, and I share fully and freely with anyone the work I have done.

Additionally, several friends and I have completely restored two abandoned African American cemeteries (Shelby City, 2.5 acres and Meadow Lane, 0.5 acres).



Mike Denis

A rewarding, fulfilling career after retirement

By Michael Denis, Retired Educator
Messalonskee Middle Sch., Oakland

We are working on a third, and I have updated locations of over 4,000 gravestones in a seven-acre cemetery in Hilldale for which the city had almost no burial records.

I loved teaching. I still love teaching even though the opportunity to teach on a formal basis has passed. But at no time in my entire teaching career have I felt as satisfied with what I am doing now. I retired and am now living a dream I never knew I had!

Mike Denis is a graduate of the University of Maine System and taught history at Messalonskee Middle School in Oakland for 39 years. He also taught three years at Kentucky University in Lexington. Mike is a member of MEA and MEA-Retired and receives The Clarion. He is still interested in what is happening in the lives of retirees and active educators in Maine.



The History Center at 108 North Second Street, in Danville, KY, is a museum, a research center, and a meeting place where there is almost always something going on.

Volunteer! Day of Caring



SMILE

“Seniors Make It
Look Easy”

Travel abroad an education like no other

By Carl & Joyce Bucciantini
Androscoggin Ret. Educ. Assoc.

Who would have thought that a worldwide pandemic would have postponed our trip nearly three years until October 2021? At long last, with our vaccination cards, negative Covid tests, masks, and passports in hand, we began our long awaited journey.

We were a bit anxious but excited as we ascended into the night sky toward our first destination—Amsterdam. The city was bustling with commerce, and people were happy to be out and about as the local Covid restrictions had been recently changed. We enjoyed walking around the old part of the city and took a canal tour to see the city from its other road system.

After a day in Amsterdam,



After their trip was delayed more than two years due to covid, Carl and Joyce Bucciatini of Greene finally embarked on a memorable three-week European river cruise..

our ship began to sail down the romantic Rhine River towards Germany. The first full day of cruising took us to Cologne, the home of the famous Cologne Cathedral. The tallest building in the city, the cathedral epitomized the Gothic style of architecture—spring buttresses and tall walls. Its ornate stained-glass

windows depicted different Bible stories.

The next day we sailed through the Rhine River Gorge which has numerous old castles and fortresses on both sides of the river. Sitting on the deck, we said, “Look at the castle over here and over there. Oh! Look! Another is coming up!”

We sailed past the Lorelei Cliff, where sailors of old were lured to their deaths by the compelling songs of the mythical beautiful maiden, Lorelei. With gorgeous swans gliding on the edges of the river and centuries old castles on either side it was easy to imagine how this was the river and countryside where legends, myths and fairytales were told.

Over the next few days, we stopped and toured several towns in Germany and the Alsace region of France. We walked the old squares in Rudesheim, Heidelberg, Strasbourg and Colmar. We marveled at the sky scraping towers of the Gothic cathedrals, gawked at the quaint old timbered houses, and visited Medieval fortresses.

As we admired the amazing structures built centuries ago, the stories of the people resonated with us. Their stories echo the moving themes of conflict, power, deprivation, and even true love.

In the early 1600’s, Prince Frederick V, reigning noble of the Heidelberg castle, emptied out his watch tower of cannons to make a garden and theater for his beautiful Princess bride, Elizabeth Stuart of England. This was romantic and endearing and reminds all of us of the true love in fairy tales.

Their love story lasted until the neighboring Duke took over the castle leaving the handsome Prince and his Princess homeless and kingdom-less at the start of the Great Plague in Europe.

After a week of traveling down the Rhine River through the Netherlands, Germany, and France, we

reached the end of the cruise in Basel, Switzerland.

Even though we were saying “Auf Wiedersehen” to our ship and many new friends, we were starting on the second part of our trip—seeing Switzerland and Austria via the rail system.

For the next ten days we would be on our own. With our Eurail Pass in hand, we embarked upon this next adventure.

We started our stay in Basel by deciding to enjoy the warm days of fall outside. We walked through the Basel Zoo and basked in the welcome autumn sunshine while viewing wild animals and trying to read their animal description in German. We walked through the old city part of Basel and found a charming little restaurant that served fondue. What could be more wonderful than being outside on a nice day and topping it all off with Cheese Fondue in Switzerland?

While we were in Basel, we took a side trip back into Germany to the medieval town of Freiburg on the edge of the fabled Black Forest, the setting for the Brothers Grimm fairy tales. A short ride using a funicular brought us up the side of The Schlossberg where there were easy hiking trails, a park, and spectacular views down into the old part of the city. After returning to Basel, we prepared for our next destination: Lucerne.

Lucerne is higher into the Alps than Basel and is ever so beautiful. The mountains seem to rise right out of the edge of the lake itself. Covered bridges with murals depict the life of the town hundreds of years ago. No trip to this area is complete

without a trip across the lake, and up the cog railway to the top of Mount Pilatus, the 7,000 foot tall mountain at the edge of Lake Lucerne.

The cog railway is one of the steepest ever built, and we



The Cologne Cathedral in Germany is the epitome of majestic architecture.

could see how the farmers and shepherds raised their livestock right on the sides of the mountains as our train climbed up the mountain. Legend tells of a dragon living at the top of Mt. Pilatus whose steamy breath created the fog that often shrouds the moun-



The Castle on the Rhine is so majestic tucked in the foothills on the Rhine River in Cologne, Germany.

tain peaks above Lucerne. The trip down from the peak is by cable car and gondola.

Our next stop was Salzburg, Austria—the birthplace

See River Cruise, Page 7

MEA Board of Directors report

By Gary McGrane, Member
MEA Board of Directors

Much of the decision-making of the MEA Board of Directors that has governed MEA's activities was often tempered by the pandemic. Whether or not one wants to believe there is a Covid-19 issue or not, MEA has taken the most cautious route by following the science and Maine CDC guidelines.

This has been a prudent mode of operations. The safety and health of our staff, educators, students and general public are MEA's primary health concerns. I mention this because many of us are eager to shed masks and get back to normal regarding the availability of our headquarters in Bangor and Augusta.

Alas, offices are open to staff but not to the general membership. Even then, some staff have been working from home or at some other remote location.

As past presidents can attest, there are policies in place to secure membership's personal identity. MEA guards that information through those policies and protocols. We have access to many of the staff but cannot make demands or requests without policy di-

rection or permission from the president or the executive director.

Many members of the MEA staff are working for MEA-Retired but not directly. Staff time and resources are allocated according to the strategic plan and budget. Because MEA staff are not our employees, requests for services or information have procedural steps of authority to follow.

Procedurally speaking, any request that a MEA-Retired member may have needs to go through the president of MEA-Retired. An example is the monthly list of newly retired educators including addresses and status. I receive the list from Lisa Collins. She works for MEA, not MEA-Retired, per se. She has been authorized to release the monthly retiree list to the president of MEA-Retired.

The president then releases the list to local affiliate presidents who then disseminate that information to their Membership Committee chairpersons.

The reason for this change is because if there is a breach in security, we have

an electronic paper trail. It's all about confidentiality and privacy and trust.

As your representative on the MEA Board of Directors, I take this responsibility very seriously. Another example of information sharing is when a member wants information on the status of a member. Erin Noyes can get that information and relay it to the President of MEA-Retired, MEA President or Executive Director. That information can be shared to the select few because only they have the capacity to act on that information.

We receive an overview of the finances. I provide a board briefing on what was discussed and issues raised that directly concern our organization. The MEA Board of Directors also reviews committee reports just like with our board of directors or executive committee.

Most of the time the reports have little bearing on MEA-Retired. For example: the rollout of the new logo or decisions of the Governor's office regarding vaccination, masks, or quarantine mandates.

Most of the discussion centers around the active educators and local leaders. I can honestly say that whenever an issue arises around retirees, MEA is there with resources and personnel.

For example: during the governor's recent supplemental budget hearing on our members COLA, MEA leadership was there. Government Relations Director John Kosinski and MEA President Grace Leavitt testified as did many MEA-Retired members. MEA staff members worked behind the scenes helping our members prepare oral or written testimony.

I can assure our members that MEA's commitment is in supporting MEA-Retired in whatever ways possible.

River Cruise, from Page 6

of Mozart There is an amazing fortress on top of a cliff overlooking the city, and a fairy tale palace just outside the old city. After walking through the palace and gardens, we found the easiest way to climb up to the fortress was to take the funicular to the top.

Our last destination was Vienna—a city that stood tall and elegant with regal palaces and grand buildings. Rich in history of music and culture, Vienna is the home of Beethoven and other great classical musicians.

The Hofburg Palace in Vienna was home to the ruling Hapsburgs and to the famous Spanish Riding School where the majestic Lipizzaner stallions are trained and perform. We were able to view a practice session for the horses, and they lived up to all of our

memories from watching them prance and dance on the "Wonderful World of Walt Disney" when we were kids.

After walking through all of the regal historical build-



Joyce shopped for wooden shoes and especially loved Gouda cheese.

ings in the old part of Vienna, we came across a smaller church called Karl's Kirche just outside the "old city." This church was much smaller than the grand cathedrals but was more modern as it was built in a Rococo style in the mid-1700's.

The interior of the church was ornate and made use of large windows to bring in the sunlight. Frescos adorned the walls which added color and beauty to the inside of the building. If the Gothic cathedrals were tall engineering marvels, this church was just stunningly pretty.

We ended our tour of Vienna chatting about all the history we had sauntered through while enjoying a cup of Viennese hot chocolate (and a pastry) savoring the late afternoon sun of our last

day in the Europe.

The deep forests and edges of the Alps easily brought to mind the specters in *Grimm's Fairy Tales* that are made real in the true history of the Black Plague and conflicts from centuries past.

Yet, it is this breadth of time, this clear knowledge that even as times seemed disparate, hope and humanity did and will prevail, as was evidenced by all of the history we walked in our travels.

As much as we are enriched from our travels, it is also wonderful to come home and view the trees, rivers, mountains, and coastline of Maine as new again. They are certainly different from the old cities of Europe, but stunning in their own sense of woodland beauty and grandeur.

NEA PAC Fund reminder

By Bob Jean, MEA-Retired President-Elect
NEA PAC Captain

The NEA Fund supports the NEA's Political Action Committee (PAC).

So much is at stake right now. With a healthy fund the NEA PAC can dive into the massive amount of work to be done supporting pro-public education candidates who back our most important issues. All across the nation groups are threatening public education, educators, and school boards. I can't think of a better time to take action than right now!

MEA-Retired affiliate presidents encouraged to set aside time at local meetings to promote the NEA Fund. Donations from MEA-Retired members certainly can help make a difference. Please consider doing your part to help the cause!

One great opportunity is to donate at our 70th Convention and Annual Meeting on May 5. The PAC raffle is a fun way to provide much-needed funds. See the article on Page 4 for more details.

Individual contributions may be sent to: NEA-Fund, PO Box 96225, Washington D.C. 20077-7501. Designate 'MEA-Retired' on your check so that Maine can get credit for your donation.

Time is set aside at the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting to recognize those states and the corresponding donations. We would like to have a reputable amount earmarked for Maine retired educators. Please consider what you are able to donate to advance the cause of public education in Maine and our nation.

Donations can also be made electronically by going to the website entitled: [Donate to the Fight for Students - Education Votes](#). After clicking on Maine, you see a "donate" button which leads you to options for one-time or recurring contributions.

Thank you for your participation.

Convention, from Page 1

stay to learn about what MEA-Retired is doing. Only unified members can vote.

A delicious luncheon will be served. Register now. The registration form is on Page 11. Encourage a friend to come with you to enjoy the festivities. This convention will be informative, enjoyable, and is finally happening in-person.

MAINE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION RETIRED 70th Convention & Annual Meeting

"Happy 202nd Birthday, Maine: Proud Past, Bright Future"
Augusta Civic Center, Augusta, ME
May 5, 2022

8:30	Registration, refreshments, exhibits/vendor & county displays, PAC raffle, book swap, music by harpist Isean Halvorson of Dover-Foxcroft
9:30	Welcome.....Gary McGrane, President
	Land Acknowledgement
	Invocation
	Pledge of Allegiance.....Bob Jean, President-Elect
	National Anthem.....LaVerne Craig
	Maine Education Association.....Rachelle Johnson, Executive Director
	MainePERS.....Dr. Rebecca Wyke, Executive Director
	MEA Benefits Trust.....Jennifer Kent, Executive Director
	AARP, Maine.....Noel Bonam, Executive Director
	MEA Government Relations.....John Kosinski
	Legacy Committee.....Hugh Keene, Chairperson
	In Memoriam Tributes.....Kay Grindall, Past President
10:30	View exhibits
11:00	Breakout Sessions (See descriptions on Page 1.) PAC raffle is conducted.
12:00	Buffet Lunch—Main floor (ticket needed)
	Keynote Address: Dr. Libby Bischof Professor of History, University of Southern Maine
1:25	Business Meeting—Main floor.....Gary McGrane, President
	Minutes of 2021 Annual Meeting.....Marilyn Hylan, Secretary
	Action on Resolutions.....Claudette O'Connell, Chairperson
	Honorary Member PresentationGary McGrane, President
	Membership Committee Awards.....Roger Roy, Chairperson
	Community Participation Awards.....Susan Feiner, Chairperson
	Affiliate Leadership Awards.....Bob Jean, President-Elect
	Presidential Award.....Gary McGrane, President
2:30	Adjournment.....Gary McGrane, President

Looking forward to seeing you and your retired educator friends on the 5th!!

Pre-Retirement, from Page 1

questions.

We usually send some pertinent questions that elicited very interesting responses and indicated the need for retirement facts: Do you know what your normal retirement age is and what factors into determining when you can retire? Do stipends count toward pension amount? What medical plan is best for you if you want to live or to travel outside Maine? When should I submit my paperwork to retire?

MEA-Retired Committee members Ed Nunery and Carl Bucciantini hosted the sessions, monitored questions in the chat box, and directed them to the appropriate resource person.

Sharon Beaulieu, Benefits Manager of MEA Benefits Trust, discussed medical insurance plans, reviewed related paperwork, and provided insurance rate

information. She also directed them to the MEA website where more information is readily available.

David Jones of MainePERS delineated information on how to calculate one's monthly pension amount and offered helpful suggestions as to when it might be best for one to retire—considering age, length of teaching experience, and extra-curricular and coaching stipends..

Horace Mann agents summarized GPO and WEP and the impact on pensions. "Getting Ready to Retire" documents are reviewed by members of the MEA-Retired Pre-retirement Committee who also host the Zoom meetings.

The dates for next season's sessions are set with two in the fall and four in the spring. More details will be posted in the June *Clarion, Maine Educator*, websites, and Facebook. Pass the word onto prospective retirees. Encourage them to join us when they retire.

NEA-Retired Executive Council updates

By Bobbi Margo, Minnesota
NEA-Retired Executive Council

The NEA-Retired Executive Council recently met virtually. During these days-as the schedule permitted, the three NEA executive officers extended greetings and shared presentations dealing with legislation, the NEA Foundation, NEA Executive Director, upcoming elections, the Center for Governance, expenditures, and more.

Each member of the Executive Council is responsible for a virtual committee. My committee is Communications. We have met three times; with the last meeting scheduled for April 21.

A major focus has been the revision of several of the communications awards application forms. Revisions have been completed, and the Exec-

utive Council has approved the revisions to several of the award application forms. These application forms are posted on the NEA-Retired website.

The Membership Committee initiated a new award entitled, "Spirit of Membership Award." The Executive Council voted to approve this incentive, and the award criteria and application are listed on the NEA-Retired website.

It was decided that our NEA-Retired annual meeting will be held in-person in Chicago and virtually on June 30-July 1. The in-person NEA-RA is also scheduled to be held in Chicago on July 3-6.

New to the Executive Council Agenda were two

Zoom "sharing sessions" for our retired state presidents. They were asked three questions beforehand to consider and be prepared for discussion:

1. What do you feel needs to be done as the next step for growth and for involvement in NEA-Retired?

2. What is missing in your work and in your activities that would help you in your role as a leader? Training? Materials? Activities?

3. What are your concerns with NEA-Retired procedures or activities for which you would like an explanation or more clarification?

The NEA-Retired PAC Fundraising for 2020-2021 totals \$250,028.04 from

10,466 donors.

Every online auction generated \$66,113.00 from 1,056 donors.

The Jack Kinnaman Scholarship Fund as of August 31, 2021, is \$131,116.03.

Members who have questions or concerns are invited to email r.margo@mchsi.com.

MEA-Retired resolutions up for vote

By Claudette O'Connell, Chairperson
Resolutions Committee

The Resolutions Committee reviewed the MEA-Retired resolutions from the previous year, the NEA resolutions and the MEA resolutions.

Following this review, we discussed and worked on new resolutions to propose for this year. We also had input from an MEA-Retired member who phoned the chair with a suggestion.

Also in late fall, the forms for retired members to use in order to suggest new resolutions were printed in *The Clarion*, posted on the MEA-Retired website and on the MEA-Retired Facebook page. The forms included the process to give input and the dates when the forms had to be turned in.

The Committee finished its work through emails and numerous phone calls. The proposed resolutions listed below will be considered for adoption at the 70th Convention and Annual Meeting on May 5, 2022.

2022 Proposed Resolutions

Resolved: That MEA-Retired believes retirees should receive a full cost of living adjustment (COLA) on their entire retirement income, without caps, based on the Consumer Price Index each year. (2022)



Resolved: That the MEA-Retired believes that the Retirement System (MEPERS) should include early retirement opportunities without penalties or restrictions. (2022)

Resolved: That MEA-Retired believes the Social Security penalty under the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) is an unfair federal law and should be repealed. (2022)

Resolved: That MEA-Retired believes that every eligible citizen has a constitutional right to vote and therefore opposes all actions that encourage voter disenfranchisement. (2022)

Resolved: That MEA-Retired believes members should support legislative efforts to exempt public pensions from state income tax. (Adopted 1997, Amended and readopted 2002-2006, Amended 2021)

Resolved: That MEA-Retired believes members should support legislative efforts to repeal the GPO/WEP federal provisions in the Social Security Act. (Amended and readopted in 2002-2006, Amended 2021)

Resolved: That MEA-Retired believes members should support legislative efforts to increase retired educator's

pension exemption from \$10,000 to parity with the Social Security exemption, and exclude any Social Security benefit received from being used to reduce the deduction. (2005, Amended 2006, Amended 2021)

Resolved: That MEA-Retired believes members should support legislative efforts to allow Maine health and dental premiums to be tax deductible in full. (2005, Amended 2006, Amended 2021)

Resolved: That MEA-Retired believes members should support increasing state funding to 90 percent for health insurance for school employees who are members of the Maine Public Employees Retirement System. (2010, Amended 2012, Amended 2021)

Resolved: That MEA-Retired believes members should actively promote efforts to maintain retirement benefits for members of the Maine Retirement System. (2011, Amended 2012, Amended 2021)

Resolved: That MEA-Retired believes members should support legislative efforts to address "aging in place" issues including increasing the number of home health workers. (2015, Amended 2021)

I would like to thank Resolutions Committee members Louise Thompson and Vickie Amoroso for their time and helpful input. It is clear that they have long standing experience in the area of resolutions. We look forward to our annual meeting.



By Carl Daiker, Member Communications Committee

He's just about seen it all

Many people don't know what they want to be when they grow up, and then others know at an early age. Phil Gonyar knew when he was in the 6th grade that he wanted to teach history.

A graduate of Orono High School, Phil earned a BS degree in Education from the University of Maine at Orono. While there he encountered professional teacher association work. He joined the Student Education Association of Maine (SEAM)—the student group of the Maine Teachers Association (MTA).

After graduation Phil was hired to teach social studies at Bucksport High School. However, the teacher he was hired to replace decided at the last minute not to leave. Phil had a signed contract, but no classes to teach. A compromise was reached, and Phil taught



Conferring on the floor of the 1968 NEA convention in Dallas are (L to R): Phil Gonyar, the late NEA Director Perham Amsden, and the late John H. Marvin, MTA executive secretary.

civics and English to freshmen, modern world history to sophomores, and American history to juniors.

Grace Dodge was Bucksport's elementary supervisor and became Phil's mentor. As NEA Director for Maine, she encouraged him in association work. She convinced him to become a life member of NEA and to join the state and local associations.

By the end of his second year, Phil was elected second vice president of the Bucksport TA. Over the summer the president and first vice president left Bucksport, and Phil became president. At the final TA meeting of the school year, Grace made a motion that the money left in the treasury be used to send Phil to the NEA convention in Atlantic City, NJ.

Meanwhile, Phil was elected to be a delegate to the MTA Representative Assembly (RA). Phil was named to the Ethics Committee and was elected chairperson at the first meeting.

Over the summer of 1961, MTA's committee structure followed the lead of NEA. The Ethics Committee became the Professional Rights and Responsibilities Committee. One of its first responsibilities was to defend teachers who were unjustly fired.

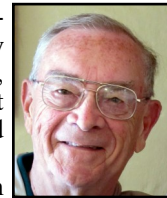
For example, two teachers were fired because the custodian, whose wife was a member of the school board, did not like that they did not arrange student desks in straight rows.

Further, a first-year elementary supervisor conducted a single evaluation of every elementary teacher. Evaluations were based on a check list in which the number of degrees a teacher had weighed heavily. The school board reasoned that if they fired the bottom third (as determined by the evalua-

tion), they would improve the quality of education.

Most of the experienced teachers did not have degrees, but had life teaching certificates. Under the evaluation criteria, they were the first ones to go. Phil and his committee were able to successfully convince the school boards that they had made poor decisions.

Phil was the faculty advisor for the Debate Team at Bucksport. One of the members, Cindy Manuel (nee Perkins), remembers Phil encouraged her to join the team which helped to increase her confidence. She recalls an incident more than 40 years later when she attended a pre-retirement seminar for teachers in Waterville. Phil was retired and chaired the seminar. When Cindy went up to greet him, she was amazed that he still remembered her name.



Phil Gonyar

After four years in Bucksport Phil moved to teach and be social studies department chairperson at Bangor High School. As he continued his association work, in 1965-66, Phil was president of the Bangor Education Association

He was also elected to the MTA executive committee. In 1966, he was elected vice president of MTA. At that time the vice president became president-elect and then president. Phil became MTA president in 1968.

During Phil's tenure John Marvin became MTA executive secretary, a negotiations law was passed, and regional MTA offices were created. MTA also became more active politically.

On the national level the civil rights movement resulted in the integration of the NEA. Phil was present at the 1968 NEA RA in Dallas when the NEA convention

recessed because a representative of one of the African nations was refused service at a local restaurant. The convention resumed when the restaurant was closed down, and Dallas apologized for the incident.

In that same year Phil was named a member of the Joint Committee of the NEA and the American Library Association. From 1970 to 1972, he was co-chair of that committee. In 1973, he became Maine's delegate to the NEA Board of Directors.

On the local scene Phil continued as head of social studies in the City of Bangor and was named chair of the school department's Secondary Curriculum Committee. When the school department decided to add the position of Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Phil's colleagues urged him to take the position if it were offered to him. It was.

After four years in this position, he applied for the position of teacher and social studies department chairperson at Waterville Senior High School.

One of the interviewees was then Superintendent of Schools, Nelson Megna. He has known Phil for 45 years. Said Nelson recently when asked about Phil, "During his long tenure in Waterville, he was well respected by students and highly regarded by his professional colleagues. His astute insights and carefully reasoned responses to issues at hand were, and still are, highly valued."

At Waterville High School Phil took a thematic rather than a chronological approach to the study of US history, a methodology which, by all accounts, was well received by his students.

See Gonyar on Page 11

Gonyar, from Page 10

One of Phil's fellow teachers at Waterville, our own Kay Grindall, remembers how students attending her journalism class reacted immediately after one of Phil's American History classes. She says "They would come in laughing and repeating quotable quotes or singing jingles related to the lesson! What fun and how memorable for them."

The late Albert Hall, one-time Superintendent of Schools in Waterville once said this about Phil, "If you want a project or committee report done with perfection, 100 percent complete, and on time, appoint Phil Gonyar as the chair of that committee."

Phil finished his teaching career in Waterville in 1991, and then went on to serve on the Waterville Board of Education. During his tenure on the Board he continued to look out for the welfare of teachers.

Waterville's current Superintendent of Schools, Eric Haley, recalls Phil questioning why stipends were given to teachers who also held athletic coaching positions, but no stipends were given to those teachers coaching non-athletic



Phil is standing on deck of MS Zaandam in the Gerlache Strait off the Antarctic Peninsula in 2018.

activities such as drama and Science Olympiad.

Eric said that "Phil announced that he would not vote in favor of any more athletic coaches getting paid stipends until the non-athletic coaches were equally paid for their time and investment in our students."

Retirement found Phil

70th MEA-Retired Convention & Annual Meeting

"Happy 202nd Birthday, Maine: Proud Past, Bright Future"

**Keynote Speaker: Dr. Libby Bischof, Professor of History
University of Southern Maine**

May 5, 2022

Augusta Civic Center, 76 Community Drive, Augusta

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

Name _____ Tel. _____ Email _____

Address _____ City/Town _____

State _____ Zip _____ Affiliate _____ Age 90+ FREE _____

Registration: \$20—coffee/juice/food, vendors, affiliate displays, buffet lunch, & entertainment. Write "1" and "2" on the lines to indicate your first and second choices for breakout sessions:

____ Line Dancing ____ Underground Railroad ____ To Antarctica and Back
____ Travels & Tourism: Greenland & Iceland

**This form may be duplicated—submit a separate registration form for each registrant.
Registration is to be postmarked by April 23, 2022**

*Make check payable to MEA-Retired. Send with registration form(s) to
Larry Given, Registrar, 84 Kenway Drive, Litchfield, ME 04350*

Questions? Convention Chair Rheba Michaud, rmichaud143@charter.net (207) 564-7494.

joining the Maine Retired Teachers Association (MRTA). When Sylvia Smith resigned as first vice president, Phil was asked to step into the position. In 1995, he became president of the organization.

Since then he has held a number of positions and is currently parliamentarian. As such, he is a member of the MEA-Retired Board of Directors and the Executive Committee.

Throughout his life Phil has always had the travel bug. To date he has visited all seven continents and 75 nations. He is looking forward to adding to the number of nations this summer (with the cooperation of Covid-19 and international hostilities).

As a part of his international experience Phil has been very involved in the Kotlas-Waterville Area Sister City Connection including seven trips to Kotlas and

other parts of Russia. He is extremely saddened by the events that have embroiled Russia in its attack on Ukraine.

Retirement from Page 12

in what we are doing, then you need to be proud about it, and to invite others to partake in the fun.

I look forward to seeing friends at our Aroostook Retired Educator Association (AREA) summer luncheons. My wife enjoys the luncheons as much or more than I do since that's the only way she gets to see colleagues of 40 or more years ago.

All you have to do is talk to teachers who are still active, and ask them the pivotal question: "Who's thinking about retiring this year?"

They will tell you. Ask the school secretary; she will

know everyone who plans to retire. Then just invite them to join the local affiliate, MEA-Retired, and NEA-Retired. Offer further information as to what is happening in your area. All you have to do is invite people and they will join the fun. Once they attend that first meeting, they discover they meet friends with whom they taught.

More people join because of being personally invited rather than receiving information in the mail or having someone call to solicit them. We all love the personal touch. Let's do our best to reach out in April and May—while they are still around.



Membership Matters: Now is the time to talk!!

*By Roger Roy, Chairperson
Membership Committee*

‘Tis the season!
No! Not Christmas again!
Retirement season!

Teachers, ed techs, guidance counselors, bus drivers, custodians, and a host of other school personnel are seriously considering retirement this year.

Each of us knows someone who is thinking of retiring from teaching. Or we know someone who works with a person who is considering getting out of the classroom. Maybe a friend’s daughter or son is of retirement age and is thinking “This is the year to retire!”

It is true that we need to talk about protecting our students who deserve qualified educators to replace these retirees. We need to think about our schools and how many

adaptations and changes have been implemented to weather the challenges of the recent pandemic.

In the same token, these prospective retirees need to think about their pensions, cost of living allowances, healthcare benefits, dental coverage, volunteerism, advocacy, and service.

All of these issues have been the primary focus of MEA-Retired for years. When people begin to think about retirement, they must also consider how they can continue to stay active with MEA. Part of retiring is considering how one can remain active in the family of educators.

NEA-Retired represents all of us at the national level; MEA-Retired represents all

of us at the state level. Local affiliates represent educators at the county level.

The local affiliates are the life blood of the retired community because they are the social safety net. We can stay in touch with our colleagues and friends and get together to support one another.

We advocate for each other when people are called upon to testify on benefits being lobbied before the legislature or the local school boards. It’s the local affiliates that ensure that our senior retirees come to summer luncheons and have opportunities to connect long after retirement. Many affiliates also provide transportation and offer free meals to those who need.

As educators contemplate

retirement, they need to know how they can easily maintain ties with other educators and continue their contributions to our schools and students and the children of our students.

Being an educator is not a job; it’s a vocation. It’s a calling. It is not easily given up. We still have that innate desire and drive to give to others, to help others, and to reach out to those in need.

Retirement is a transition and joining MEA-Retired is part of that transition. Please consider inviting your friends and colleagues to join us in the next stage of their life. They are going to need us, and we certainly do need them.

I know some of you may feel bashful about approaching to recruit them. If you believe

See Retirement on Page 11

