



THE CLARION

August 2022

The Newsletter for Retired Educators
Maine Education Association Retired Vol. 134, No. 6

From our President



Gary McGrane

Happy August!

As I write this it feels like summer has just begun, but how did we end up in July already!

Enjoy it while you can because as we all know, winters are long and summers are short in Maine.

I was on a call the other day; and we were talking about the high price of gasoline, home heating fuel, and food. This led us to further discussion about the many

retirees and members who are widowed or disabled. What can we do to assist those who are struggling and are already worrying about how they are going to heat their homes come fall.

I suggested they might want to work more closely with nonprofit agencies that administer federal or state assistance programs. I have compiled a short list of resources that can help answer some of those issues. And if necessary, assist them to make application before cold

weather sets in.

Food assistance like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can help fend off hunger. There is no asset test, and the EBT card (unlike food stamps) looks like any other debit card.

I believe access to food is a human right, and no one should go to bed hungry. Nor should anyone feel that they should not use the help.

Another resource our member should not be afraid

See President, Page 4

Memorable MEA-RA

Eleven MEA-Retired delegates represented our membership at the annual MEA-Representative Assembly at the Portland Marriott at Sable Oaks in South Portland.

A warm welcome was extended by MEA-President Grace Leavitt. The keynote speakers was NEA Vice President Princess Moss. MEA Vice President Jesse Hargrove

and Executive Director Rachelle Bristol shared updates. Treasurer Beth French presented the budget and explained the financial status of MEA.

Business items, resolutions, news, legislation and other issues consumed the day-long session on Saturday. Delegates enjoyed meeting in person and

spending time with friends and colleagues.

The renowned Awards Banquet on Saturday evening is always a favorite event in the weekend assembly. The following awards were presented:

Anne Sheehan Political Action Award: Associated Faculties of Maine (AFUM) and Education Association 22

Ashley Bryan Arts & Humanities Award: Sylvia Jadczyk, RSU18 EA

Award for Teaching

See MEA-RA, Page 4



MEA-Retired delegates to the annual MEA-RA in South Portland: (Back L to R): Marilyn Hylan, Bo Zabierek, Kay Grindall, Paul Bouchar, Phil Gonyar. (Front L to R): Gary McGrane (inset), Barbara Bricker, Bob Jean, Jane Conroy, Pam Partridge, and Belinda Micucci.

MEA-Retired

71st Convention
and Annual Meeting

Augusta Civic Center
May 4, 2023

Convention plans underway

By Rheba Michaud, Chairperson
Convention Committee

Humorist Gary Crocker of West Gardiner will be the keynote speaker for our May 4, 2023, 71st Convention and Annual Meeting at the Civic Center in Augusta.



Gary Crocker

Gary heard his first stories from his Grandfather Russell when the two would often walk the Maine woods together. His life forever changed during those walks.

However, quite likely the man who had the greatest impact on Crocker's decision to become a Maine humorist was the legendary Marshall Dodge. He first heard the master storyteller in the mid '70s at the Ladd Recreation Center in Wayne.

See 2023 Convention, Page 7

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First Place E-Newsletter NEA-Retired Recognition

THE CLARION

The Newsletter for Retired Educators
Maine Education Association Retired Vol. 134

Be informed: Elections have consequences

By Crystal Ward
Legislative Committee Chair

This often used statement has been clearly shown to be very true! We have been trying to get the terrible, harmful cuts, freezes, capping the COLA and lifting the retirement age made in the MainePERS pension system by Paul LePage and Bruce Poliquin in 2011 corrected. Trying for eight years with LePage got us nothing!

Finally, with Governor Mills and Democrat majorities, we changed the COLA cap from 3 percent to 4 percent, the total COLA of 5.4 percent paid for 2022 and the total amount added to the base used to figure future pension amounts.

The state income tax exemption increases annually from the current \$10,000 until it is \$35,000—the same as the Social Security amount. The state's share of the premium for healthcare plans rose from 45 percent to 55 percent.

These needed improvements were made by the Democrat-led state government.

There is more work to do, and we need our friends in office. As John Kosinski often reminds us, "We have no permanent friends and no permanent enemies." We have just **friends** who will help the retirees!! Vote for friends who helped us in the November 2022 elections.

The MEA's Screening and Endorsement Committee, comprised of MEA members from across the state, met to review the candidates for governor. Ultimately, they would decide which candidate will work to ensure public education is a priority.

This process is extremely thorough and fair. Committee members draft a questionnaire relating to issues that are important to members, students, schools, retirees, and our union. Gov. Mills answered the questionnaire, while her opponent, Paul LePage, declined to participate and did not return the questionnaire.

After the review of the questionnaire and considering Gov. Mills' voting record of support for students and educators, the committee and the MEA Board of Directors endorsed Janet Mills for re-election and encourage MEA members to cast their vote for her on Election Day, on November 8.

If you want to see the voting records for the eight years of Paul LePage and the four years of Janet Mills, MEA maintains the voting scorecards that show how they voted on our legislative initiatives. You may contact Jenna Vendil: jvendil@maineea.org or John Kosinski: jkosinski@maineea.org.

MEA Retired knows this election will be close and our efforts can help make sure Janet Mills is elected to serve another four years. If you want to join the MEA's effort to help get Janet re-elected, email Jenna Vendil at jvendil@maineea.org and we can be in touch with you about events and activities whereby you can help her campaign.

MEA President Grace Leavitt released the following statement:

"You've heard it many times before, but each time it is even more accurate—this is the most important election ever! Governor Janet Mills and our friends of public education in the current Legislature have demonstrated their support for our retired educators by making significant improvements to the retirement system, undoing much of the harm done by Governor Paul LePage.

"MEA has endorsed Governor Mills for a second term because she is the one who has clearly shown she supports public education, educators, retired and students. We encourage members to help support candidates who support us by donating to the MEA Fund in Support of Public Education here: <https://maineea.org/mea-fund/>"

MEA Government Relations Director John Kosinski released the following statement:

"If you care about your pensions, then the choice for Governor is clear – Janet Mills is the best choice. Un-

der Governor Mills we have seen significant improvements to our pensions, including removing the state income tax from our pension benefits.

"Don't forget, in 2011, Paul LePage and Bruce Poliquin pushed a campaign that cut our pensions drastically by reducing and capping cost of living adjustments and lifting the retirement age, among other major cuts that we still live with today. Janet Mills signed the budget that increased the states contribution from 45 percent to 55 percent. If you care about your pensions and retirement security for retired educators, Janet Mills is far superior and I encourage all MEA-Retired members to cast their vote for her on Election Day."

THINK. STAY INFORMED. VOTE FOR FRIENDS OF THE RETIRED!

Elections have consequences. Our pensions must be protected.

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

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 207-888-3856 or via email at lcollins@maineea.org.

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MEA-Retired is here for you!

August 1, 2022 @ 9:30 a.m.
Executive Committee Meeting
Location: MEA Building

Sept. 6, 2022 @ 9:30 a.m.
Board of Directors Meeting
Location: Best Western Hotel Waterville

October 3, 2022 @ 9:30 a.m.
Executive Committee Meeting
Location: MEA Building

Contact affiliate leaders with ideas and concerns.

NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA RA

June 30—July 6, 2023
Orlando, FL

July 1—July 7, 2024
Philadelphia, PA



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 via the MEA-Retired president by October 1.

A two-thirds vote of the members of the Board of Directors is required to ratify the nomination. This is usually done at the December Board meeting.

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 that 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 announced in the May annual meeting and convention booklet and included in the August *Clarion*.

Nominations must be received by our president by October 1. Please send to

Time to nominate Honorary Members

By Gary McGrane, President
MEA-Retired

Gary McGrane, 310 East Dixfield Road, Jay, ME 04239. Documents may be sent via email addressed to gmcgrane7@gmail.com.

Pre-Retirement sessions ready to go

By Sue Grondin, Chairperson
Pre-Retirement Committee

The Pre-Retirement Committee has set the dates for the fall and spring seminars and we are ready to share the good news of what awaits active educators when they decide to retire. Active members are encouraged to attend a session to gain a general overview of retirement expectations and benefits.

Individual situations and concerns can be answered by contacting MainePERS and the MEA Benefits Trust regarding one's pension and health insurance coverage.

Over time information changes, thus members should consider attending one or more seminars over a three to five year period prior to retirement.

A notice will be sent in the fall to all active members, who have provided MEA with an email address, with information about signing up for a seminar. Each seminar is two consecutive nights from 5:00 to 6:15 P.M.

Hosted by MEA-Retired Committee members in conjunction with MEA, presenters from MEA Benefits Trust, MainePERS, and Horace Mann provide a summary of expectations each active member needs to consider.

The Pre-Retirement Committee sends a survey to each seminar attendee to evaluate information and format that was presented. The optional survey results are used to guide the Pre-Retirement Committee in seeking avenues to improve each session.

Naomi Mullane is a school nurse in MSAD 75, (Brunswick) and says that the sessions were "informative and reassuring."

Ann Martin teaches Grade 2 in the RTI program in Penobscot. She commented, "Thank you for providing clear and concise information about retirement."

Carol Rosinski teaches at Connors Emerson School in Ellsworth. She noted, "Thanks so much. It's so good to know that there are so many competent and caring people at the MEA who can help me out when I need it."

Laurie Molton is the K-12 Fine Arts and Gifted and Talented instructor. She also advises the yearbook and Civil Rights team. She said, "I really felt like a deer caught in the headlights before these sessions. Now I understand the process, have

a plan and I know whom to contact if I need help! Thanks for providing this service!"

We appreciate the time, commitment, and expertise of our presenters: Seminar dates are posted on the MEA and MEA-Retired websites and in *The Clarion* and *The*

Maine Educator.

MEA-Retired welcomes prospective retirees. You are invited to download an easy "fillable" membership application from our MEA-Retired website. Note that three are posted—one for HEAR, one for teachers, and a separate one for ed techs.

2022-2023 Pre-Retirement Events

Fall Session 1:

Tuesday, Oct. 18—MEA Benefits Trust & GPO/WEP
Wednesday, Oct. 19—MainePERS

Fall Session 2:

Tuesday, Oct. 25—MEA Benefits Trust & GPO/WEP
Wednesday, Oct. 26—MainePERS

Spring Session 3:

Tuesday, Jan. 10—MEA Benefits Trust & GPO/WEP
Wednesday, Jan. 11—MainePERS

Spring Session 4:

Tuesday, Jan. 17—MEA Benefits Trust & GPO/WEP
Wednesday, Jan. 18—MainePERS

Spring Session 5:

Tuesday, Feb. 7—MEA Benefits Trust & GPO/WEP
Wednesday, Feb. 8—MainePERS

Spring Session 6:

Tuesday, Mar. 7—MEA Benefits Trust & GPO/WEP
Wednesday, Mar. 8—MainePERS

Sue Grondin, Chairperson, scgrondin@hotmail.com, 207-782-8850

MEA-RA, from Page 1

Excellence: Mallory Cook
Friend of Education Award: Senator Joseph Rafferty, Senate District 34
Golden Apple Awards: Civil Rights Team Project, Brandon Baldwin-Project Director; The Game Loft, Belfast ME; Todd MacArthur, Winthrop EA
Honor Medal Award: Kara Schwartz, Hermon EA and Kelsey Stoyanova, Education Association 22
Human and Civil Rights Awards: Hermon High

School Gay-Straight Alliance and Dr. Larissa Malone, AFUM

Joan McGovern ESP of the Year Award: Kimberly Hubbard, Tri-County ESP Association

John Marvin Local Association Awards: Oxford Hills EA and Seacoast EA

The MEA website has more detailed information as to other issues and events that were highlighted during this two-day annual event. Check out the website: main-eea.org.



ME President Grace Leavitt welcomed delegates to the recent MEA-RA in South Portland.

President, from Page 1

to ask for help is Low Income Home Energy and Assistance Program (LIHEAP) which is administered through your local Community Action Program.

Finally, we can provide help to those who have not filed income tax returns for last year because they are not required to do so. In order to qualify to receive the \$850 stimulus check from the State of Maine treasury, though, one must file a tax return for the previous fiscal tax year 2021 by October 1, 2022, of this year.

Nonprofit agencies that can assist in this filing process include Spectrum Generations and Seniors Plus. The short form is a one-pager and only takes a few minutes to complete.

I understand that many individuals don't want a handout; but if we offer a helping hand, then maybe, just maybe, that will be seen as a fellow educator making sure others receive the benefits that are available.

Feel free to contact me at anytime. My contact information is on Page 2. I look forward to hearing from you at anytime.

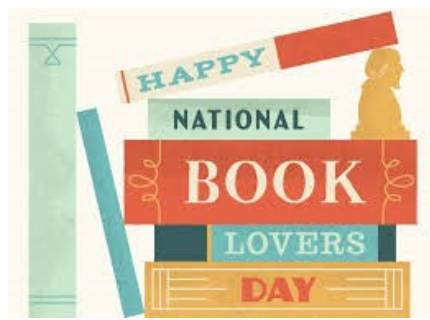
We need MEA-Retired members to step forward and become delegates to represent us at the 2023 MEA Representative Assembly. Will you consider being a delegate to represent more than 5,300 members next year?

Watch the October issue for more in-depth information on this process. We encourage recent retirees to step forward and become candidates for these delegate seats. Contact President Gary McGrane for more information.



(L to R): Roberta Morrill and Jean Phillips of Cumberland County Retired Educators Association represented MEA-Retired at a promotional table from 8 a.m. to 12 noon during the MEA Representative Assembly. Marie Solak and Frank Maguire served at the table from 12 to 4 p.m.

August 9 National Book Lovers Day



Facebook update

Our MEA-Retired association has been successful with its Facebook implementation. It's working, so feel free to join in.

You can reach the MEA Retired Facebook page by going to this link:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063702362546>

At the current time, we have 171 followers, and we can always handle more. The page is a public page, and generally has posts every day from a variety of topics, including items of interest to retired teachers. It also includes a variety of items relating to vacation opportunities in New England, news from around the world, and hints for successful retirement.

These posting are available for any-

one to see. We try to limit the posts to one a day in order to keep the process and the news manageable.

Perhaps more importantly, the MEA Retired Facebook page sponsors three affiliate related groups. Groups are the places for MEA members to interact with their peers and neighbors.

We currently have affiliate Facebook groups organized in Androscoggin, Aroostook, and Kennebec Counties. Each group has its own administrator and conducts its own business. Groups are designed for members of the affiliate and are private for those members.

Consider joining the Facebook pages of the affiliate groups, or setting up a group for your affiliate. It's pretty easy and it helps us all stay better connected.

By Roger Fuller, Administrator
MEA-Retired Facebook

I would like to ask that you consider serving on the following NEA-Retired committees: Communication, Membership, or Legislative. We also need people to serve as affiliate PAC Captains.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of the work of these committees! Ideas are shared at every meeting, and encouragement is given for the ongoing work. EVERY state needs to organize activities, goals and objectives in each of these areas.

I urge our presidents to involve others within your state after naming someone to lead in the work by serving on one of these. THIS means presidents need to ask people to serve on EACH of the three committees.

Each committee meets virtually at least three times a year. Start now to see how you can become involved.

Presidents are asked to send me names, email addresses, and phone number. Re-member: Our Commitment continues and we do this by serving.

Mark Your Calendar NOW There WILL be Presidents' Training in August. A specific date will be

forthcoming soon! There will be training for NEA secretaries and treasurers if they are new, also in August or early September.

This month I'm sharing ideas related to communication that you put on our lists at the NEA Leadership Summit in Baltimore in March.

Reaching members who live in rural or geographic, far reaching areas: If ever there is a need to communicate by email or paper, it is now. We want and need ALL members to have information and to be involved. They won't do this unless they have ongoing information.

Some members don't belong to a chapter or affiliate, and this only doubles the need to communicate! Once again, it also pinpoints the need to have a Communication Chairperson to assist in getting the word out. Take info from this monthly newsletter as well as current events in your own state. Accurate and frequent information is basic and vital to involvement. Of course, zoom meetings can always be held so conveniently.

Need training in Social

Media: This can be held virtually or in an in-person meeting. Surely within each state are active or retired members who can assist. If you're really at a loss, we can find NEA Executive Committee members to assist. Just ask.

Need messaging to increase getting the word out: Agreed, so reread Number 1. Staff should be able to assist.

Greater visibility with the active members: Be sure that you have a presence at EVERY state event: Set up a Retired table at every event—complete with a give-away, a basket of goodies, a gift card, a gifted percentage off on new signees for membership, etc.

Always have membership information, fliers, applications, current newsletters for distributions. A basket of candy always attracts persons to your table!

Attend Assoc. Board meetings, offer to help with active membership drives, lobby with actives and without, speak up at meetings.

Greater support from actives: See above BUT also establish times to talk with Active leadership, seek to be

NEA-Retired updates and opportunities

By Sarah Borgman, President NEA-Retired

a line item in your state budget, be willing to increase your retired dues in order to show your good faith to fund your work from your side of it.

This shows you are not asking for a handout but are also working to solve financial concerns. Offer assistance at events to demonstrate the importance of all Association work.

Let me know if you have other questions and need help. While this newsletter is shorter, I'm sure you understand since we are involved in Chicago!

"The great courageous act that we must all do, is to have the courage to step out of our history and past so that we can live our dreams."

—Oprah Winfrey

By Jane Conroy, Vice President Higher Education Association of Retirees

1688 or email soucyroy@maine.rr.com. Or contact me about HEAR membership at 207-717-6472 or email jconroy@maine.edu.

Let's reach out—one at a time.

HEAR affiliate reorganizes

As part of the MEA-Retired 70th Convention and Annual Meeting, the Higher Education Association of Retirees (HEAR) gathered during lunch for its own annual meeting. The group discussed updating any needed language in the bylaws and the dues structure. No action was taken at that time.

Of importance was the election of HEAR officers as follows: President—Susan Feiner of Yarmouth and University of Southern Maine retiree; Vice President—Jane Conroy of Dover-Foxcroft and University of Maine System (UMS) Cooperative Extension retiree; Treasurer—Deborah Killam of Detroit, UMS Cooperative Extension retiree.

The group acknowledged the long-time service and leadership to HEAR of members Hank Metcalf and Paul Harris.

In addition to our meaningful reconnecting with former colleagues, we had created a display that featured current

HEAR members. The display explained who we are, from which institution we retired, and where we are located throughout the state (and around the country). It is our hope to be able to meaningfully connect with MEA-Retired affiliates in our state.

It is estimated that about 100 UMS employees will be entering the world of retirement over the summer. We need to encourage them to be part of our organization. So be on the lookout for ways to encourage those you know or with whom you have worked to join MEA-Retired, MEA, and HEAR.

Roger Roy of Caribou is our MEA-Retired Membership Committee chairperson and a HEAR member. Interested folk may contact Roger at 207-768-



HEAR members attending our 70th annual meeting are Row 1 (L to R): Arthur Hill, Nancy Grant, and Jane Conroy. Row 2: Ron Mosley and Roger Roy

UMS: Please cooperate

By Sue Feiner, President
Higher Educ. Assoc. of Retirees

Hello Friends, Colleagues
and Fellow Retirees:

I'm excited to be the recently elected President of the Higher Education Association of Retirees (HEAR), an affiliate of Maine Education Asso-

ciation Retired.

Before I say anything about myself, I'd like to thank everyone who makes MEA-Retired possible!

I was a professor at the University of Southern Maine for 23 years and president of the USM chapter of the Associated Faculties of the Universities of Maine (AFUM).

During my tenure more than 50 faculty members were forced into retirement, and 26 were fired. Among them 16 faculty members were tenured.

One thing I know as well as I know the nose on my face: Whenever you hear

the UMS use the word "transparency," it's a good bet that something is definitely being covered up.

That's relevant here and now because the UMS has post-employment benefits in their penny-pinching sights. In order to effectively fight against these cuts to our earned retiree benefits, we need to be as numerically strong as possible.

The UMS knows this and that's why they have refused (multiple times) to work with MEA-Retired to put in place a system whereby MEA is notified of UMS employees who are going into retirement.

My top priority is that of "persuading" the UMS to give MEA monthly updates on retiring personnel. We want to provide them the opportunity to join HEAR and MEA and NEA-Retired. We want them to stay united and informed as to critical issues relating to their retirement.

My suspicion is that this will take letters to the editor, lobbying of legislators, a protest march, and a lawsuit.

Why? Because the UMS modus operandi is to double down: You want retiree info? Force us to give it to you.

News flash: We won't back down! (Hat Tip: Tom Petty).

AARP Maine offers much

By Pam Partridge, AARP Liaison

After a hiatus from our weekly Tuesdays at the State House (TASH) meetings during May, volunteers reconvened with bi-weekly meetings in June under a new banner entitled, "WAVE" which stands for *We Advocate for Voter Engagement*.

This is the time of year when mid-term voter campaigns are ramping up and candidates are found everywhere. Voter engagement is an AARP priority for the coming months. AARP and their volunteers will be reaching out to the 50+ voter community between now and the big voting day—November 8.

They strongly support Mainers exercising their right to vote and working to ensure their voices will be heard on issues that matter—like rising food, gas, and oil prices, as well as dealing with the residual effects of the recent Covid pandemic.

AARP Maine trained volunteers in July for this purpose and will also continue to address the priority issues of prescription drug costs, affordable housing, and paid family medical leave.

Would you like to join a book club with a purpose? AARP Maine is sponsoring the "Ballot Box Book Club."

Democracy starts at the ballot box. Do we really understand how our elections work? Participants are looking at our election history and exploring ideas as to what can be done better in the fu-

ture.

Their first book of the Book Club was *100% Democracy: The Case for Universal Voting* by E.J. Dionne and Miles Rapaport. The book for August is *Thank You for Voting, The Maddening, Enlightening, Inspiring Truth About Voting in America*, by Erin Geiger Smith.

These monthly Book Club meetings are held virtually on Zoom. For more information or to register, go to the (1) AARPMaine Events website, (2) meare-tired.com website which has a direct link to AARPMaine Events, or (3) the Maine AARP Facebook page. After registering, a confirmation email will be sent with the Zoom link to access the meeting on designated dates. The Book

Club will continue to meet once a month between now and election day.

I would like to add that AARP is non-profit and nonpartisan. We are not

taking sides about voting issues but discussing historical perspectives and what we can do to make educated discussions. We do not endorse candidates.

AARP Maine has announced that 11 organizations throughout the state will receive 2022 Community Challenge grants. They are among 260 organizations nationwide being awarded a total of \$3.4 million to date.

Grantees will implement quick-action projects that help communities become more livable in the long-term by

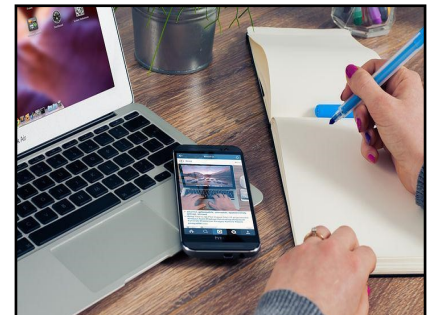
improving public places; transportation; housing; diversity, equity and inclusion; digital access; and civic engagement, with an emphasis on the needs of adults age 50 and over.

I encourage you to check the AARP Maine website at <https://states.aarp.org/maine/> to see all the benefits, opportunities, events, and self-help projects. Take a few minutes today to see all that is offered there. You will be amazed at the wealth of very helpful information you will find. Please do not hesitate to contact me at pampartridge1@gmail.com or call me at 207-431-2370.



LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

We have more than 5,200 readers—there have to be many more stories out there!
Opinions? Ideas?
Suggestions?
Deadline for the October
Clarion is September 5.



Staying informed: Resolutions update

By Claudette O'Connell, Chair Resolutions Committee

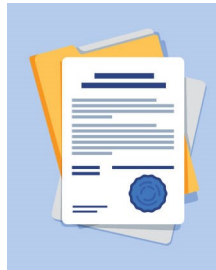
In an effort to keep our members well-informed and as a follow up to our annual meeting deliberations and vote, the following resolutions were adopted at our 70th annual meeting on May 5.

In the interim as we move forward in MEA-Retired, we invite suggestions for new resolutions and issues that could be addressed and become part of our guiding principles.

Resolved: That MEA-

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

Resolved: That the MEA-Retired believes that the Retirement System (MEPERS) should include early retirement opportuni-



ties without penalties or restrictions. (2022)

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

(2022)

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

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

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

Resolved: That MEA-Retired believes members should support legislative efforts to increase retired educator's pension exemption from \$10,000 to parity with the Social Security exemption, and exclude any Social Security benefit received from being used to reduce the deduction. (2005, Amended 2006, Amended 2021)

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

islature.

After retiring from the legislative position, he decided to be a full-time humorous speaker. Then, of course, we all can imagine what happened! Covid wiped out his speaking itinerary for two years. He is now building his speaking schedule and is available for speaking engagements.

Today, Gary speaks several times a month. While not speaking or cleaning out the trailer, Gary has managed to produce two CD's with a third on the way. "It's best to make money doing what you love—especially if you like to talk as much as Gary."

Gary and Ellen have three grown children and two grandsons. They may be reached at 207-462-3774 or send an email to them at gfcrocker@gmail.com.

So, mark your calendars early and make plans now to attend our big event at the Augusta Civic Center on May 4, 2023. Really, you must get in on the fun this year! There is nothing as healthy and wholesome as a good hearty laugh! Well, they are guaranteed for you on May 4.

Watch the October issue of *The Clarion* for registration information. You will have a great, memorable time and leave with lots of laughter, great food, and friendships.

2023 Convention, from Page 1

Gary says of his mentor, "He was probably one of the finest storytellers I ever heard," says Gary, who has collected all of Dodge's tapes.

Crocker arrived early to get a front-row seat and was mesmerized by his storytelling. He says, "I remember him sitting there with a stool and microphone for over an hour, telling us classic Maine stories in a S-L-O-W Maine dialect."

After seeing that performance and being entertained by the Maine humor, Crocker knew he wanted to become a Maine storyteller as well.

Gary's first official booking as a paid humorist was around 1980, at a Rotary club in Augusta. "That's where most public speakers start." Since then, he has performed in Maine and throughout the United States.

His audiences have ranged from a captivated four people to 30,000 Boy Scouts attending a jamboree at the Brunswick Naval Air Station. This performance, during which Gary was projected onto three gigantic screens, "was bigger than life!"

Gary taught English and speech at Cony High School. He then became director of adult education at Central Maine Community College in Auburn. For over 30 years he was also their advocate and spokesperson in Maine's Leg-



2021)

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

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

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

I would like to thank Resolutions Committee members Louise Thompson and Vickie Amoroso for their time and helpful input and perspectives as we crafted resolutions. It is clear that they have long standing experience in the area of resolutions.

As we look to our committee meetings again, we look forward to hearing updated and innovative ideas and suggestions from our members. Please contact me at 207-944-4930 or send an email to me at cladet456@gmail.com.

SPIRITCORPS: Premiere opportunity for retired educators

It's August! School starts in a few weeks. A great time to begin the school year in an exciting volunteer program that enhances the lives of students.

SPIRITCORPS is a volunteer-driven 21st Century literacy and social emotional learning program serving Grade 7 thru 10 students from Maine to California.

Born out of the recent pan-

Membership, From Page 12

gift of their first year's membership dues.

What about people who

retired earlier, and haven't joined yet? I am sure you know some—have you invited them to join us? Nothing works better than the personal invitation. And nothing works better than retaining membership than involvement in local activities including social events and community projects. (Sometimes community projects feel like social events.)

And, by decade's end, it is expected that 25,000 students annually will meet the **SPIRITCORPS** challenge, coast to coast. To assist on their journey of self-discovery, 1,000 volunteer Story Coaches are needed!

SPIRITCORPS begins with heartfelt video stories from program staff and friends, inspired by the lives of the historic heroes we celebrate.

This year, from the many

virtues exemplified in the series, schools will choose to explore courage, conscience, or compassion.

With guidance from their Story Coach, students complete a rigorous five-step self-discovery and writing process to identify, craft, and record a true-life **SPIRITCORPS** video story of their own.

These creative stories are shared in finale presentations to classmates and school communities—with a representative sample featured at year-end regional celebrations.

Story coaches mentor students with positive, constructive written feedback at three critical points during the **SPIRITCORPS** process.



Volunteers don't need to be the world's greatest writer to coach! Rather, they just need to have the drive to help like all teachers have—just a feel for good story and a commitment to advance the lives of the young people we serve.

As an added benefit, and a crucial part of your training, all coaches are asked to complete the 5-step process, from pitch a video story of your own.

Once trained, we ask that volunteers give between 15-20 hours of their time, mentoring as many as 20 students during the school year. For more information, contact Kent Pierce at 207-653-5048 or kpierce@spiritseries.org or call Lance Cromwell at 207-756-4439 or email lcromwell@spiritseries.org.

New MEA App

The MEA continues to try and meet your needs and is also launching a new way for you to access information from the Union. You can now find MEA information at your fingertips with our new app! There has never been an easier way to reach MEA.

The app will give you up-to-date information from your Union so make sure you download it today and enable push notifications, so you don't miss a thing!

The MEA App is in the App Store and Google Play.

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retired earlier, and haven't joined yet? I am sure you know some—have you invited them to join us? Nothing works better than the personal invitation. And nothing works better than retaining membership than involvement in local activities including social events and community projects. (Sometimes community projects feel like social events.)

Furthermore, if you have friends who want to be politically active, tell them about our legislative lobbying activities.

If you are retired from a position in higher education, you have a new president. Susan Feiner of Yarmouth was recently elected president of Higher Education Association of Retirees (HEAR).

The HEAR Membership Committee chairperson is Jane Conroy of Dover-Foxcroft. I congratulate Susan and Jane for their commitment to leadership and to coordinating efforts among our higher ed retirees. We look forward to hearing more about what they have planned.

I commend Jane for the great work she has done over many years. She has "stayed the course" as a leader and has enabled HEAR to evolve to where it is today.

If you have questions about HEAR, Jane has an abundance of knowledge and history of the affiliate. Feel free to contact her for more information as to how to join. Her email address is jconroy@maine.edu.

Check out the three different membership applications for retirees on our website: One is for our active educators, another for ESP, and a third one is designed for our higher ed retirees. Download and forward in emails to friends. Follow up with a phone call to see if they need help or have questions.

You could always call me; Roger Roy 207-768-1688 at any time. Your local affiliate president and membership chair are also eager to help you. Membership is everyone's job, and we have to work together if we are to continue growing.

NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA-RA news

By Bo Zabierek
Aroostook Retired Educ. Assoc.

Gary McGrane, Bob Jean, Ben Paradis, Belinda Micucci, and I joined more than 300 delegates and represented MEA-Retired at the two-day NEA-Retired annual meeting and conference at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Chicago.

NEA-Retired President Sarah Borgman gave the First General Session meeting to order and reviewed the Freeman Hybrid live/virtual platform which was used to accommodate live and virtual participation.

We were honored to have President McGrane offer the land acknowledgement. Sarah Borgman offered her sincere thanks: "Thank you, Gary, for presenting the Land Acknowledgement. I loved the poem/prayer and was so glad you included it."

NEA-Retired President Borgman's opening remarks of folksy charm and self-deprecating humor charmed the crowd. She spoke of the challenges of being the first group to test the Freeman Hybrid live/virtual platform which was, at times, "challenging but she managed to keep the delegates engaged with very little down time."

NEA-Vice President Princess Moss gave welcoming remarks that fired up the assembled delegates. An additional Welcome to Chicago was delivered by Illinois Education Association-Retired Host President Jim Duffy. Other greetings were extended and NEA Secretary/Treasurer Noel Candelaria of Texas led a salute to our veterans who stood in the hall

to be recognized with applause for their selfless service to our country. We then paused for a moment of quiet reflection.

NEA-Retired Elections Chairperson Steve Gorrie gave the credentials report—over 300 members attending in person and virtually.

Sarah's son Kim gave a touching introduction of his mother for the annual presidential speech to the convention. Sarah spoke of the challenges that Covid presented and the virtual challenges to ensure business would continue to be conducted. She asked for patience as we piloted the Freeman Hybrid live/virtual platform.

The May 16th Day of Action calling for reform of the GPO/WEP social security offsets, and how it can affect recruitment of new teachers and ESPs was the most prominent issue discussed throughout the convention.

After a brief break Steve Gorrie returned to discuss elections and resolutions. NEA-Retired Vice President Jean Dobashi of Hawaii and Marilyn Warner gave overviews of The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education PAC fundraising efforts—including gift card drawings and the live action.

NEA President Becky Pringle then addressed her "favorite delegates" with a speech that brought the crowd to their feet. The Second General Session commenced with an overview of the Kinman Scholarship

Program delivered by Joanne Smith Mashburn of Alabama and a member of the Executive Council.

The presentation of the Communications Awards by Roberta Margo of Minnesota was especially exciting when our MEA-Retired *Clarion* won first place for the new E-Newsletter category!

Sarah then reminded us to vote overnight electronically for bylaws and candidates for the NEA Resolutions Committee. Delegates perused PAC sales items and candidate promotions. Sarah welcomed us back and Steve Gorrie delivered the Credentials Report for day two.

After a review of the Freeman Platform by Sarah, Joann Smith Mashburn conducted donation collections by passing the hat followed by the presentation of the awards for the Jack Kinman Memorial Scholarships.

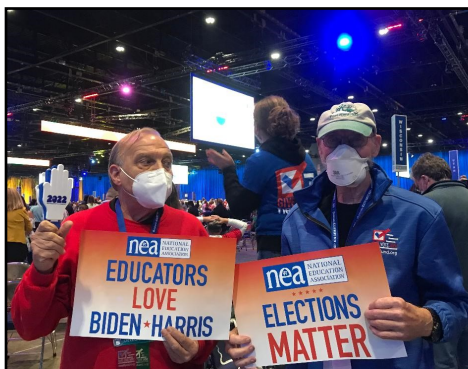
We were treated to a Parade of States and then Meg Gruber, NEA-R Executive Council, VA delivered the Legislative Update followed by remarks with questions and answers for Mary Kusler, Director of the NEA Center for Advocacy.

Again, the emphasis was on the progress being made towards a vote on the GPOWEP in the Congress. Mary stayed for Julie Horwin's gift card drawing and then she revved up the crowd and their pocketbooks as our guest auctioneer for PAC.

We continued the day's business with video presentations by the candidates for the NEA Executive Committee, reports by Linda McCrary on the voting results on bylaw amendments,



Mary Kusler and Bo Zabierek shared a few moments of discussion about actions to be taken on the GPO-WEP.



Bob Jean and Ben Paradis take a few moments to campaign on the floor at the NEA-A.

and New Business Items (NBIs).

Janice Poirier gave Member Benefit and Grants reports after which Tom Wellman presented Membership Awards. Our very own President Gary McGrane was chosen to fill one of the three vacancies on the NEA Resolutions Committee.

The program concluded with recognition of outgoing NEA-Retired Governance Leaders. Sarah's announcements and Points of Personal Privilege adjourned the 2022 NEA-Retired Annual and first Live/Virtual Convention.

Belinda Micucci attended her first NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA-RA. She says, "I learned a great amount about the generosity & dedication of the retired educators. The RA is amazing as delegates debated. Hearing many different views from other state representatives, then voting electronically, and seeing the results on a screen. I'm honored to have been able to attend the RA."

Everyone was impressed by the encouraging message by Mary Kusler, Director of the NEA Center for Advocacy, in her discussion of "GPO-WEP Movement." President-Elect Bob Jean noted, "It's been a long, ongoing battle (as we all know), but Mary remains optimistic that our baby steps are positive signs of momentum."

Our own PAC chairperson, Bob also noted that "NEA-Retired, once again, did a phenomenal job of raising PAC money. Retirees continue to lead the way supporting PAC!"



By Kay Grindall

Foreign exchange students a homey experience

was dedicated to Gil in 2009.

The Roys knew nothing about hosting students until Anita had an interesting conversation about the foreign exchange student program with a friend. They attended meetings and learned about the International program, a non-profit high school exchange organization dedicated to developing the next generation of global leaders and world citizens.

They began to understand what was involved in opening their home to enable foreign high school students to attend an American school where they would adapt to the lifestyles and cultures of fellow American teenagers.

The Roys' student journey began quite unexpectedly when a student was placed in a home that did not work out. Circumstances necessitated that he be moved. When the coordinator learned that they might be interested in hosting, Dan from Moldova soon moved in with Gil and Anita and finished his junior year at Messalonskee High School in Oakland.

The Roys provided extensive travel experiences for Dan--Florida, Washington, DC, New York, and other U.S. landmarks.

Having no children of their own, the Roys found this to be a most rewarding, wonderful experience for Dan--and for them.

Most unfortunately, seven months after Dan's arrival in their home, Anita passed away very suddenly. Unable to deal with the great loss of his wife, Gil found another home where Dan was able to finish his junior year.

After his wife's funeral Gil was extremely lonely and bored and decided he had too much free time. He relished his time working with high school students and

had so many fond memories of events and members of the Class of 2009.

Now that he was retired, the idea of hosting foreign exchange students seemed to be more compelling. He loves to travel and knew he would enjoy taking foreign students to famous sights and sounds in our country for the first time.

Gil finally decided to contact Brandy Jewell of Skowhegan who is the Community Representative for Ayusa—a non-profit organization dedicated to promote global learning and leadership through foreign exchange, study abroad, and leadership programs for high school students around the world.

Gil filled out the application, completed a background check, and a representative checked his home and accessibility. Once approved, Gil viewed profiles and pictures of male students who had applied to study overseas.

Students arrive in the August to prepare for school. Gil makes an appointment with the guidance counselor to register them for classes. He gives them a tour of the building and drops them off the first day. They ride the bus thereafter.

The young men go inside the school knowing no one. Without exception, Gil reports, "They come home from school the first day all smiles and shares names of new students they met who were 'so friendly' to them." They soon become a member of a sports team or a club at school and meet more students who are always willing to help them acclimate.

Often the students play soccer, lacrosse, or football and will be here in time for preseason. Others are interested in drama, music, and community service projects. "Volunteerism seems to be a priority for many of these

young men," says Gil.

His most recent student, Daniil Lukin from Russia, played soccer and was presented with the "Most Valuable Player" award. Gil remembers that Pablo Marciel from Spain had a beautiful singing voice and enjoyed participating in drama and musicals.

Tom Sheridan of Winslow has coached lacrosse for 27 years and soccer for 16 years. He is the varsity soccer coach and usually checks with Gil over the summer to see if he will have exchange students who play soccer. Tom invites them to his home for a "Meet and Greet."

He says of Gil's students, "They are great soccer players and have added so much to my teams over the years, and the boys from Messalonskee

It is August, and we know what that means for educators: Organizing classrooms, creating bulletin boards, preparing seating charts, opening boxes of new textbooks, planning pre-season practices, and learning names of new students.

For many high schools, August also means welcoming new foreign exchange students. For Gil Roy of Oakland, August 2022 means Oliver from Germany and Matvey from Russia will join his home where for the past 13 years he has hosted 25 high school students from 12 countries.



Gil Roy

Gil worked at Scott Paper Company in Winslow until they closed. He then obtained a position as administrative assistant at Messalonskee High School where he worked until his retirement.

Gil and his wife Anita served as advisors to the Class of 2009. Their Project Graduation outing for the nearly 200 students was a trip to Six Flags Amusement Park in Massachusetts. The yearbook



Gil (center) and Anita began hosting foreign exchange high school students in 2009.



Gil collects flags from the countries from which the students come. To date he has 24

benefit from the experience. They learn about other cultures and make friends with students they would never have known unless through the student exchange program.

"I also know how much time Gil spends catching up with the students when they return home. I know he has traveled back to meet their families, attended weddings and have been on cross country trips. You can definitely see that having students stay with him is beneficial for him as well. You can see how it impacts his life and gives him purpose.

"Gil is truly one of the most unselfish people I know, and those students who stay

See Exchange, Page 11

I find myself writing this article on a lazy July summer day. However, I assure you that the Maine Education Association Benefits Trust staff have been anything but lazy! They busy working to maximize your access to the best possible healthcare benefits during these retirement years. As of this writing, our MEA offices remain closed to personal visits due to COVID precautions.

We received reassuring news on June 21, 2022. Barbara Slager, M.D. is president of Coastal Women's Healthcare and has communicated with Denise McDonough, president of Anthem Blue

Cross and Blue Shield of Maine. They have conferred and recently announced that the two organizations had reached an agreement to renew their contract to give members uninterrupted access to the services provided by Coastal Women's Healthcare. This is very good news.

Members with questions concerning their benefits are invited to contact Anthem by using the toll-free number printed on the back of their current identification card. Those utilizing healthcare at the Coastal Women's Health-care are

invited to call them at 207-855-8400 for more details.

Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield is still in the process of renewing a number of contracts. The Trust is monitoring these deliberations. We will do our best to share updated information with our members in a timely and efficient manner. Again, please do not hesitate to contact the Trust with any questions or concerns.

Please contact the Trust with questions of concerns at our website www.meabt.org or by telephone at 1-888-622-4418. Sharon Beaulieu is our Benefits Manager and her extension is 2207.

MEA Benefits Trust updates

By Faith Campbell, Trustee
MEA Benefits Trust

Feel free to contact me at anytime if you have questions or suggestions or concerns. I may be reached by email at fannecampbell@gmail.com or give me a call at 207-567-3190 I wish you a relaxing and healthy summer.

Exchange, from Page 10

with him are very lucky."

Bringing a brand new student in his home, Gil learns their hobbies, food, music, sports, movies, and, of course, study habits. He also learned that when foreign exchange students think of America, they think of peace, freedom, Miami Beach, Mt. Rushmore, New York City, Washington, DC, and Chicago.

Vasya Chernov from Russia stayed in Gil's home in 2011-2012. He recently wrote his fond memories of more than a decade ago: "I would never imagine in my mind back in 2011 that somebody whom I've never known before would host with such a warm heart and full integrity as you. The experience you gave me is priceless. Even after so many years I keep on realizing how much the year in America has changed my life for good."

Vasya returned to visit Gil and the United States in June 2014. Two weeks after arriving, he asked Gil to go to the airport and "pick up my Dad and his girlfriend." (His first wife, Vasya's Mom, died.) They, too, wanted to drive across country to California together.

The foursome had a most memorable trip visiting landmarks along the way. The

most noted event of the three-week tour was the wedding of Vasya's dad and step-mother in the Elvis Chapel in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Soon thereafter, Vasya's family invited Gil to visit them in Russia—at their expense. Gil has been there twice; one summer, he was able to meet Nikita who was his exchange student in the fall. Gil just heard from Dimitri, a student hosted by another family 12 years ago.

Of course, taking trips to the Maine coast, eating lobster, touring lighthouses, shopping at L.L. Bean, and visiting Maine landmarks are highlights of their stays.

Students must maintain a minimum of "C" average in all their courses. Gil says the students are "very intense and engaging in all their classes." Failing classes or not doing their homework assignments are not options. Students are not allowed to drive cars.

Laurel Hanson has taught English for more than 20 years and has had a number of Gil's students over the



Foreign exchange students and host parents from all over Maine gathered in Bethel for a weekend camp trip.

years. She says, "Depending on how strong their English was when they joined, they participated well. Pairing the students with others who are eager to

offer assistance and explanations to the foreign exchange kids helps them. They add support and make the students feel welcomed and involved."

Lev from Russia was one of Gil's students. When his mother received a picture of her son smiling in a group photo celebrating his birthday, she wrote, "I've never seen my son so happy!"

Gil celebrates their birthdays with a meal at their favorite restaurant and cake and ice cream afterward. He takes them out to eat often, and they love American food. Their favorite is spaghetti.

Gil does not receive remuneration for hosting students. Occasionally, parents will help with trip expenses, entertainment fees, park tickets, etc. "But I don't expect them to pay for these trips; it is part of my household

budget," he says.

He likes the checks and balances of the "Monthly Questions." He gets a question and his students receive a question every month on email. They ask how things are going and are there concerns or suggestions?.

Brandy reports that there are 297 Ayusa students coming to America for the fall. Brandy is eager to find a few more host families where students feel welcomed and luck to experience the culture and beauty of Maine.

Jammie Hutchinson, Regional Manager of the Northeastern states says, "Gil is a wonderful host dad! He is so supportive and excited to learn about each student. One of his great joys is traveling with his students, but most host families do not have the ability to travel so often or extensively.

"The primary goal of 1-1 visa exchange is for international students to adapt and integrate into their communities and host family life. Host families focus on local exploration of towns, parks, local sights and events. Any travel outside is an additional treat."

Gil says, "The most difficult part of the program is bidding farewell at the airport when the students leave in June." Interested folk may contact Gil at 207-314-7543 or kilroy04963@gmail.com.



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Day of Caring 2022
Let's continue the legacy of
community and school participation.
Funds are available from MEA-Retired!

Membership Matters: Summer is the time

By Roger Roy, Chairperson
Membership Committee

Summer is too short in Maine, but it is beautiful. As retirees, we can celebrate with our colleagues who recently wrapped up their careers. We welcome all new retirees to join MEA-Retired, NEA-Retired and our local affiliates, as we work to strengthen our ranks and increase our friendships.

Remember how busy you were when you retired? Membership in MEA-Retired was not the top item on your to-do list. Have you invited a new retiree to a social event held by your local affiliate?

Each of us needs to pitch in and do our part. When you see a new retiree, congratulate him or her and ask if he or she has joined us yet. Let them know what we are doing and that we want their input; we want them with us.

We need to support one another. Let them know what your local affiliate is doing; let them know what social events are happening this summer. If your local affiliate has a service project, invite them to participate.

You don't have to be pushy about joining us—just be proud and inviting. Be proud of what we are doing for retired and active educators, for students, and for our communities. You have dedicated your life to your students. Don't stop now.

As each of you know, being a teacher is not a job—it's a vocation, a calling. It is who we are. It is also who

your colleagues are. Be proud of that and reach out to them to celebrate this wonderful profession.

Membership is about being part of something that is bigger than we. It's about facing the future proudly and

being determined to make life better for all of us. It's also about having fun.

Mae and I look forward to the summer luncheons that the Aroostook Retired Educators Association conduct each month. We love meeting fellow retirees, hearing what is new in their lives, and what they are planning for the fall and winter. We hear about family updates

and new grandchildren or great grandchildren. We learn of their new hobbies for which they now have more free time.

If you see someone in the grocery store or at Wal-Mart, strike up a conversation. They just might have been thinking of joining and have questions that we can answer. Direct them to our MEA-Retired website where they can read the latest *Clarions*. They can also find membership applications that are easy to access and are "fillable online."

Direct them to <http://mearetired.org/joining>. If someone drops by the house, share your copy of *The Clarion* (assuming you've already read all the articles). If you're close to someone, you may wish to give them a rewarding



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