



THE CLARION

August 2020

The Newsletter for Retired Educators
Maine Education Association Retired Vol. 132, No. 6

From our President



From our President

Well, the ebb and flow of the coronavirus in recent weeks often remind us of the rise and fall of the waves at the ocean on the coast of Maine. The ones we are not visiting as often this summer. The uncertainty of these days keep us at bay as we yearn to return to "the way we were."

We do see hope on the horizon. Now, we can choose to dine in a restaurant and not have to resort to takeout. Doctor and dentist offices are open. Hospitals will now allow patients to have visitors—I just called and asked that question at

MaineGeneral Medical Center. Are masks required or recommended?

Survival of businesses continues to be paramount in the lives and homes of many young families. Some of our members rose to the occasion of caring for grandchildren in the wake of daycare centers

See President, Page 2

MEA-Retired wins national recognitions

NEA-Retired Distinguished Service



Tom Curran
1936-2020

The late Tom Curran of Raymond was awarded posthumously the prestigious Distinguished Service Award. Tom served as vice president of MEA-Retired. He was honored by receiving the President's Award in 2003 and an Honorary Membership Award in 2002.

Tom served in NEA-Retired leadership from 2001-2018: Executive Council and Board of Directors. Vice President (2009-2012) and President (2012-2018).

1st Place: Website

For a third consecutive year mearetired.org website earned **first place** national distinction at the recent NEA-Retired annual meeting.

Web Administrator Pam Partridge of St. Albans recently moved our website to a more professional platform that enables greater accessibility with more ease.

Links to outside entities and forms have increased in order to provide optimum service.

We have had many queries for more information about insurance, membership, dental, and more.

Check out your website.



Pam Partridge

1st Place: Newsletter

Our bimonthly publication, *The Clarion*, earned **first place** national distinction at the recent NEA-Retired annual meeting—tying with Georgia's retired educator newsletter.

This award goes to the many retired educators who give their time and expertise to write articles of interest to our readers.

Articles depict the life of MEA-Retired—volunteerism and service in local schools and communities, involvement in advocacy, legislative activism, and leadership that directly affect our pension, health insurance, COLA, and financial protection in these uncertain days.

By Rheba Michaud
Convention Coordinator

wearing masks in the fall; but if we can meet with masks, that will be good.

Our **68th Annual Meeting** is still going to take place on **Thursday, October 15, 9:30-12 noon** with a box lunch for \$10. If you do not

See Annual Meeting, Page 8

Don't miss our Annual Meeting



Rheba Michaud

Hi to everyone! Hopefully all of you remain healthy! With recent hot, humid days, summer is surely here.

How fortunate we are to have such a beautiful state to enjoy during this pandemic! Are you seeing more

of Maine than you usually do since many of us are not traveling too far or out of state?

Let's pray Covid-19 will continue to decrease in numbers, and we have no more deaths. Maybe we can get back to a more normal time. Probably, we will be

MEA-Retired

68th Annual Meeting

October 15, 2020

"Happy 200th

Birthday, Maine!"

MEA-Retired launches Facebook page



Roger Fuller

MEA Retired is pleased to announce its first Facebook page administered by Roger Fuller of Lewiston

You can visit the following link and bookmark it for future use: https://www.facebook.com/Maine-Education-Association-Retired-104743981253633/?modal=admin_todo_tour

The Facebook page can easily be found once on Facebook by typing "Maine Education Association Retired" in the search button. Then you can easily bookmark it to return.

This page will help the geographically dispersed retired educators to stay in touch—especially during this COVID-19 pandemic. We all need a bit of connectivity—just to know we are not alone

The Facebook page will provide timely information on matters of importance to re-

See Facebook, Page 4

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"promoting the economic, professional, and social welfare of retired educators"

Legislative Update



By Crystal Ward
Legislative Liaison



No action has occurred in the Maine Legislature on retired issues as of July 10.

Since our COLA is now part of State of Maine statutes, maybe you have been wondering what will happen if the national COLA is a negative number?

Will we lose money?

No. If the national COLA is negative, the COLA for MainePERS will be zero. If in the next year the COLA is positive, the negative COLA from the prior year will be deducted from the following year's positive COLA. This happened once before.

For example, if in Year 1 the cost of living is negative one percent (-1%), the COLA for MainePERS retirees will be zero. If the COLA in Year 2 is one percent (1%), the COLA for MainePERS will be zero in Year 2.

The short answer is we do pay for a negative COLA over time. MainePERS announces COLA in August.

MEA will have important screening and endorsement meetings on July 28 to interview the candidates for U.S. Senate and make a recommendation to the MEA Board of Directors.

On August 11 they will review questionnaires for State House of Representatives and State Senate candidates. Questionnaires were sent to all candidates and only people who sent back questionnaires were reviewed at this meeting.

You are encouraged to reach out to Senator Susan Collins and ask her to help pass more relief for our schools. We know our state faces massive revenue shortfalls, and we will need more resources in order to reopen.

Put simply, we will not be able to weather this storm without additional financial assistance from the state. Please take a minute to contact Susan Collins and ask her to take action.

All elections run on volunteers. If you can help a candidate, be sure to ask questions to verify they are working on issues such as Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, MainePERS pension, reducing drug costs, and many more.

IMPORTANT information from MainePERS:

We are receiving reports that members and retirees are receiving calls that appear to be from MainePERS but are not legitimate. The caller is asking for things like credit card numbers or bank account information.

Do not share this information with the caller. To verify the call's validity, hang up, call MainePERS at 800-451-9800 and ask to speak with someone in our Service Programs area.

Unemployment fraud is one of the fastest growing criminal activities coming

out of the coronavirus environment. The Maine Department of Labor is working to combat this fraud. If an unemployment claim has been fraudulently filed on your behalf, you can report it to Maine DOL at <https://www.maine.gov/unemployment/idtheft/>.

MainePERS takes multiple precautions to protect your personal information and your retirement account. We appreciate patience as we verify your identity and work to make sure we are sending your information only to you.

We can add a note to your MainePERS file as an extra precaution that you have had a fraudulent unemployment claim filed on your behalf. Please call us at 207-512-3100.

NEA-Retired News

I learned from Todd Crenshaw, NEA-Retired, that MEA has not had an NEA-Retired staff liaison since Linda Heaney left a few years ago.

After contacting MEA regarding this dilemma, we learned that Government Rela-

See Legislative News, Page 6

President, from Page 1

closing.

This also meant that many of you returned to teaching—this time, in the world of virtual learning with your grandchildren. We know that teachers are lifelong learners, and you rose to the occasion. You committed to your “kitchen table classroom” with a vengeance to provide the best learning environment for your young students.

All of a sudden you had to learn how to use a computer to log into online classrooms and understand the expectations of lessons presented on YouTube, Google Classroom, Zoom, and other online platforms. Well done!

Thank you to our affiliate leaders and members who learned to use Zoom to engage in online meetings that

enabled meaningful connectivity and conducted the business of the county groups. You held online auctions, you donated scholarship money, and you found ways to recognize accomplishments of members.

You also made marked differences in the lives of others by being creative and working hours to provide face masks, food assistance, rides to appointments, thoughtful acts of kindness, and much more.

Thank you, MEA-Retired officers, members of our Executive Committee, and our Board of Directors for your persistence in fulfilling the commitment of your positions in the midst of difficult situations.

Thank you for the expeditious manner in which you

answered phone calls and email messages so that meetings were held and decisions were made. This life of isolation and self-distancing is so foreign to the interactive manner in which our meetings and procedures are typically conducted.

As you know, state quarantine mandates prohibited us from holding our day-long convention on May 7. We look forward to having you join us at our annual meeting at the Augusta Civic Center on October 15 to conduct business. See the registration form on Page 11.

Thank you for your continued life of giving and giving and giving. You embody the quote by F. Sionil Jose: “*The influence of teachers extends beyond the classroom, well into the future.*”

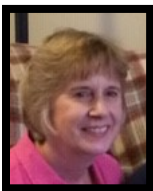
The Clarion is published bimonthly by Maine Education Association Retired. Readers are encouraged to submit feature stories, news articles, notices of events and activities, and opinions of statewide interest by the tenth day of the month preceding publication. Please send to our editor.

We pay 50 cents for every *Clarion* returned due to “incorrect address.” Please send address changes to Lisa Collins at 800-281-3191, Ext. 2400 or 207-498-3191 or via email at lcollins@maineaa.org.

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Belinda Saucier

Sitting comfortably on my couch with my laptop teetering on my knees and coffee mug in hand, I logged onto the virtual Maine Education Association Representative Assembly (MEA-RA) at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, May 16.

This was the earliest we could log in to the site and I wanted to be sure my connections were working for the 10 a.m. opening.

Zoom was the virtual venue of choice. I wondered how our meeting would progress and how easily we could interact and respond to new business items and resolutions.

Out of a possible 299 delegates, 147 were registered and 110 delegates attended or were "seated." It seemed a bit unusual—some of us were seated in recliners, outside on the back deck, at the kitchen table, or in the den.

MEA President Grace Leavitt opened the 92nd annual MEA-RA at 10 a.m. on Saturday, May 16, 2020, as scheduled. After the introduction of our officers, we voted to suspend Standing Rule #3 to adopt rules for a virtual meeting and the order of flexibility.

Rebecca Manchester of Windham was elected as the new NEA director, replacing Amanda Cooper of Buxton. Ken Williams of Nobleboro was voted to serve as trustee to MainePERS for another three-year term.

The strategic budget was presented and passed as were the following four new NBI's:

1. MEA will investigate the feasibility of increasing the number of delegates representing student members and determine any changes to the constitution and bylaws needed.

2. MEA will investigate the feasibility of adding a "Community Ally" membership category for friends of public education with no right to vote nor the eligibility to hold office in the Association.

3. MEA will purchase the Hustle app to communicate more effectively and in a timely manner with ESP's across the state.

4. MEA will investigate creating a permanent fund to financially help support local associations to send local delegates to the NEA-RA with priority established for delegate selection.

A strategic plan for this action would be developed. We are hopeful that we can meet August 15 to complete the other NBI's and related unfinished business.

Our award recipients were as follows:

John Marvin Award—*To recognize a local association for effective bargaining and protecting member rights by being a strong advocate for members, being a leader in effective bargaining practices, and organizing wall to wall units:* Scarborough EA and Merry-meeting EA

Human and Civil Rights Award *recognizes individual members, local affiliates, individual students, or student organizations who have demonstrated outstanding dedication in promoting human and civil rights for students and citizens of the State of Maine:* Hermon High School Civil Rights Team "Operation Breaking Stereotypes"

Golden Apple Award *recognizes an individual or group that has demonstrated a strong commitment to local schools and/or to the children of a community:* Connie Carter, Elisha Oliver, Marjorie Bruen, Angela Wotton

MEA Friend of Education *recognizes an individual currently holding an elected or appointed public position and currently making a significant contribution to public education:* Rep. David McCray and Sen. Erin Herbig

Anne Sheehan Political Action Award *recognizes*

an MEA member or governance affiliate which has demonstrated a strong commitment to political action for public education issues: Portland EA and Rose Walker, Lewiston EA

MEA Public Higher Education Impact Award *recognizes an individual or group whose leadership, acts, and support have contributed to the improvement of public higher education in Maine:* Ron Mosley, Esq., AFUM

MEA ESP of the Year Award: Heather Haskell, Hermon

MEA Award for Teaching Excellence: Luanne Phair, RSU 18

Clyde Russell Trust Scholarship: Emma Ackerman, Traip Academy; Gracia Bareti, Westbrook Academy; Lindsey Cross, Belfast Area High School; Lexi Crouse,

MEA-RA rewarding experience

By Belinda Saucier
Androscoggin Ret. Educ. Assoc.

tunities to speak if they wished."

Gary McGrane of Jay said the meeting was "simply amazing. Hats off to MEA President Grace Leavitt for making this year's RA memorable and safe."

Bob Jean of Thomaston said, "I was impressed with how well the Zoom RA was conducted. I especially liked it when the numbers were given to go along with the voting outcomes. Great job by all



These are 23 of the 110 delegates who attended the MEA-RA via Zoom online meeting venue on May 16.

Houlton High School; Jaelin Roberts, John Bapst High School; Adam Robinson, Jonesport Beals High School.

Honoring these recipients of recognitions and hearing news of MEA initiatives were rewarding and served to connect delegates. This was a concern as we logged in to the RA from our own homes.

MEA-Retired member Claudette O'Connell of Bangor conceded that "I soon found that there was certainly no reason to worry since the meeting ran very smoothly. All delegates had oppor-

those involved in setting this up."

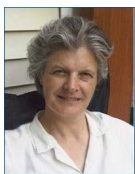
This was the first RA for Marilyn Hylan of Farmington. She was "impressed with how well the virtual RA was prepared for in advance and delivered.

I attended the PROM meeting beforehand which prepared me very well and made it very easy to follow the actual RA. I used two devices for the RA—one for the virtual meeting and the other for the RA documents.

See MEA-RA, Page 4

Learning for fun: Maine's Senior College

By Anne Cardale
Director of Communications
Senior College, USM



Anne Cardale

For Maine residents, 50 years of age or older, the Maine Senior College Network (MSCN) provides opportunities for endless learning!

No entrance exams, no grades, and no tests. Members find kindred spirits among fellow students—making new friends who share their love of learning.

Classes offered around the state cover a wide variety of subjects. Literature and history are always popular. You will find the sciences and pop culture covered, plus art classes, gardening, pickle ball, and nature walks, and much more!

You can guarantee the volunteer instructors will find a creative spin in their presentations, whether it is a look at current events, world religions, or the movies.

MSCN is comprised of 17 colleges and has existed for over 20 years. This is due primarily to the dedicated work of its volunteers! They serve on the boards, teach the classes, and help with a broad range of administrative activities.

The Curriculum Committees are the powerhouses behind course offerings at Senior College—identifying and encouraging new instructors to teach classes.

MSCN classes are great fun to teach! Students want to be there, and they bring a wealth of experience and a passion for learning to all discussions.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, MSCN had around

7,000 members across the state enrolled in 500 courses in the spring and fall semesters.

These courses ranged from six to eight weeks, one-day lectures, discussion panels, "Lunch and Learn" sessions plus field trips to galleries and museums, beauty spots, and historical sites.

Most senior colleges also host special interest groups. These cover a wide range of activities from Bridge and Mahjongg, book clubs and current affairs, dining out, hiking, theater trips and many more.

MSCN has been exploring the use of Zoom to reach people unable to get to a class. The network never for one moment imagined a situation could arise, which would find us all home-bound!

Once Governor Mills "Stay Healthy at Home" directive was issued, several senior colleges immediately stepped forward to master online classes. Volunteer instructors and tech supports have leaped into action around the state, transferring senior college classes to Zoom.

We are now hearing from recent class evaluations that people have found the online experience an enjoyable surprise! The classes allow members to see their college friends and chat before class and during the breaks.

Senior colleges are also exploring the social aspects of Zoom. We are witnessing "Meet and Mingle" and "Zoom Cafes" sessions featuring small groups chatting in breakout rooms to music, poetry reading, wine tasting, and game nights!

MSCN has always maintained a system of reciprocal membership. This means the member of one senior college can take classes at another whenever space allows. Now that we have Zoom; it is possible to join lectures taking place on the other side

of the state!

MSCN online gatherings and classes are in progress. We strive to keep members safe yet able to engage with each other. We are actively looking for more instructors willing to help the network by teaching their favorite topics on Zoom!

We provide Zoom instructor training sessions and are available to help senior colleges expand their online

offerings.

This growth in online offerings and the drive to master Zoom epitomize a shared passion for lifelong learning. A pandemic will not stop MSCN members from learning for the fun of it!

Annual membership fees are between \$25-\$35. There is an additional modest tuition for each course. Scholarships are available. Visit our website: maineseniorcollege.org.

Facebook, from Page 1

tired educators—including news and updates on MEA-Retired initiatives, Covid-19, AARP, MEA, and some interesting articles. The page is currently administered by Roger Fuller with help from Carl Bucciantini of Greene.

People are invited to post, and the page administrator will approve and be sure it is posted correctly.

Facebook users can send a message to MEA-Retired, or to MEA-Retired@mainenet.org for posting help. Additionally, users can write directly to Roger at rfuller@mainenet.org.

Roger taught English at Lewiston High School from 1972 to 1977. He taught English and was department

chair for English, social studies, and foreign languages at Oak Hill High School in Turner. While there Roger installed one of the first school networks in Maine.

In 1999, he traveled to Los Angeles, where he became the Director of Technology and then principal at Milken Community High School. Roger returned to Maine in 2013 to become the Executive Director of the Maine International Center for Digital Learning. He retired in 2015.

He has a BA in English, and MA degrees in English, Gifted Education, Technology Education, and a Ph.D. in Leadership and Change.

He and his wife Gina live in Lewiston and have four, and soon, five grandchildren.

MEA-RA, from Page 3

"Voting was easy. I may have had some advantage using the virtual meeting format because I have had many Zoom meetings during the pandemic. MEA leadership was well prepared and the meeting was professional in all respects."

Our guest speaker was NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia of El Paso, Texas. She congratulated everyone on their adaptability to virtual learning and praised their abilities to teach students even though they are not in a room with them.

She reported that the Senate has a lot of work to do to ensure education cuts don't happen. She reminded us

that contributions to NEA PAC are very important to ensure we have education-friendly representatives.. You can help do this by donating to the NEA fund on line at www.neafund.org/Donate.

President Leavitt was well prepared. She and her staff did an amazing job to keep business progressing from one issue to another. The meeting was as close to in-person as possible sitting in our homes.

Overall, the RA on the virtual Zoom platform was very manageable with all of the hard work Grace and her staff accomplished. Even though it was quite different from seeing everyone in person and no sharing meals, much was accomplished.

More “Comfort in COVID-19”

Cumberland County

By Roberta Morrill

We at Cumberland County Retired Educators Association are still contacting our members via our “Phone Pal” program, calling our members at least once a month.

Since some of us at my church are now making “driveway visits” to our church members outdoors, I visited one of our CCREA members, (who also taught with me) and his wife in Bridgton this afternoon.

I am going to suggest that outdoor visit idea to my Phone Pal callers, as they might enjoy visiting one another as well—albeit in the driveway.

Franklin County

By Craigen Healey

Food Pantries have an important role in Maine. Even in pre-pandemic times many families in rural Maine don't qualify for enough food stamps to sustain a healthy diet.

Amy Palmer, retired Special Ed teacher, volunteers as president of the Clearwater Food Closet for three small towns outside of Farmington—Industry, New Sharon, and Chesterville.

With the need for social distancing, she and the other volunteers set up tables outside the building for safe distribution each Monday morning.

The driveway has been divided so that the IN side leads to the tables holding boxes prepared in advance and displaying produce donated by Hannaford. Patrons may get out of their vehicles to choose foods or simply ask for specific items.

Masked and gloved volunteers carry the family's box of dry goods and the selected

items right to the car so no one needs to get out. Then the driver can safely leave by way of the EXIT.

Being home-bound for 10 weeks now I will get out in the public until I know it's safe. After giving it much thought, and after witnessing so much high anxiety and negativism on TV and Facebook, I decided to reach out with calming, positive words.

Each day I post a positive, inspirational quote on Facebook that is relevant to our current situation, hoping it will guide people toward more positive thinking and action. This wisdom comes from famous individuals in the past and present.

I also send daily personal quotes to individuals who are medical frontline workers in their “messenger” segment of Facebook to encourage, thank and raise their spirits.

I also write these messages on card stock, along with a few personal words to individuals I know who are living alone, widowed, struggling, etc. I have received many positive responses to this methodology.

Hancock County

By Cathy Ibarguen

My husband Doug and I have been traveling from Farmington to Ellsworth to

be part of a team to help our daughter, Kara Minear-Ibarguen, prepare 150 take-out meals for her community. We have done this every other Wednesday since late June when we felt comfortable to do so. We wear those masks you see hanging around our necks while working. The program was initiated by Kara through her involvement with the UCC church in Ellsworth in 2012.

Known as the “Welcome Table,” the program operates every Wednesday throughout the year. The program is supported by donations, local food pantries and other area food initiatives as well as dedicated volunteers.

When “Welcome Table” shifted from mainly dine-in meals to all take-out meals in April, they also increased the number of meals from a weekly 50-75 to the 150 they are currently distributing. It's most rewarding to be able to help AND to spend time with our amazing daughter!

We leave our home by 6:30 a.m. on our Wednesday sojourns to Ellsworth, enjoy the scenic ride, and return about 6 p.m. It's a long, but most rewarding day.

At home I enjoy my flower gardens and daily walks in the nearby woods to enjoy nature. Peace can be found amongst these crazy



Doug and Cathy Ibarguen of Farmington help to provide take-out meals every Wednesday at the United Church of Christ in Ellsworth.

Bits ‘n Pieces

Sam's Club Renewal

As members renew their Sam's Club memberships in the next few months, no incentives for renewal are available at this time. We will let you know as soon as perks are reinstated at Bangor, Augusta, and Scarborough clubs.



Write for *The Clarion*

We always want to hear from our readers. A goal is to have as many different people write as possible. We like to hear various perspectives and learn what our retired colleagues are doing.

We glean ideas as to opportunities for volunteerism and service in our own communities and schools. Our writers share good ideas, suggest activities, and opportunities for involvement.

We also like to hear your opinions and if you agree or disagree with the manner in which we move forward with initiatives, activities, and projects.

We have lived through a record-setting four months. What have you learned? What suggestions do you have? Please consider writing an article or letter to the editor for *The Clarion*. Share your ideas. Consider writing.

Do you now have email?

Maybe when you joined MEA-Retired years ago, you did not have an email account. Now, you may be using email.

If we do not have your email address and you would like to receive the communications we send out electronically, please send an email message to our MEA-Retired liaison, Lisa Collins, at lcollins@maineea.org.

Thank you.



"Honorary Membership" nominations due

Opportunities for nominating a deserving individual to receive an honorary membership award are encouraged every year.

Article III of our MEA-Retired bylaws deals with membership. Section 4 specifically addresses "Honorary Membership." This status is granted to a person who has made a noteworthy contribution to education or to this Association.

A member may nominate a

fellow member and present a letter of recommendation to the Board of Directors by October 1. A two-thirds vote of the members of the Board of Directors is required to ratify the nomination.

No more than one honorary membership may be granted in any one year. The Association will pay unified and affiliate dues for honorary members. Non-members will be paid expenses to attend the Annual Meeting.

MEA-Retired Honorary Members are invited to attend the MEA-Retired Annual Meeting and Convention held in the following spring. At this time a special presentation and recognition will be made.

Registration and mileage expenses to convention will be paid. Expenses for designated lodging and meals will

be paid to those who travel 90 miles or more one way to attend. A list of honorary membership awards is in the annual convention booklet.

The deadline for nominations to be received is Octo-

ber 1. Please send to Kay Grindall, 23 Hilltop Drive, Oakland, ME 04963. Or they may be sent via email to kay_grindall@yahoo.com.

Questions? Call 207-512-0027.

Legislative News, from Page 2

tions Director John Kosinski will be our Maine state staff liaison for MEA-Retired. We will receive more timely legislative news from NEA and NEA-Retired in Washington, D.C.

NEA-Retired membership today is more than 300,000, and we continue to lead the way in public education and speak up to act on critical issues.

We work with NEA members to (1) protect and improve retirement pension

and health benefits—including state pensions, Social Security and Medicare; (2) improve public education through mentoring, literacy, and intergenerational programs and activities; and (3) achieve legislative and political action goals for education and education employees.

There has been no action on the Social Security bill dealing with the WEP and GPO.

Stay safe. Wear a mask, Get the flu shot.

Spread the Word!

Great gifts for retired friends, auction items, birthdays!

Maine Educator



Retired



Long-sleeved Denim Shirts @ \$35
Navy Blue Hats @ \$13
Red, Iris Blue Tee Shirts @ \$21
Red, Ultramarine Golf Shirts @ \$29
Sizes: S, M, L
Sizes XL & XXL: Add \$2
Sizes XXXL & XXXXL: Add \$4
Lapel Pins @ \$10

Name _____ Email _____

Mailing Address _____ City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Tel. _____ Affiliate _____

Qty.	Item	Size	Color	Unit Price	Total Cost
	Sizes XL, XXL: Add \$2 Sizes XXXL, XXXXL: Add \$4				
	Total Remittance				

Questions? Contact Rena Kearney at rkearney@ainop.com or 207-429-9041.

Prices include tax and postage/handling.

Make checks payable to MEA-Retired and mail to Rena Kearney, PO Box 377, Mars Hill, ME 04758.

(Items produced by Cushman's Embroidery, Presque Isle, ME)

AARP serves Mainers on many fronts

By Carl Bucciantini
AARP Liaison

AARP Maine has been busily adjusting to these trying times. Nationally, all in-person events have been canceled through the end of 2020. Yet, there are ways to connect:

AARP Community Connections: We may be apart, but we don't have to be alone. Across the country, people are organizing online mutual aid groups to stay connected, share ideas, and help those in need.

Whether you want to start a group, find a group, or request a friendly call from one of our volunteers, we can help you connect with people in

your community. <https://aarpcommunityconnections.org>

Is your loved one in a nursing home? Six questions you need to ask. If you have loved ones in a nursing home, you are likely concerned about their safety and well-being because of the coronavirus pandemic. AARP has consulted with leading nursing home experts to provide some key questions to ask the nursing home. <https://states.aarp.org/maine/is-your-loved-one-in-a-nursinghome>

-6-questions-you-need-to-ask Scams & Covid-19:

The world is rallying to combat the spread of COVID-19. People are looking for guidance to better protect themselves.

But lurking in the shadows are scammers seeking to take advantage of this opportunity to steal money or sensitive personal information.

Know there is currently no vaccine, treatment or cure for the disease caused by the coronavirus – any claim of such is fraud. Consider products that

claim they protect against coronavirus to be dubious at best.

Scrutinize any new investment opportunity related to a vaccine or cure. Your best bet is to stay up to date with new information and guidance through local, state and federal government sources (all government emails and websites end in “.gov.”) <https://states.aarp.org/maine/scams-covid-19>

For more information, go to aarp.org/me



Carl Bucciantini



Maine

NRTA grant boosts MEA-Retired

All MEA-Retired members were recently notified through email and the postal delivery of letters to our members who do not have email that a \$3,000 grant was awarded to MEA-Retired from NRTA.

Essentially, the grant will be used to “help our members stay informed through two interactive forums where members can learn how to protect themselves from scams and fraud, and to explore some activities designed to help stay connected in this time of ‘Stay Safer At Home.’”

In the June *Clarion* you were introduced to MEA-Retired's participation in an exciting grant opportunity offered to state associations through the National Retired Teachers Association (NRTA), a subsidiary of AARP. The grant provided financial resources to enable us to reach out to members to provide resources and to let them know that support is available.

The MEA-Retired has a membership of approximately 5,400 retirees. Of those, approximately 3,000 have provided an email address while the remaining 2,400 rely on the U.S. Postal Service for updates from us. This division presented our planning team with the challenge of reaching out to our “non-connected” members while also reaching our other members digitally.

We organized a planning team composed of: Kay Grindall, Ben Paradis, Crystal Ward, Roger Fuller, and Carl Bucciantini. Our plan utilized a variety of techniques to help bridge the digital divide. These initiatives included email,

Facebook, postal mailing, Zoom conference, and telephone conference call.

To determine the effectiveness of our activities, we distributed an electronic survey to our members. From nearly 3,400 emails sent, we received 181 replies. Results of our survey will be referenced throughout this report.

Our first activity was to send a message and handouts to our membership via email and U.S. postal delivery. All members received the same documents, and 49.3 percent found the information informative.

Early in our planning process we decided that the time has come for our association to have a more visible social media presence, besides our website, so a Facebook page was created. In doing so we have created a new position of Facebook Administrator knowing that, unless someone is tasked with the responsibility to regularly maintain our page, it could quickly become outdated.

We learned that 60.8 percent of our respondents to the survey report using Facebook, but only 8.5 percent have looked at our page yet. We continue to see new “likes” and are confident that, with AARP Maine and the MEA both helping to promote our page, our viewership will improve as time goes on.

Our foray into the unknown involved hosting a panel discussion both on Zoom and via a telephone conference call. Our panelists included the NEA-Retired President Sarah Borgman of Indiana; the Executive Director of

NRTA Al Campos, AARP Maine's State Director Lori Parham, and the Program Director of the Maine Senior College Network Anne Cardale.

AARP Maine handled our registrations and gave us use of their phone conference line. Unfortunately, only 1.7 percent of our members participated in the Zoom event and there was only one registrant for the phone conference, so it was canceled.

While we are disappointed in the participation rate for these two activities, it has provided a window into what we can be doing in our efforts to connect with our membership. It is likely that we will offer additional Zoom events as well as to continue to communicate with members via email and the US mail.

Additionally, as a result of the panel discussion, we have embarked upon a partnership with the Maine Senior College Network to help our members avail themselves of the growing list of digital course offerings provided across their statewide network.

With the help of the NRTA grant, we are able to offer a one-year \$25 subscription to the first 45 MEA-Retired members who go online to apply to the Senior College program nearest them. The Senior College membership application is online at bit.ly/MEA-RMSCN.

Maine Senior College Director Anne Cardale explains more of your questions in an article on Page 4. It's pretty clear that there are many opportunities for us to remain connected with others!

MEA Benefits Trust offers hearing aid assistance

By Jennifer Kent, Exec. Director
MEA Benefits Trust



Jennifer Kent

As an Anthem Medicare Preferred (PPO) with Senior Rx Plus plan member, you have access to a wide range of hearing benefits through Hearing Care Solutions (HCS).

With more than 35 years of combined experience in hearing health care, HCS can help deliver the care you need to hear—and live—better.

Your Benefits:

Up to \$3,000 every 36 months per ear toward the purchase of eligible* hearing aid technology

\$0 copay for one routine hearing exam every 12 months

\$0 copay for hearing aid evaluation

\$0 copay for eligible* hearing aids

Free battery supply during the first three years, with a 64 cell limit per year

Call 1-855-312-2545

(Monday – Friday, 8

a.m. to 8 p.m. ET). HCS will stay on the phone with you while they schedule an appointment with a contracted hearing care provider in your area.

HCS will work directly with Anthem, and you will only pay for allowable charges that exceed the benefit amount. Allowable charges may vary according to the hearing aid technology.

If your provider is not in the HCS network, you may be eligible* for reimbursement for any payments made. Complete and mail or fax the Hearing Care Solutions reimbursement claim form, along with your signed purchase agreement.

The Hearing Care Solu-

tions reimbursement claim form and instructions can be found on the MEABT's website, www.meabt.org/documents, under the Medicare Advantage section.

For additional information, please feel free to call your Anthem Medicare Preferred (PPO) with

Senior Rx Plus plan Member Services team at 1-844-963-0436. For TTY users, 711, Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. ET, except for holidays.

**Online purchases and amplifiers are not eligible hearing aid devices and would not be considered for reimbursement. Please feel free to contact the Hearing Care Solutions team for additional questions.*



Annual Meeting, from Page 1

want a lunch, the meeting is free. Decisions on bylaws and resolutions need to be conducted. It has been a

long time since seeing friends and colleagues. Our schedule is below; plan to come and bring friends.

MEA-Retired 68th Annual Meeting North Room, Augusta Civic Center October 15, 2020

8:30 a.m. Registration, Light Refreshments, PAC 50/50

9:30 a.m. Welcome

Pledge of Allegiance

MEA Greetings

2020 Honorary Membership Award

In Memoriam

Minutes 2019 Annual Meeting

Presentation/Vote on Resolutions

Presentation/Vote on Amendments to Bylaws

Adjournment

11:30 a.m. Lunch

MEA-Retired dues to increase \$3

By Kay Grindall, President

The MEA-Retired Board of Directors recently approved increasing our annual MEA-Retired dues from \$12 to \$15 to begin September 1. Our fiscal year ends August 31.

In the membership year of 2001-2002, the MEA-Retired dues were \$5 and the MEA dues were \$9. In 2002-03, the MEA-Retired dues increased to \$12, and the MEA dues were \$9.

Over the past 18 years MEA dues have increased incrementally to \$28 as of September 1. Since 2002 until now, MEA-Retired dues have remained at \$12.

As you can well imagine, basic expenses include mileage, meals, stipends, printing, mailing, conferences, annual meeting, transportation, supplies, speaker fees, and more.

As one can imagine, every line item in our budget has increased considerably over the past 18 years. Our fiscal budget is printed in our annual convention

booklet. A booklet is made available to convention attendees and will be provided upon request.

The following rationale was discussed at the March Executive Committee meeting and a recommendation to approve the increase in dues was made to the full Board of Directors. Board members were convinced and voted to enact the increase based on the following rationale:

The mileage reimbursement rate in 2002 was \$.345; it is now \$.58. First Class postage in 2002 was \$.37; it is now \$.55. Bulk mailing costs by a non-profit permit have nearly tripled since 2002. The costs of paper, ink, labor, and postage in publishing our newsletter, convention booklet, and promotional documents have increased considerably since 2002.

Reimbursements for meals, travels, registration fees, and lodging for meet-

ings, conventions, RA's, and committee meetings have increased considerably over the past 18 years.

We have more state committees now than in 2002. These added positions have increased stipend payments. We have also added positions that now carry stipends—web administrator, information coordinator, etc.

The cost of our convention and annual meeting was \$20 in 2002; we are still charging just \$20 for the day-long event. Think about it. The costs of food, serving wages, facilities, parking, speakers fees, musicians, and other entities have increased considerably over the past 18 years. The costs of recognitions and other accessories have increased as well.

Therefore, as of September 1, the first day of our fiscal year, the monthly deduction for MEA-Retired dues will be \$1.25 instead of \$1. Questions? Feel free to contact Kay Grindall at 512-0027.



Gary McGrane

The NEA-Retired 2020 virtual annual meeting was called to order by President Sarah Borgman of Indiana at 3 p.m. on June 29, and concluded at 5 p.m. on June 30, 2020. President Borgman paid tribute to NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia for her six years of service as NEA president.

The NEA-Retired credential report was read and adopted with 355 eligible voters, and 267 participants present and voting. Your delegates to this assembly were Beth Guy of Portland, Beinda Saucier of Lewiston, Kay Grindall of Oakland, and me.

The annual meeting continued with adoption of the agenda, minutes, and the passage of New Business items 1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, and 11.

A brief yet thorough review of the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education was updated. I suspect a report on an Amendment to the NEA-Retired Bylaws received a lot more discussion than was anticipated.

The controversial issue revolved around whether the "... President shall serve as the duly elected alternate for NEA-Retired members on the NEA Board of Directors...."

The Legislative report was given by political strategist Julie Horwin of Arizona. It was noted that the Grants Committee and the Finance Committee reports are online.

The highest recognition awarded by NEA-Retired is the coveted "Distinguished Service Award" that is given annually to a leader who has contributed significantly to NEA-Retired and the retired educator community. Our esteemed, the late Tom Curran of Raymond was honored posthumously for this award.

National recognitions were also made in the categories of membership, and communications. For the third consecutive year, MEA-Retired Webmaster Pam Par-

tridge of North Anson received "Best Retired Educator Website." President Kay Grindall was recognized as producing the Best Newsletter for Retired Educators, *The Clarion*.

Chairman Alen Ritchie reviewed the Kinnaman Scholarship donation report and announced the five recipients of the \$5,500 Kinnaman Scholarship Awards.

The day concluded with a Moment of Remembrance for Brenda Montgomery and a tribute to NEA-Retired Veterans.

Day two was a more abbreviated session with 292 participants. NEA Vice President Becky Pringle addressed the virtual assembly regarding social justice advocacy with "When we fight, we win."

The remainder of the day was devoted to candidates speeches about why we should vote for them via secret ballot. The ballots will be mailed to each registered delegate to vote for an NEA-Retired President; two Retired Executive Council members; and two NEA-Retired Board of Directors.

President Lily Eskelsen Garcia gave the opening session of the 158th NEA-RA with words of encouragement and hope that "This is our time, our Democracy...not even a pandemic is going to stop the NEA-RA."

Former Georgia State Rep. Stacey Abrams started us off with an opening statement; "I believe in education because public education believes in me." She welcomed delegates to Atlanta, Georgia, by way of the virtual setting.

Our executive director Kim Anderson announced 15-year-old Swedish resident, Greta Thunberg, as this year's Friend of Education.

To read more about this amazing person, visit NEA.org/ra. Other individuals added their voices in support of public education—

Michelle Obama, Trevor Noah, and other state and national politicians.

In conjunction with the RA, many of us participated in a silent auction by either bidding or donating items to raise funds for our Political Action Committee. This is all voluntary and no NEA dues support this activity.

The NEA-Retired delegates raised \$18,555. These funds will go to political candidates who support public education. NEA-RA also had a silent virtual auction.

Candidates running for NEA office had three minutes in which to deliver their campaign speeches. All delegates will vote for their choices by mail-in ballots.

The budget, which is usually debated and voted on by the delegates, will not change from last year. This was discussed prior to the RA; and one hour was devoted to description, discussion, debate and questions answered by the Budget Committee and secretary/treasurer.

New Business Items, and Resolutions will be considered in 2021. In the meantime, we will follow our belief statements (353) from 2019. The delegates will be asked to endorse Presidential candidate Joe Biden.

Fifty-eight percent is needed to gain NEA's endorsement. We heard from Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, Hillary Clinton and Vice President Joe Biden.

The NEA-RA is usually a five-day event, but this year's abbreviated annual meeting lasted fewer than eight virtual hours. To give context to the size of the delegate assembly, we had 6,814 registered delegates, and 6,680 delegates plus 412 non-delegates in attendance.

Among those 37 percent were of ethnic minority. A governing theme was that schools need additional funding so they can open safely. Precautions must be

Virtual NEA-RA a success

By Gary McGrane
President-Elect

based on science, safety and security of the American people.

We were hypnotized by our executive director's statements of telling the truth and asking the hard questions as we continue to fight for social justice by dismantling institutional racism during this solidarity movement moment. We continue to seek economic and political justice.

Belinda Saucier of Lewiston attended her first NEA-Retired annual meeting. She says, "Utilizing such an unusual meeting format, I was impressed with the technological ability to be able to connect and 'attend' such a large meeting. The sessions were very informative. I look forward to next year in Denver and being able to experience the entire NEA-RA in person."

MEA-Retired is here for you!

Executive Committee Meeting
Zoom Online Meeting Venue
August 3, 2020, 9:30 a.m.

Board of Directors Meeting
Best Western Hotel, Waterville
and
Zoom Online Meeting Venue
September 8, 2020, 9:30 a.m.

Executive Committee Meeting
MEA Headquarters, Augusta
October 5, 2020, 9:30 a.m.

MEA-Retired Annual Meeting
Augusta Civic Ctr., North Rm.
October 15, 2020, 9:30 a.m.

Questions? Suggestions?
Please contact us today!



**By Rodney Abbott, Past President
Oxford County Ret. Educ. Assoc.**

"Who is John Kimball?" And how did he become the longest-serving president of Oxford County Education Association-Retired?

John was brought up in a family of nine children on what he calls a "dirt farm" in North Waterford, a small village in western Maine.

He remembers a time in the Waterford Memorial School where he figured out plate tectonics while the rest of the class was doing less interesting things. He was in Grade 4 and thinks he may have had what is now called ADD.

He was impressed with a teacher, Helen Grover. He said, "She was one of the real people who made a difference in my life. She read stories to us in dialect."

He attended Norway High School where he had Irene Tubbs for English—"a truly remarkable teacher who shared her great love for language, literature and poetry with her classes. Norway became part of the newly-formed Oxford Hills School District; he was part of the first class to graduate from Oxford Hills High School.

John attended the University of Maine in Orono (for many years). He later took classes at the University of Southern Missis-

sippi, the University of Maine Law School, Husson College, Bowdoin College and "University of the Air Force." His coursework ranged from engineering physics, mechanical engineering, business administration, radar repair, computer science, gifted and talented, and even some education courses.

Teaching was not his original goal, but he seemed to have a natural inclination toward it. When he was in high school, his father would drop him off at school while on the way to work.

This started out to be an opportunity for him to do his homework. It soon morphed into opportunities for some of his classmates to learn how to do their homework as well.

He graduated from high school at the age of 17 and started at UMO, where he enrolled in engineering physics. He switched to mechanical engineering and later business administration. (The local draft board was beginning to take notice of John).

The Vietnam War was still ongoing. In December of 1968, he received his draft notice. Remember that President-Elect Richard Nixon "had a plan to end the war."

In January 1969, he was awarded his B.S. degree in business administration. In March he became a "reluctant volunteer" and joined the USAF and soon signed up for "the longest course they had open." It was radar repair school in Mississippi. After basic training, he and his wife, Michele, went to Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Mississippi, for the 42-week radar repair course.

Hurricane Camille!! Moon Landing!! He volunteered for the "Little Red School House," a nick-

name for an accelerated basic electronics course in the radar school, which could be completed in half the time.

Although he never actually finished the full radar repair course, John was selected for instructor duty, took the instructor course and was assigned to teach radar repair for two years.

In the summer of 1970, opportunity knocked because of the extensive damage from Hurricane Camille. (By now it was obvious that "Tricky Dick" never had a plan.) Military personnel who could teach math and science could fulfill their military obligation by teaching in local school systems devastated by the storm.

In order to do this, he would have to teach math in the public school during the day and teach radar repair for the Air Force six hours in the evening.

He taught math in the Pass Christian Separate School District, which was in its first year of integrated schools in that part of Mississippi. Michele had landed a teaching job in Gulfport, MS.

The promise to discharge his military obligation fell through when the USAF declared his duty assignment "critical."

Three years later he was discharged from the service. John and Michele returned to Maine where he did surveying, apple picking, and substitute teaching at Oxford Hills High School in South Paris and Leavitt Area High School in Turner.

He was offered a job teaching accounting and business law at Leavitt. Myron Pierce, head of the

business department, gave a recommendation: "Best substitute we ever had." He soon learned he would also teach U.S. history.

He explained, "I taught eight periods a day in a seven-period schedule." He noted that in those days students could bring rifles to school during hunting season. They were stored in a "vault" until they left school at the end of the day.

Because of his business background and interest in investing, he was appointed chair of the committee that handled those decisions and the responsibility to invest trust funds. That was fortuitous as those investments did extremely well over the next several years.



John received Master Instructor Certificate from Squadron Commander at Keesler Air Force Base, Biloxi, Mississippi.

In 1988, he was appointed a trustee for the Maine State Retirement System, representing active teachers. He remained a part of that group until 2005. His tenure there included improvements for service to members by updating computer systems and converting to digital records—a long and frustrating process.

His time at Leavitt Area High School included active participation in teacher association activities and, in his words, included "everything but secretary."

John coached cross country for nearly 20 years, girls' track for six years, and Odyssey of the Mind. His

See John, Page 11



Maine Education Association Retired

68th Annual Meeting

"Happy 200th Birthday, Maine"

October 15, 2020



Augusta Civic Center, North Room, 76 Community Drive, Augusta

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

Name _____ Tel. _____ Email _____

Address _____ City/Town _____

State _____ Zip _____ Affiliate _____ Age 90+ FREE _____

Please register in advance: \$10 includes coffee/juice/Danish and boxed lunch. Choose from these sandwiches:
 ___ Ham Salad ___ Chicken ___ Roast Beef ___ Veggie Or a ___ Veggie Salad
 Chips, Apple, Cookie or Brownie, and Water

Please duplicate this form and submit a separate registration form for each registrant.

Advance registration is requested by October 2, 2020. Questions? Call Rheba Michaud at 207-564-7494.

Make check payable to MEA-Retired and mail to Pam Partridge, Registrar, 23 Union St., North Anson, ME 04958-7149.
 (Legibly written email addresses will receive a confirmation of registration.)

☐ Pre-registration for the annual meeting is required in order to confirm membership in MEA-Retired. Since I intend to attend only the annual meeting and will not be present for lunch, I will not need to pay a registration fee. Check if applies.

John, from Page 10

teams won the "balsa wood" project 13 of the 15 contests they entered.

John was the guiding force behind bringing Leavitt into the world of computers. Starting from an interest in "under-performance" of Leavitt's males, as evidenced by under-representation of males in "Top Ten" graduates, he became interested in Gifted and Talented education which led to the district hiring Martha Field as a district resource.

As a result of grant-writing, Leavitt initiated its first computer lab in 1979, which in turn led to the business department (Thank you, David Mead) becoming computerized a few years later.

He also taught computers in adult education classes for more than a decade and was named Maine's Adult Education Teacher of the Year.

John fondly remembers his students—one became a chef for Donald Trump. He noted that teachers seldom know when they make a lasting impression on students.

That former student later told him that at the time he was in the John's class, he was depressed and thinking of suicide. Something about John's approach to teaching and his interaction with this student turned the young man around and into a positive future. His general philosophy of teaching was to find out where students were as they started in his classes and take them as far as they could go.

John retired after 33 years of teaching and started to complete decades of unfinished projects, which

he says remain unfinished.

He volunteers extensively with the Waterford World's Fair." He likes to collect things of "no value at all, or that have intrinsic value, or have value to others." One of his goals is to collect five of every tool he might have ever used.



John Kimball spends COVID-19 time volunteering for the Waterford Fair by taking down a donated building.

His wife Michele also retired after teaching remedial reading in elementary grades for 35 years.

His retirement travels with Michele include Europe, Central America, and South America.

Although it didn't make much of an impression on him in his boyhood, the fact that his mother was a successful and well-loved teacher affected his path in life.

He remembers that she bought a *Child Craft* series of books (at a time when times were tough) and often read to her children.

His advice to anyone thinking of a teaching career is to make sure they really want to teach. He reminded that the reward will not be in money but the intrinsic rewards that go along with helping shape another person's future in a positive way. It obviously shaped his.



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Membership Matters: “Family Ties”

By Ben Paradis, MEA-Retired Membership Chairperson
Aroostook Retired Educators Association



The lake was like a mirror as I glided silently in my kayak towards the west end 20 minutes after the sun had set. The sky above was slowly becoming a deeper blue, while above the horizon there were thin lines of red and orange clouds signaling the

advent of another sunny day tomorrow.

I could hear gentle voices coming from on shore and I could smell campfire smoke, as other lake residents try to keep the mosquitoes at bay and relish the cool evening air.

“Bumpa! You’re going too fast!” yelled my granddaughter Ana, as she was on a kayak behind me. She and boyfriend Brandon had come to join our annual family July 4 get-together. This year four of our five boys were able to attend.

I am always amazed at how well they get along together, sharing stories about the past year, especially how they are coping with the pan-

demic. Only one, an optometrist, had to stop working, while the others fortunately could work from home. Two of our daughters-in-law are educators and finished the school year using Zoom.

The amount of food that is consumed at these gatherings is staggering. It certainly helped that our oldest son is also an amateur chef with plans to open his own pub in Topsham soon. He takes care of the food preparation—not many leftovers.

As they were leaving and wishing me good luck in my pending bypass surgery, I was grateful for their concern and for being a member of such a loving family.

I realized that being a member of MEA-Retired is also like being part of a large

family. Yes, we have our differences at times, and we often debate each other’s opinions. However, I also detect a great deal of love and compassion for one another.

As a member of a family, it is important to be supportive of each other, yet honest as well. If one of us fails, we need to extend a helping hand. It is important to believe in the mission of MEA-Retired and to work to achieve our goals.

More than beliefs, we must have love for our Association and all members. And this love will motivate us to welcome all educator who are not a member to join our group. Hope all of you had as good a 4th of July holiday as Nancy and I had and that you stay well and keep in touch with one another.

NEA-Retired Annual Meeting NEA Representative Assembly

6/29–7/6, 2021 – Denver, CO
6/29–7/6, 2022 – Dallas, TX
6/29–7/6, 2023 – Orlando, FL