



THE CLARION

The Newsletter for Retired Educators
Maine Education Association Retired Vol. 135, No. 4

April 2024

72nd MEA-Retired
Convention
and
Annual Meeting

May 2, 2024

“We Shine for Everyone!”

From our President



Bob Jean

Greetings to our valued MEA-Retired members. Our leadership teams have been busy preparing for a busy spring season. I thank members of our Board of Directors and our Executive Committee for their diligence, time, and attention to issues and initiatives.

I thank our affiliate presidents and vice presidents for their commitment to county members and programs. Your service to local members and community entities matter greatly.

So, what is next on our agenda? Our convention and annual meeting, of course! We look forward to having you join us on May 2. Our Convention Committee works hard to make this event special, meaningful, and entertaining. We are grateful for their

efforts and pleased to see the interesting program they have planned. It is always great to recognize and honor our members who serve others so selflessly

This year’s theme is “We Shine for Everyone!” MEA-Retired does, indeed, do its best to shine for everyone. Our hard-working and generous members make a difference every day.

“We shine” for our students in our local schools. Our Day of Caring program continues to be very popular and successful. Many local students and staff benefit from the generosity of our members who donate supplies and time to their local school of choice. The positive feedback we get from the schools confirms that it is a very successful program.

“We shine” for our col-

leagues in other parts of the country. When our friends in Hawaii experienced devastating fires, MEA-Retired contributed to a special fund to help out the Hawaii Retired Education Association members who were affected. Some of our local affiliates added more resources to that fund.

“We shine” for our friends and colleagues at home. When a tragedy hit close in Lewiston, MEA-Retired donated to the special fund to help victims and their families. Once again, many of our locals took up individual collections to add to that fund. We shine for our active educators.

“We shine” for active and retired educators. Recently, there was an MEA Lobby Day at the State House in Augusta. The day

See President, Page 8

Don’t miss out!

By Rheba Michaud, Chairperson

Yes! We are excited!

MEA-Retired Convention and Annual Meeting are just a few weeks away! Register today and join us on May 2 at the Augusta Civic Center.

By the time you receive your *Clarion* in the mail, you will have just a few days to register before the postmark deadline of April 20. Don’t wait too long! There may not be a seat left!

The four breakout sessions will be presented twice, so be sure to register for two events instead of just one. Read the descriptions and think about which two you want to attend.

See 2024 Convention, Page 10

MainePERS launches member portal

Access now available from MainePERS Website

By Domna Giatas, Director
MainePERS Communications

MainePERS members and retirees may now register for and access the **new online Member Portal** directly from the MainePERS website. The phased launch began in October and through March 1, more than 13,000 individuals have registered for the Member Portal.

With the phased portion of the launch completed, information about the portal and how to register is now available on the Member Portal webpage (www.maineper.com/memberportal).

For those who are already

registered easy access to the Member Portal Login is now provided at the top of the MainePERS homepage (www.maineper.com).

Not yet registered? Member Portal registration instructions are available to help on the Member Portal webpage and additional assistance is available at 207-512-3100.

While participation in the portal is optional, registering provides secure and convenient access to MainePERS account information. This includes access to view,

download, and print documents and review beneficiary selections. It is also a convenient way to update contact information, which has been one of the most popular features.

Providing secure access to member information is important, so multifactor authentication (MFA) is required for user registration and login.

As part of that authentication process, access to a cellular or land-line telephone and/or email address is required to receive a unique verification code. This code will be entered online for a successful authentication and secure log in to the portal. Visit the

Member Portal webpage for more information.

A large majority of members and retirees have asked for online account access in member satisfaction surveys and MainePERS is excited to offer this new service!

Inside this issue

72nd Convention.....	1
MainePERS.....	1
Legislative Updates.....	2
Day of Caring grant.....	3
AARP.....	4
Pre-Retirement.....	5
One of our Own.....	6
Our Partner.....	7
MainePERS Report.....	8
Legacy Committee.....	9
Convention/Registration...10-11	
Membership Matters.....	12



By Crystal Ward, Chairperson
Legislative Committee

The second session of 131st Maine Legislature went into session on January 3 and is scheduled to adjourn on April 17.

Several bills dealing with education and some concerning retirement were carried forward from the first session.

The bill we worked hard to get passed with a bipartisan vote was **L.D. 70 "An Act to Eliminate the Cap on Retirement Benefits for State Employees and Teachers to Which a Cost-of-living Adjustment Is Made."** The bill was sponsored by retired educator Representative Janice Dodge of Belfast.

In January, the two co-chairs of the Labor Committee—Senator Mike Tipping,

Legislative updates: Action needed

and Rep Amy Roeder, along with Rep. Charles Skold from the Labor Committee and bill sponsor Rep. Jan Dodge—met with Governor Mills about L.D. 70 and an idea that would cost **much less**.

It was a frustrating meeting. According to Rep. Dodge, the message from Governor Mills that she repeated in several iterations was essentially, "They have received increases! Sometimes through one-time payments, ad hoc COLA's, increases to the base to which the COLA's are applied and the cumulative benefits of their 3 percent."

Governor Mills says that MainePERS retirees are NOT a priority. She was not interested in the new idea and will not support L.D. 70.

It is very frustrating she does not understand the negative impact and harm that have been done in the past,

being done now, and will be done well into the future for MainePERS retirees.

Her concept that we all received a 3 percent COLA computed on our total pensions is a BIG SCAM!!

It is just not true!

Prior to 2011, the annual determined COLA percentage was applied to your **full** retirement benefit. Since that time, the percentage has been applicable to the indexed amount which started at \$20,000 and now, 12 years later, is at only

\$24,911.84.

That 3 percent is figured on the full pensions of those retirees earning **up to** the \$25,659.20 amount. Those whose pensions are more than this amount will **not** receive COLA on their entire amount.

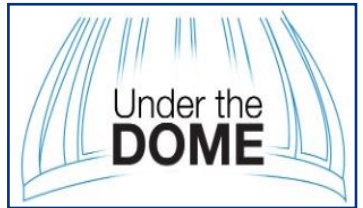
For example, the 3 percent COLA computed on \$25,659.20 amounts to \$769.78. This is the maximum allowable COLA regardless of the higher amount of one's pension.

Let's look a step further and see what they would receive on a 3 percent of a \$35,000 pension: \$1,050. However, this same person

will only receive \$769.78—losing \$280.22. This amounts to about 2.2 percent—**not a 3 percent COLA**.

You can see that we retired educators are **NOT** keeping up with inflation! Most of the reporting on our MainePERS COLA is very misleading to the public and some

See Legislation, Page 4



Members are invited to sign up to receive "up-to-the-minute" legislative news and updates from MEA Government Relations Director John Kosinski. Send an email to him at jkosinski@maineea.org.

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 or send to Kay at 23 Hilltop Drive, Oakland 04963.

Questions? Call Kay at 207-512-0027.

We pay 70 cents for every *Clarion* returned due to "incorrect address." Please send address changes to Lisa Collins at 800-281-3191, Ext. 2400 or 207-888-3856 or via email at lcollins@maineea.org.

Communications Committee:
Carl Daiker, Photographer/
Proofreader
Kay Grindall, Information Coordinator/
Clarion Editor
Roger Fuller, Facebook Administrator

Bob Jean, President
Maine Education Assoc. Retired
PO Box 821, Rockland ME 04861
207-593-6597
vegas04861@yahoo.com
www.mearetired.org

NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA RA

July 1—July 7, 2024
Philadelphia, PA

June 30—July 6, 2025
Portland, OR

July 1—July 7, 2026
Denver, CO

June 29—July 5, 2027
Indianapolis, IN



MEA-Retired is here for you!

April 1, 2024, 9 a.m.
Board of Directors Meeting
Best Western Hotel, Waterville

May 1, 2024, 5:30 p.m.
Executive Committee
The Senator, Augusta

June 3, 2024, 9 a.m.
Board of Directors Meeting
Best Western Hotel, Waterville

August 5, 2024, 9 a.m.
Executive Committee
MEA Headquarters, Augusta

Meet/greet begin at 9 a.m.
Meetings begin at 9:30 a.m.

MEA RA May 18-19, 2024

Portland Sheraton
at
Sable Oaks
in
South Portland

The Community Participation Committee is pleased to announce the recent award of a \$1,000 grant from the Instructional and Professional Development (IPD) Committee of MEA.

This money from IPD provides extra funds for affiliates to purchase supplies and

classroom items for our Day of Caring activities. Upon submitting a completed application form and receipts for items purchased, affiliates may receive up to \$60 for these expenditures.

There is one **BIG** factor in our executing this grant: All purchases must be made and receipts submitted to me by May 10. The grant must be remitted to MEA before the June 1 deadline and will be done so by their receiving verification of receipts of purchases.

Affiliate members volunteer many hours to assist our active educators and students. Examples include setting up classrooms and preparing materials for incoming students, providing school supplies in backpacks, and photocopying materials.

Hence, affiliates may purchase classroom supplies and items in April that may be stored and used for our

active educators and students in the fall.

Additionally, if affiliates want to use the funds to help provide food for lunches for workers on the Day of Caring, they may purchase gift cards at Wal-Mart, Shaw's, Hannaford or their local grocery stores. Then, these gift cards may be used later in August and September to purchase the food and drinks to feed the volunteers on the actual Day of Caring.

Applications have been sent to affiliate leaders. Please send the completed form with related receipts to Susan Grondin, 47 Hilltop Avenue, Lewiston, ME 04240 postmarked by May 8.

Forms not submitted by this date will not qualify for these extra funds. Questions? Email me at scgron-din@hotmail.com or call me at 207-782-8850.

Please note that these MEA funds are **in addition**

Day of Caring begins now: Extra \$\$ available

By Susan Grondin, Chairperson
Community Participation Com.

to the MEA-Retired annual reimbursements which support Day of Caring expenses up to \$100 as well. Information for submitting Day of Caring applications for MEA-Retired reimbursements will be forthcoming.

The Committee thanks our members for continuing to be active in our communities and for supporting the goals of MEA-Retired Association. We look forward to another successful year.

Reminder
Please keep track of your physical activity hours and volunteerism hours beginning April 1, 2024, thru March 31, 2025. Members are asked to report these hours to affiliate leaders. Those with the highest number will be recognized at our Annual Convention and Business Meeting in May.

Bylaws Committee Report

The MEA-Retired Bylaws Committee consists of Corley Anne Byras, Kay Grindall, Gary McGrane and Phil Gonyar. The Committee met recently and discussed possible changes to our bylaws. The Committee is presenting the following revision:

In Article X, regarding alternates to the NEA Representative Assembly and the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting, the Assistant Treasurer shall be removed from the list of alternates.

NEA rules indicate that delegates and alternates must be elected by the members. **Since our Assistant Treasurer is appointed, that officer is not eligible to serve as an alternate.**

The vote on the amendment will be held at the MEA-Retired Annual Meeting to be held on May 2, 2024.

Partnership for Caring

Retired educators remain eligible to participate in the "Partnership for Caring" financial assistance program. The criteria reads: "MEA will assist local affiliates to meet exigent expenses of an unpredictable nature incurred by members or their immediate families. Specifically, the MEA will match, dollar-for-dollar, up to \$1,500 in contributions raised by a



local affiliate or combination of affiliates to meet such expenses."

When an affiliate raises funds to assist a needy unified member to help with catastrophic circumstances (fire, flood serious health diagnoses, etc.), MEA will match the raised amount up to \$1,500. An application is posted on our MEA-Retired website and Facebook page.



CONGRATULATIONS "Century+ Club"



Benita Russo, 1/1/1919
Martha Rollins, 6/22/1919
Irene Robertson, 10/23/1919
Lucille Walker, 1/1/1921
Frances Bryson, 1/1/1923
Josephine McAlary, 1/1/1923
Evelyn Davis, 5/10/1923

AARP special recognition

By Pam Partridge
MEA-Retired AARP Liaison

André Chassé of the Bangor area is the new Volunteer State President of AARP Maine. He currently works for Northern Light Health as a Retirement Benefits Manager.



André Chassé

In the announcement, Noël Bonam,

AARP Maine State Director, described André as a “person of energy and commitment who is passionate about Maine and the well-being of the people who live in our state.”

The role of the volunteer state president is an important one to the organization. André has been a member of the AARP Maine Volunteer Executive Council for the past two years and will continue to serve on the Board with more responsibilities.

Other responsibilities will include a leadership role with the Tuesdays at the State House (TASH) volunteer corps. This group works with AARP Maine staff members to review pertinent legislation, engage state legislators, draft testimony, testify at hearings, and monitor legislative committee meetings.

André has had a leading role in initiatives and events supporting his local community. Personal interests include a love of music which he studied in college.

He is currently involved in the music program at the Hammond Street Congregational Church (HSCC) and sings with the Black Bear Men’s Chorus at the University of Maine in Orono.

His community involvement includes serving on the Stewardship Committee at HSCC; being a board member with Equality Maine, and serving on the Advisory Committee on Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Human Rights for the City of Bangor.

Chassé graduated from John Bapst Memorial High School in Bangor and earned a Bachelor of University Studies degree from the University of Maine.

Noted in a recent press

release, when asked what he hopes to accomplish as the AARP Maine Volunteer State President, Chassé said: “Much of the success that AARP Maine has achieved is a direct result of the efforts of its volunteer corps who work tirelessly on behalf of older Mainers.

“AARP is a powerful, non-partisan organization for the entire age 50+ community. I look forward to expanding our reach so we can increase engagement with AARP members and their families throughout our state.”

There are over 200,000 AARP members in Maine, a significant percentage of our population.

Chassé says he is deeply honored to have been selected as the next Volunteer State President for AARP Maine and is looking forward to working with AARP Maine volunteers, staff and our extended family in this new position.

Legislation, from Page 2

legislators.

L.D. 457 An Act to Amend Maine's Tax Laws has a plan to fund COLA on

the first \$40,000 one year at a time. This legislation had a public hearing with the Taxation Committee. We will follow this new idea that costs a lot less.

Governor Mills told the sponsors in the January meeting to “find the money.” They did find the money, and she still does not support L.D. 457. This is very disappointing to realize that retirees are not receiving what they have earned and what they deserve. I encourage you to send Gov. Mills a message about how disappointed you are for her not supporting L.D. 70 or L.D. 457 to help fix the punishments dumped on the retirees in MainePERS in 2011.

L.D. 1773 An Act to Increase the State's Share of the Cost of Health Insurance for Retired Teachers was voted *ought to pass*, unanimously out of committee.

This legislation would increase the amount the State pays for retired teacher

monthly health care premiums from 60 percent to 65 percent. This bill has bipartisan support. There are more steps in this process but this one may make it.

GPO/WEP

In Washington D.C., H.R. 82 would correct the Social Security offset (WEP/GPO) issues that have over 300 bipartisan co-sponsors. NEA is working hard to get a vote by this summer. This is the best chance we have had in many years.

The bill in the Senate has 49 co-sponsors. All of the Maine delegates in Washington are co-sponsors for these bills. NEA is also carefully watching several bills that could impact Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. However, few have widespread support; but they are always monitoring progress and keeping us informed. About opportunities to help retirees in MainePERS.

Areas to watch include increasing the amount the State pays for health insur-

ance, implementing the new laws dealing with taxation of retired, and offering ideas to fix the 2011 COLA injustice.

I hope that many of you have contacted Governor Mills on this issue because her support is critical to any movement in 2024.

If you do not have a computer, there is nothing better than a hand-written letter. Write your story that will give them insight into the plight of your retired life. Mail it to Governor Janet Mills, One State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333.

One may also go to the maine.gov website and see the contact email address for Governor Mills. There is a form to fill in and email a message to Gov. Janet Mills.

If you want monthly up-to-date legislative reports and hear about opportunities for testimonies, contact MEA Government Relations Director John Kosinski. Ask him to include you on the email list entitled “Under the Dome.” Email jkosinski@maineaa.org.

PAC Auction!

PAC funds provide support for candidates who support students and education. Will you provide some items for our auction tables? Knitted, crocheted, or sewn items? Woodworking? Dishes? Metal creations? Antiques? Jewelry? Baked goodies? We will also have a 50-50 raffle.

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

Pre-Retirement reflections

By Bo Zabierek, Chairperson
Pre-Retirement Committee

As we welcomed our new MEA-Retired President Bob Jean, all committee positions were reconsidered and approved by the new president and confirmed by the Board of Directors.

We had a recent resignation in February as Ruth Chaffee of Dennysville resigned due to a very busy calendar of events. We thank Ruth for filling the opening in the committee last year and providing us with a year of service on the committee.

We started the school year with Jim Thornton of Westbrook joining the committee to fill the opening that Ed Nunery left hosting the Tuesday night seminars with Anthem Medicare Advantage and Horace Mann GPO/WEP presentations.

Jim also refers to the benefits of unified membership handout during retirement in NEA, MEA, MEA-Retired—as well as for our local county retired education associations.



Joan Warren of Lyman has continued to host the Wednesday evening seminars with MainePERS as the featured presentation. She also mentions the benefits of being a member of our local county retired education associations.

To replace Ruth, we reached out to another recent retiree, July Gomez of Lewiston, to fill in for whoever needs coverage. She hosted our final Tuesday evening on March 5 while Joan closed out the year on March 6.

We have been grateful for the very valuable feedback that the surveys have provided us. They have allowed us to meet on Zoom as a committee to discuss and implement changes to the presentations to make them more streamlined, relevant, and memorable as prospective retirees contemplate the big decision.

We thank President Bob Jean for facilitating the setup and distribution of Zoom links through Lisa Collins, our Uniserv Assistant in the MEA office in Caribou. She also encourages members to join with retired unified members for less than \$100 per year.

We are thrilled to have a fully staffed committee returning for the second year of our pre-retirement program assignments. We are looking forward to meeting hundreds of active educators who are contemplating retirement in the next few years. If you have questions or suggestions, feel free to contact me at bozabierek@gmail.com.

Health Care Committee update

By Belinda Micucci, Chair
Health Care Committee

The Health Care Committee works for retirees to meet their needs and find answers to their questions. We will continue to address your health benefit concerns upon request.

Vision coverage is available through Anthem's Blue View Vision program. If you have questions on enrolling in the vision coverage you may reach out to Sharon Beaulieu, MEABT Benefits Manager at sbeaulieu@meabt.org.

If you have other concerns, billing or coverage questions, those would need to go through Blue View Vision at 1-866-723-0515.

Dental coverage remains separate through Northeast Delta Dental. You may contact Lisa Collins with questions at lcollins@maineaa.org.

At the MEA's request, the University of Maine System has appointed a Retiree Health Ombudsman. She is Benefits Specialist Ann Remick. Ann can be reached through the UMS Employee Benefits Center: 207-973-3373.

(Option 2 for Retirees) or 866-269-9635. Her personal contact information is: 207-262-7936 or send an email to ann.remick@maine.edu.

Director of Employee Benefits Karla Varnum has agreed to act as Ann's back-up. Karla's contact information is: 207-262-7938 or karla.varnum@maine.edu.

If you have questions regarding health insurance coverage, feel free to contact me at bmicucci80@gmail.com or call me at 207-807-6224.

Be well.

FREE Coffee Socials Sponsored by AARP

Want to meet other AARP members this summer? Join AARP Maine for free coffee and snacks while greeting neighbors, friends, staff, and volunteers. You will also hear from community leaders.

Coffee socials are held each month at the following locations and times:

Bangor: Third Friday, 8:30-10 a.m., Dysart's at 1110 Broadway.

Fort Kent: Second Wednesday, 2-3 p.m., Public Library, One Monument Square.

Lewiston/Auburn: Last Wednesday, 8:30-10 a.m., Happy Days Diner, 67 Mill St., Auburn.

Portland: First Friday, 10-11:30 a.m., AARP Maine's State Office, 53 Baxter Blvd., Suite 202.





By Dianne Horton
Waldo Educators Assoc. Retired

Where and when it all began

superintendent who had a pile of applications on his table as teaching jobs were scarce that year.

Dan said he wasn't going to teach in a town where the chicken meets the sea. Belfast was the broiler capitol!

They called us for a Belfast interview while we were on our honeymoon heading to Swans Island where Dan's roommate lived.

We slept in our car with the back seat folded down beside Swan Lake in Swanville getting ready for an interview in a school's office in Belfast. We loved it there and dreamed of actually living on the lake one day.

Swan Lake is bordered by Frankfort, Searsport and Swanville and is five miles long. It also offers Swan Lake State Park. Dan was the first life guard and our two sons also served as life guards.

Dan wore his wedding suit and tie and gray suede spats over his shoes. The two men interviewing us didn't know what to make of him.

Then they asked me about the last book I had read—*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. It wasn't popular yet and hadn't been made into the famous movie yet.

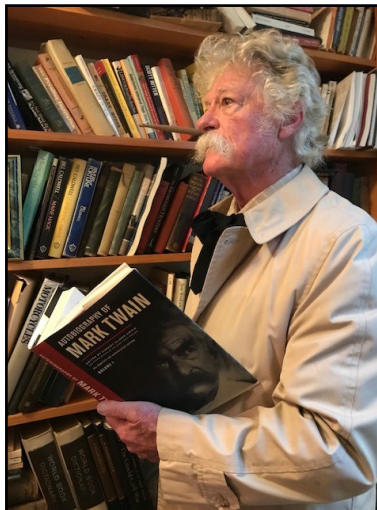
The superintendent asked me what three colors I'd use to paint a portrait. Even back then I was painting and had wanted to go to art school. My parents refused to let me go to USM and paint naked people!

The men interviewing us brought in some school board members to meet us, and we signed contracts on the spot—\$6,500 each. We were so broke we didn't even ask what the salary was!

Dan was thrilled and immediately began to search for games and neckties and fun things to do in a seventh grade social studies class-

room. I was very nervous teaching Grades 1 and 2 together in the same classroom.

Dan has always dressed



Dan brought Mark Twain to life when he would impersonate him and read from his books for students and adults alike.

up for holidays with costumes and fun games. Now teaching eighth grade, his principal told him they wouldn't be celebrating Halloween so his class celebrated the day after!!

One year the principal was not happy that Dan didn't seem to dress up like a country but he had worn so many neckties she didn't realize he was Thailand.

For 33 years, he taught every class how to sing "The Maine State Song" with all the gestures that accompany it. When we see some of our grownup students now, they remind us of the motions they learned while singing the State of Maine song!

Dan also coached the YMCA swim team encompassing Ages 5 through 14. They practiced in the Belfast Area High School pool for 20 years. It was called Blue Fish and a Y without Walls.

We now have a YMCA building and a beautiful, state-of-the-art six-lane

pool—thanks to the efforts of Dan and many others who worked hard to help it come to pass.

He has often taken on the role of Samuel Clemens—the famous author known as Mark Twain. Dan can tell his wonderfully humorous stories as well as dress like Twain. Furthermore, Dan's hair and mustache are now white and just as bushy as Twain's was.

Other schools have asked him to perform as well. He's quite hysterical.

Now married for 52 years, we have lived in the same cottage since 1978 right on that same Swan Lake. We made it a year-round home, and it has been a most wonderful place to raise our two sons and play with visiting grandkids!

Kevin Coombs remembers Mr. Horton's social studies class in 1990: "One of the details that I always enjoyed was his ability to make history come alive with his anecdotal approach. Dan has a story for every scenario and can craft an analogy out of mid-air like a magician snatching a rabbit from a hat. This was the magic of his class and the mastery of his craft—a teacher who could take social studies concepts and bring them to life.

"We serve on the Board at the Waldo County YMCA together, and Dan often substitutes at Troy Howard Middle School where I teach Grades 7 and 8 English Language Arts."

Dan taught for 33 years—Grades 6 and 7 social studies and Grade 8 language arts. Dianne taught for 31 years—Grades 1 and 2 and for 23 years she taught migrant children in Pre-K thru high school in 11 schools. They both taught in MSAD 34—Belfast area. They remain active and often travel in their 1985 VW pop-up camper. The Hortons live in Swanville and have two sons and three grandchildren.



Dan and Dianne won the 2023 "Ugly Sweater" contest sponsored by the local YMCA in Bel-

Now what? We decided to get married in June 1971, but it was also the date for both of our college graduations—at the University of Maine in Machias and University of Southern Maine—Gorham.

We had attended a huge job symposium day at USM in Gorham and we were the last couple to meet the Belfast area

Lisa Collins, MEA-Retired's Uniserv Assistant, grew up in Woodland where she attended primary and middle school. She became involved in all that school has to offer—playing basketball, softball, and other intramural sports.

She went on to Caribou High School where she enrolled in the business education department. She was interested in obtaining skills to work in a business office setting.

After high school she worked at a bank for eight years and started a family.

She saw an advertisement for work at the Presque Isle High School as an administrative assistant in the school nurse's office. This position in the school offered

great working hours for a working mother. She applied and was offered the position. She worked in the office for 10 years.

Lisa then moved to Caribou High School where she worked in a similar position in their school nurse's office. She worked there for 10 years before coming to work for MEA in the Caribou office as the assistant to Uniserv Director 15. She is also the MEA-Retired's Uniserv Assistant.

Caribou is MEA's only office with a single UD Director and single UD Assistant. Lisa also handles all of MEA-Retired applications for retirement and insurances and dues deductions from our pensions.

Lisa also is a pivotal member of our MEA-Retired Pre-Retirement Committee as she organizes and schedules our seminars. She organizes six two-evening sessions—some are held in the fall and some in February and March.

She emails invitations to educators in Grades Pre-K

through 12 who are MEA members. She keeps track of registrations and answers questions. She sends the Zoom link and accompanying documents that they read ahead of time to prepare for the meetings.

As a result, she often receives questions and requests for more information from attendees. She is very busy accommodating members before and after the seminars.

Lisa is a member of MEA Staff Organization, the staff union of MEA's employees. She also helps out at the RA every May. She is at the registration table—checking in attendees, handing out folders, and answering numerous questions.

Through her current position with MEA, Lisa loves reconnecting with her many colleagues who are still working in education in "The County."

She also enjoys helping and coordinating with the state office staff in the MEA office in Augusta for special statewide events.

Lisa is a pivotal resource and ready and willing worker for MEA-Retired. She handles all of our membership enrollments. She maintains our mailing list so that our retired members receive pertinent mailings and *The Clarion* every month.

MEA-Retired President Bob Jean commends Lisa for her great work in scheduling the calendar and emailing attendees for our pre-retirement seminars. "She is very organized, cooperative in every way, and is a pivotal person in the success of our membership drives. We appreciate all she does to support MEA-Retired."

Roger Roy of Caribou is MEA-Retired's Membership Committee Chairperson and

works closely with Lisa to ensure membership issues are tended.

He says, "Lisa has been a great resource and willing worker. She is so very helpful in all the membership issues we work through. She keeps meticulous records of our members and always has the answer to our questions."

Roger expressed appreciation "for her dispensing the monthly lists of active teachers who are retiring at the end of each school year. She now includes their telephone numbers and email addresses which make our contacting them so much easier," he says.

Clarion Editor Kay Grindall agrees wholeheartedly. "She maintains our mailing list and keeps addresses as updated as possible. She also keeps track of our members who are 100 or more years of age."

Rick Dosedlo of Grossman Marketing Group where our newsletter is printed says that "Lisa sends the mailing labels like clockwork every other month. She is always on top of her game. I enjoy working with her."

Lisa has been a great help and forwards all members' requests very well. She contributes much to the success of our pre-retirement seminars.

Lisa and her husband moved to Cross Lake a few years ago and enjoy living near the water. She enjoys sledding and traveling in the winter. In the summer she likes riding her ATV, water sports, and boating.

She enjoys hosting barbecues and spending time with family and friends throughout the year. These times are important parts of their social lives.

She and her husband have two sons and a daughter who all live close by. Her husband works for Pepsico.

One son attended Caribou High School Technical pro-

Our partner in member growth

By Bo Zabierek, Chairperson
Pre-Retirement Committee

gram and Northern Maine Community College in Presque Isle preparing to become a diesel mechanic. He is married.

Their other son is a Husson College Masters of Business Administration graduate and works in business.

Their daughter works in real estate part-time while operating her own beauty salon in Caribou. She was in the second cosmetology class to graduate from the Presque Isle High School Technical Center.

When asked her advice to anyone about a career in education, she said, "I'd tell them what I told my own children: Become educated yourself and then go see the world!"

In her spare time she still helps out on her family's potato farm in Aroostook County as she has done during her growing up years. She hopes to retire someday to a warmer climate for the winters.



Lisa Collins

Volunteer!



SMILE
"Seniors Make It
Look Easy"

MainePERS inside look

By John Kimball,
MainePERS Trustee

Finances: The preliminary balance of the MainePERS fund was **\$19.1 Billion** in spite of volatile financial markets. The Federal Reserve continues to hold interest rates at current levels; there are signs that the rate increases have accomplished a cease-fire on the war on inflation. I expect no decreases until at least July 2024.

As of this writing, Jerome Powell, Chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve, has indicated that rates may stay higher at their current levels longer, despite high mortgage rates. The House of Representatives, which must originate any spending bills, has remained ineffective.

Due to lack of any internal leadership, possible government shutdowns will continue

to threaten the economy. There continues to be a monthly cash outflow from the programs due to benefit payments and the systems investment program. At the February Board of Trustees meeting, the trailing 12-month period outflow was **\$445 Million**.

This outflow is projected to reverse in the next 12 months as investment **distributions** should outpace benefit and investment **outflows** by nearly **\$610 Million**.

Projected 2024 fiscal year return is expected to be below actuarial projections. Current performance since June of 2024 is 3.4 percent with implications of these trends being reflected in the next biennial state budgets.

Calendar Year January 31, 2023, results were 0.0 percent. Fiscal Year to Date return remains at 3.4 percent (January 31, 2024). In 2028, after the 1995 Unfunded Actuarial Liability (UAL) has been paid off, the system anticipates the unfunded liability accrued since 1995 to be approximately **\$1 Billion**.

There will be considerable policy discussions involving **actuarial assumptions** as projections for State mandatory contributions

have failed to control the volatility of the funding level of the UAL.

Any benefit restorations in the next biennium will continue to be challenging because the impending increased payments for the 1995 UAL may fluctuate significantly with the approaching deadline.

This is a typical effect at the end of a liability funding scheme. The system's rolling 3-Year Annualized risk of the fund is 6.3 percent—well **below** the assumed actuarial assumed risk of 12 percent. Furthermore, the Rolling 3-Year Annualized Rate of Return of 7.3 percent remains above the expected return of 6.5 percent.

Asset allocation is driving over-all return. The system's asset allocation has resulted in reduced overall volatility as most of the public market volatility affects only one third of total assets. Liquidity is **not** a concern. (\$7.6 Billion)

Operations: MainePERS CEO Dr. Rebecca Wyke has implemented significant changes in member services that have already

resulted in improved member service, efficiency, and morale. Among changes to improve services are increased feedback opportunities for stakeholders.

Work on the member portal with new features has gone active (October 2023) and is experiencing ever-increasing use, saving significant time-savings to staff. The work backlog that caused the "Focus Fridays Program" will be extended a few more months until the flood of teacher retirees has been cleared.

Full staffing problems have been mitigated and the backlog has declined significantly. The total number of retirees is over 47,500.

MainePERS has been busy contacting previous participants who are no longer active, are not vested, and are withdrawing their contributions to the System.

Each withdrawal of contributions represents an "experience gain" to the System. Ongoing operations include updating software, hardware, and system security. The 2023 Annual Report has just been released!!



President, from Page 1

was for contacting state legislators—asking them to support an increase in the base pay for active teachers and to support legislation that would hopefully establish a livable wage for support staff. Of the 50 or so MEA members, nine were from MEA-Retired. It was a great show of support for our active educators.

"We shine" for our future retirees. MEA-Retired offers Pre-Retirement seminars for educators who are giving serious thought to the day when they can retire and are trying to make sense of the retirement system. The seminars are extremely informative and offer guidance for those making the all important decision about retirement.

"We shine" for all our members who make MEA-Retired so special. Shine on! Enjoy this special day set aside to celebrate the accomplishments, friendships, and relationships among more than 5,400 members and friends.



Retired educators participating in MEA's Lobby Day at the statehouse in Augusta on February 22 are (L to R): Rep. Mike Worth, Ellsworth; Rep. Kelly Noonan-Murphy, Scarborough; Rep. Mike Brennan, Portland; MEA-Retired President Bob Jean, Thomaston, Pam Partridge, North Anson; Bo Zabierek, Sherman Station; Lorraine Mahoney, Norridgewock; Gary McGrane, Jay; and Kay Grindall, Oakland.

Legacy grants provide incentives

By Jan Collins, Chairperson
Legacy Committee

Affiliates have applied for the **Ritter Grant** for 2024-2025 year. This year they stress concern for members who are more vulnerable or are restricted in their activities.

The projects stress ways to stay in contact with those who are more restricted in their activities. The main theme for all applications is finding ways to keep every member in contact with others.

To have the grant accepted the county associates must make an application explaining what they plan to do to include all members of the organization. These applications are given to each county at the September Board of Directors meeting when all affiliates are present.

They are posted on the MEA-Retired website, and a reminder notice is sent twice to members of affiliate leadership.

The deadline for submission is always February 1 of the following year. All counties are encouraged to submit an application.

The Legacy Committee then reads the applications to see if any changes need to be made to be acceptable for consideration.

ANDROSCOGGIN:

“Chocolates and Fellowship for Retirees 80 and Older” We will recognize our oldest and valuable members who are also our most vulnerable. These include our active, honorary, those in ill health and our recent inactive members, including those in care facilities. We convey that they are not forgotten. This includes chocolates on their birthdays, when ill and congratulations for receiving special recognitions.

AROOSTOOK: **“Life members eat free!”** At four general meetings we will provide funds so that every life member eats free.

FRANKLIN: **“Lifting Spirits”** Visiting members

who are ill, hospitalized or homebound with flowers, meals or cards; taking them for rides, lunch or the movies. Communicating with the rest of the members.

HANCOCK: **“Sending Sunshine and Staying Connected”** Brightening the days of members who are homebound by brightening their days with flowers on their birthdays and cards sent at regular intervals, visits, and care packages.

KENNEBEC: **“Creating a More Inclusive Membership Environment”** Increasing members’ connection to the organization regardless of physical ability to attend KREA meetings with a special focus on those 80+ years and older, homebound, or ill and to honor their contributions. We email or paper mail to keep members informed, send get well and birthday cards, and send flowers on milestone birthdays (90,95, 100+ years of age).

KNOX: **“Kindness, Communication, Reaching Out”** Reach out to our active and inactive members in times of need. This will be done through mail, phone calls, facebook, photos, etc. We will send cards to members who need cheering up and provide transportation to meetings or medical appointments. We will remind members to alert us when they know a member needs our help.

MID-COAST: **“Legacy Greetings: Honoring Educators”** Bringing joy and appreciation to retired educators. Holiday mailings will be sent to approximately 24 retired educators who need this attention.

Every member will receive a birthday card to show they are special. Telephone calls will be encouraged among the members. Cards are specially selected to express admiration for their dedication, wisdom, and life-

long commitment to their students.

PENOBSCOT:

“Santa’s Helpers” Provide a gift bag at Christmas to all members who are homebound or in a care facility. Also make sure all members who attend meetings know they are important people. Christmas cards will be sent to all members. We also continue to send birthday cards.

SOMERSET: **“SEAR Outreach”** Copies of our newsletter sent to our members who are unable to attend meetings. Cards and visits will be made to members who are home-bound. We provide zoom connections for those who cannot make our meetings in person.

WALDO: **“Driving Retired Educators, Attending Meetings and Socializing”** Provide monetary incentive for members to provide rides to and from meetings especially for members who no longer drive. Reimbursement for drivers to meetings and to the annual state conference.

WASHINGTON:

“Building and Maintaining Membership” We will send retirement cards to prospective members, pay for invited speakers lunch, donate to meeting host site, send flowers to families of those mem-

bers who die, and cards to those who are in facilities or homebound.

YORK: **“For Their Services Rendered”** Long-standing members (20 years) will receive a complimentary meal and a gift at the October meeting. Members who can no longer attend meetings will receive a potted plant. Cards will be sent to these members when appropriate.

The **Sheehan Grant** was developed by friends and family of Anne Sheehan. The Honor Grant is given each year in her name to an active teacher enrolled in an advanced degree program.

This year’s grant is awarded to Brandi Merry, a Grade 7 & 8 Alternative Education teacher instructing a wide range of subjects. She is enrolled at Thomas College in the Educational Leadership Degree program and hopes to become an administrator.

Membership, from Page 12

Their current membership stands at 82. So their percentage growth is 13.9 percent— $82-72=10$ divided by the old number of 72.

Come to convention and see how the awards for membership growth will be presented as follows:

MEA-Retired would present up to five awards as follows: Affiliate with largest membership growth percentage receives \$100. Up to four affiliates with the next highest growth percentages receive \$50 each. (with the stipulation that growth percentage be positive).

This would cost up to \$300 per year, and would incentivize affiliates actively recruiting new members.

If affiliate leaders have questions or need further clarification, do not hesitate to contact me at 207-768-1688 or soucyroy@maine.edu.

2024 Convention, from Page 1

Master gardener Lynn Lubas of Dover-Foxcroft will give us tips on creating better and more productive gardens.



Lynn Lubas

Rena Kearney of Mars Hill has traveled to many countries and enjoys sharing her many experiences—her most recent one being to Europe. You may want to take one of her trips because Rena brought the country alive for you.



Rena Kearney

For all you outdoors enthusiasts and avid hikers, we have the lady for you. Traci Halvorson of Easton hiked the Appalachian Trail alone. She had many fascinating adventures! You may decide to hike a small portion of the trail after you hear her stories!



Traci Halvorson

All of us want to maintain good health with confident balance and strength. MaineGeneral’s Physical Therapy Director Matthew Cary will be giving exercises for you to do at home to help with your balance. As you watch TV or movies, you can exercise and become healthier and more balanced as you work around and outside your home.



Matt Cary

Our keynote speaker will be most extraordinary. Scarborough Police Chief Mark Holmquist will discuss his career as a sentry guarding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington, Virginia. All who have visited the renowned Tomb of the Unknown Soldier will be very interested in learning of the expectations and requirements of this very impressive position. This will be very interesting!



Mark Holmquist

(Note: Reread your December *Clarion* for more in depth information on our speakers.)

In addition to having two breakout sessions, we have a new **Attendance Award**. This Attendance Award will be given to the affiliate with the highest percentage of members in attendance—computed on the membership numbers from the 2023 convention booklet. It is important to be sure to write the name of your affiliate on the registration form so we can know how many attend from each affiliate. Invite friends to attend. Plan to carpool and make it a fun day.

A delicious brunch awaits you as you arrive. A hot full menu lunch is always

delicious. Many exhibitors and vendors are available for you to peruse. The PAC silent auction will be available for your fun and surprises! The book exchange table will be featured as well. So, bring some good books to leave at the table and take some home with you.

Affiliates, we invite you to bring a poster to display and showcase what your affiliate members are doing and the programs in which they are involved. Presidents, please let me know that you are planning to bring a poster, so I will have a table waiting for you. If you only need one-half table, please let me know that too. Affiliates often share tables.

Our morning speakers keep us up to date on MEA-Retired affairs. We will have a solemn Memorial Tribute. Grants and scholarships will be presented. Membership and Community Participation Awards will

be given. Please keep track of your volunteer and exercise hours.

One of the most important awards given are Leadership Awards that are presented to each affiliate’s exceptional leader.

For this nominal fee, you will enjoy great food, learn in the breakout sessions, remain informed, enjoy entertainment, speak with many vendors and exhibitors and meet and renew old friendships.

Let’s see which affiliate will receive our first Attendance Award. Encourage your friends to come with you. See you in a few weeks—you will leave having fun, being more informed, making sweet memories, becoming more aware of opportunities, and joining other retired educators of like mind.

Fill out the form today and send it in well before the postmark deadline. We look forward to seeing you soon!

**MAINE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION RETIRED
72nd Convention & Annual Meeting
Augusta Civic Center, Augusta, ME
May 2, 2024**

- 8:30 Registration, refreshments, exhibits/vendor/county displays, PAC raffle, book swap, music by harpist Isleen Halvorsen of Dover-Foxcroft
- 9:30 Welcome.....Bob Jean, President
- Land Acknowledgement.....Bob Jean, President
- InvocationRev. Angela Rotherham, Pastor
Kennebec River United Methodist Churches
- Pledge of Allegiance.....Molly Smith, President-Elect
- National Anthem.....Isleen Halvorsen
- Maine Education Association.....Jesse Hargrove, Vice President
- MainePERS.....Dr. Rebecca Wyke, Executive Director
- MEA Benefits Trust.....Jennifer Kent, Executive Director
- Introductions: Vendors, Exhibitors, DisplaysBob Jean, President
- 9:50 Dismissal to Session 1 and PAC Raffle
- 10:00 Breakout Session 1
- 10:45 Dismissal to Session 2 and PAC Raffle
- 10:55 Breakout Session 2
- 11:40 View Exhibits and Affiliate Displays and PAC raffle tickets
- 12:00 Buffet Lunch—Main floor (Ticket needed) Raffle prizes awarded
- 12:40 Keynote Address.....Mark Holmquist, Chief, Saco Police Department
- 1:25 Business Meeting—Main floor..... Bob Jean, President
- MEA Government Relations..... John Kosinski, Director
- Minutes of 2023 Annual Meeting.....Marilyn Hylan, 2022 Secretary
- Action on Resolutions..... Gary McGrane, Chairperson
- Action on Bylaws Changes.....Phil Gonyar, Parliamentarian
- In Memoriam Tributes.....Gary McGrane, Past President
- Legacy Committee.....Jan Collins, Chairperson
- Membership Committee Awards.....Roger Roy, Chairperson
- Community Participation Awards.....Susan Grondin, Chairperson
- Affiliate Leadership Awards..... Molly Smith, President-Elect
- President’s Award.....Bob Jean, President
- 3:00 Adjournment.....Bob Jean, President

Book table at convention

Once again this year tables will be set up at our MEA-Retired convention and annual meeting for our **FREE** book swap.

We encourage attendees to bring books you have read and share with others. Then, feel free to take books donated by others. It is a great way to expand your reading repertoire and clean out bookshelves.

You do not have to bring books to take books.



Children's books will also be available. We always need new books to read to our grandchildren now that we are retired and have more free time.

So, when you start your spring cleaning, share your reading material. For more information, contact our convention coordinator Rheba Michaud at 207-564-7494.

72nd MEA-Retired Convention & Annual Meeting “We Shine for Everyone!”

May 2, 2024

Augusta Civic Center, 76 Community Drive, Augusta

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

Name _____ Affiliate _____

Address _____ Age 90+ FREE _____

City/Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Tel: _____ Email _____

Registration: \$30—coffee/juice/food, vendors, raffles, prizes, book exchange, awards, affiliate displays, buffet lunch, entertainment, annual business meeting, fellowship

Two breakout sessions featuring four topics: Select 1st and 2nd choices for each one.

- (1) European Travels (2) Gardening Tips (3) Hiking the Appalachian Trail (4) Maintaining Momentum

Session 1 (10-10:45 a.m.): ___ 1st choice ___ 2nd choice

Session 2 (10:55-11:40 a.m.): ___ 1st choice ___ 2nd choice

This form may be duplicated—submit a separate registration form for each registrant. Registration must be postmarked by April 20, 2024

Make check payable to MEA-Retired. Send with registration form(s) to Carl Bucciantini, Registrar, PO Box 352, Greene, ME 04236-0352.

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



Vendors, non-profits, and affiliates always prepare interesting displays and tables, and many provide giveaway items. Don't miss the very interesting PAC raffle table!

‘Tis the season!



Francesca Fuller, 2, of Kingston, NH, enjoyed the recent delights of the Easter bunny! She is the granddaughter of Roger and Gina Fuller of Lewiston. Her mom is an educator.



Membership Matters: Positive growth incentives

*By Roger Roy, Chair
Membership Committee*

As of February 15, Maine Education Association Retired membership was at 5,444 according to Lisa Collins at the MEA Caribou Uniserv Office. This number shows an increase over last year, but it is continually in flux due to deaths, non-renewals, and the addition of new retirees.

I want to commend our local affiliates for the hard work they have exerted to recruit new members and to reinstate former members. Our final total membership for the 16 local affiliates is 1,498.

Conditions vary greatly among affiliates. In Aroostook, for example, we had over 450 members a few years ago. Despite

working diligently to enroll newly retired educators every year, we find each year, more members die than new ones who retire.

We find that, of course, some members do pass on. Others retire and move to live closer to children and grandchildren. Others move to southern Maine or out of state to be closer to medical facilities and more socialization opportunities.

This problem is common in the rural areas that have decreasing populations. To incentivize all affiliates, I proposed

changing the criteria to the Board of Directors.

My initial suggestion to the board is as follows:

Using the previous year's total membership number that was registered in our convention booklet, each affiliate is asked to subtract the number of deceased members.

NOTE: Going forward to 2024-2025, it is important to keep track of affiliate members who have passed. Keep in mind that the necrology report in the

convention booklet includes ALL who work in

schools—whether they are affiliate members or not.

However, for the purpose of maintaining an accurate record of affiliate membership and to qualify for incentive grants, we must maintain accurate records of new members and those who pass on.

That adjusted “net” number would become the new base membership. Then, the affiliate reports how many new members they have signed up, and that number is used to calculate membership growth.

For example, Kennebec had a membership total of 77 last year and lost five members. Their base is 72.



See Membership, Page 9