



THE CLARION

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

August 2023

72nd MEA-Retired
Annual Meeting
and
Convention
May 2, 2024
Plan to attend!

From our President



Bob Jean

The NEA-Retired Annual Meeting (RAM) is an opportunity for leaders from across the country to gather to advance the work of NEA-Retired.

Joining me in attendance at this summer's NEA-Retired Annual Meeting (RAM) in Orlando were President-Elect Molly Smith, Healthcare Committee Chairperson, Belinda Micucci, and Pre-Retirement Chairperson Bo Zabierek.

This governing body makes decisions that guide our organization as it looks at our constitution, bylaws, and new business items.

One of the added perks to attending this meeting is the networking that takes place in between scheduled sessions. When speaking with presidents from other states, I quickly learned that we have a

very strong organization here in Maine.

Of course, there is always room for improvement in any organization; and it is my hope that we can build on our accomplishments as we move forward.

We have some immediate needs at MEA-Retired with a few key positions that need to be filled. I ask all of you to think about stepping up to ensure our continued success. Make it your professional challenge to step into a leadership role.

I can guarantee you that you will not be alone. We have many seasoned veterans who are always willing to help one make the transitions smooth.

Open positions on our leadership team include the following:

Webpage Administrator:
Our current administrator,

See President, Page 3

'Tis the Day of Caring season

By Susan Grondin, Chairperson
Community Participation Com.

August is the best time of year for Day of Caring projects.

Teachers love having help photocopying and collating documents that go home with students on that first day of school. They are so happy when we can help to create bulletin boards, stamp new books, photocopy lesson study guides, laminate and cut out words for "word walls."

Retirees provide invaluable services that enable our educators to be ready for the busy first week of school.

They also appreciate groups who give school and

See Day of Caring, Page 5

MainePERS member portal update

As announced in the June edition of *The Clarion*, MainePERS plans to launch an online Member Portal this fall—rolling it out in phases. Invitations to log in to the Member Portal will be sent out by mail over a series of weeks and months to groups of active and retired members.

It is possible that your fam-

ily members, friends or co-workers who are members might receive an invitation to register before or after you do.

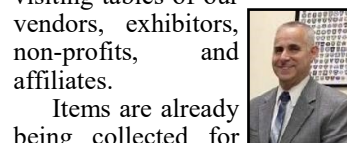
This gradual process is intended to ensure adequate support is available when one registers to access the portal for the first time as each group is invited to participate.

By Domna Giatas, Director
MainePERS Communications

In preparation for accessing the Member Portal, members must have a current telephone number and email address on file with MainePERS.

This information is required to securely log in through the multi-factor authentication process. In the next few weeks, MainePERS will contact members to confirm or update this information currently on file

For more information about the benefits of the MainePERS Member Portal, you are invited to visit <https://www.mainebers.org/forms-resources/mainebers-member-portal/>.



Items are already being collected for our very popular

See 2024 Convention, Page 3

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Save the Date!
Affiliate Leadership Training

Best Western Hotel, Waterville

Thursday, October 26—8:30 a.m. Meet & Greet

More information & registration details to come!

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

at

Legislative Updates: Many changes coming our way

By Crystal Ward, Chairperson Legislative Committee

Hello MEA Retired, As of July 10, 2023, the news from the Maine Legislature is good and bad.

THE GOOD: We had hoped for more structural improvements in pension benefits. The Appropriations Committee voted to provide

A staunch advocate for students, educators, ed techs, and retirees, Rep. Jan Dodge of Belfast is finishing her third term representing House District 39—Belfast, Northport, and Belmont. She is shown here giving warm applause to House visitors. Jan is a retired music educator and is contemplating a fourth and final political term if she has “the time and team to campaign.” We greatly value her support for education.

one-time funds for a 3 percent one-time cost-of-living to all retirees. This is only one-time and not cumulative, as we had advocated.

It will provide some immediate relief to current retirees, but this one-time fix does not provide the structural changes we need to improve our pension system.

There is a 5 percent increase in state share of health insurance premiums. We currently pay 55 percent; however, beginning July 1 the state will pay 60 percent and we will pay 40 percent.

Mainers will not be taxed on the first \$35,000 of their retirement income. This was a Republican pushed tax cut! About 110 state employees

who were disadvantaged in the calculations for their MainePERS pensions were made whole. These people had changed state jobs and were never told they were going to a different MainePERS plan and lost a lot of their pensions!

THE BAD: Bills to lift the cap so that the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) would apply to more of our pensions and to provide additional cumulative COLA’s passed in committee with UNANIMOUS support. Yet this initiative was not funded by the Appropriations Committee in their budget deliberations.

We should appreciate the improvements that have been made. We should also be saddened to learn that the Legislature didn’t do more to help current or future retirees. The work will continue next year!!

Washington D.C. Rep. John Larson of Connecticut is the Ranking Member of the Social Security Subcommittee. He authored the Social Security 2100: A Sacred Trust bill.

Increased Benefits Highlights: This is a benefit bump for current and new Social Security beneficiaries. It provides an increase for all beneficiaries (receiving retirement, disability or dependent benefits) equivalent to an average of 2

percent of benefits to make up for an inadequate COLA since 1983.

Protects against inflation: This initiative improves the annual COLA formula to better reflect the costs incurred by seniors through adopting what’s called a “CPIE formula.”

Protects low-income workers: Five million seniors currently live in poverty. No one who paid into the system over a lifetime should retire into poverty. The new minimum benefit will be set at 25 percent above the poverty level and would be tied to wage levels to ensure that the minimum benefit does not fall behind.

Provides a tax cut for 23 million lower-middle income Americans: This would reduce the taxes on the Social Security benefits of lower-middle income Americans.

See Legislative on Page 5



NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA RA

July 1—July 7, 2024
Philadelphia, PA

June 30—July 6, 2025
Portland, OR

July 1—July 7, 2026
Denver, CO

June 29—July 5, 2027
Indianapolis, IN



MEA-Retired is here for you!

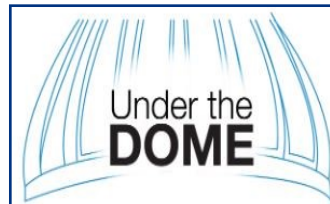
August 7, 9 a.m.
Executive Committee
MEA Headquarters, Augusta

September 5, 9 a.m.
Board of Directors Meeting
Best Western Hotel, Waterville

October 2, 9 a.m.
Executive Committee
MEA Headquarters, Augusta

November 6, 9 a.m.
Board of Directors Meeting
Best Western Hotel, Waterville

Meet/greet begin at 9 a.m.
Meetings begin at 9:30 a.m.
Contact affiliate leaders with ideas and concerns.



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

The Clarion is published bimonthly by Maine Education Association Retired. Readers are encouraged to submit feature stories, news articles, notices of events and activities, and opinions of statewide interest by the fifth day of the month preceding publication. Please send articles to kay_grindall@yahoo.com. 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@maineaa.org.

Communications Committee:

Chairperson Jane Conroy
Carl Daiker, Photographer/
Proofreader
Kay Grindall, Information Coordinator/
Clarion Editor
Web Administrator
Roger Fuller, Facebook Administrator

Bob Jean, President

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MEA Benefits Trust update

By Faith Campbell, Trustee
MEA Benefits Trust

I believe that Michael's newly developed programs will provide opportunities for us to get together and share some enjoyable times.

It has been a rainy start to this summer in mid-coast Maine. The other day I was soaked when I was determined to weed whack a flower bed border. It had not rained for 20 hours, and we had a bit of sun. Nevertheless, the grass was so wet that as soon as the string touched the vegetation a spray of water enveloped me.

I might have made an American Home Videos episode if anyone had filmed the event! I am happy to report a successful contract dispute resolution has been reached between Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Maine and

Covenant HealthCare.

The Covenant Health Care organization maintains its status as an Anthem in-network provider. Maine Education Association Benefits Trust members can rest assured of no disruption of services and treatment received through the Covenant network.

This contract dispute was carefully monitored by the Trust. The Maine Education Association Benefits Trust is committed to ensuring its members continue to have high quality options as they make decisions concerning

their healthcare.

I am excited to report that MEA Wellness Director Michael Booth is developing some new healthy living activities for our retirees. Please read his article in this edition of *The Clarion*. I think these activities could be incorporated into MEA-Retired affiliate community building activities.

I know that we are still educators despite our retired status. We tend to become more focused on our community support activities without taking the time to take care of ourselves.

President, from Page 1

Pamela Partridge, will work with you until you have the comfort level to take over. The position has a stipend attached.

Communications Committee Chairperson: The leader in charge of this committee would inform members of issues, programs, and services important to them or the educational community. Members of this committee are media/resource personnel—information coordinator, Facebook Administrator, photographer/proofreader, *The Clarion* editor, and our president.

This committee also connects with the NEA-Retired Communications Committee and Zoom meetings often connect Communications Committee leaders from other states. Several webinars were held

this past year—focusing on improving communications among retirees. It is my understanding that the committee currently meets via Zoom and the time constraints are minimal.

Investment Committee Chairperson: This is a new committee just approved in a vote by our members at our May 4 annual meeting. According to our revised bylaws, this Investment Committee shall consist of the chairperson, the treasurer and one member appointed by the president and confirmed by the Board of Directors. The Committee's responsibility shall be to make recommendations to the Executive Committee and Board of Directors on investing funds of the Association and on major financial matters.

Please reach out to members who have some experience with financing and investing and would like to get in on the ground floor of this new endeavor. As with all committee chairpersons, these three positions would become members of the MEA-Retired Executive Committee and Board of Directors.

We can all help with the search to fill these committee vacancies. Please communicate with members whom you think would be good candidates for these positions. I ask affiliate presidents to please take a few minutes at meetings to discuss these opportunities for involvement. If some of your members are interested in these leadership opportunities, please contact me at 207-593-6597 or email me at vegas04861@yahoo.com. Thank you..

2024 Convention, from Page 1

PAC raffle. We always enjoy a delicious lunch,

We are pleased to announce that our keynote speaker will be Mark Holmquist, Scarborough Chief of Police. He began his career as chief in December after a longtime career with the Maine State Police, where he had worked since 1997.

He has held many State Police assignments, including Evidence Response Team member, Honor Guard Commander, firearms instructor, certified instructor in the Leadership in Police Organizations (LPO), Commander of the Major Crimes Unit, as well as others. Chief Holmquist most recently served as Troop Commander for Troop A out of Alfred, Maine.

Holmquist has also served in various capacities in the U.S. Army while serving on active duty and then continuing his

career with the Maine Army National Guard and U.S. Army Reserves.

Highlights of his 25-year military career include serving as a Sentinel at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery, Senior Drill Sergeant and retiring at the rank of First Sergeant in the Army Reserves.

Holmquist was mobilized to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri for one year in 2011 as a Senior Drill Sergeant, responsible for basic combat training for entry-level Soldiers.

He holds a Master's degree in Human Resources Management from Southern New Hampshire University and has facilitated executive level organizational leadership training since 2015.

In addition to his roles with the Maine State Police and Army Reserves, Mark has worked in a consultancy capacity to facilitate leadership training

and employee growth to public and private organizations.

Being active in the community is important to Holmquist. Over the years, he has taught and coached in youth sports and supports the high school and other community-based programs.

He has been married to his wife, Devra, for 21 years and has two children, a son attending college in Florida and a daughter, who attends Massabesic High School in their hometown of Waterboro.

Holmquist also served as a committee chair for the Boy Scouts of America when his son was active in scouting. Along with spending time with his family, Holmquist is an avid runner and just completed his seventh marathon.

Our Convention Committee members are Bob Jean, Thomaston; Susan Grondin, Lewiston; Rena Kearney, Mars Hill; Kay Grindall, Oakland; and Carl Daiker, Waterville.

It's "RA 'n Delegate" time!

By Molly Smith
MEA-Retired President-Elect

More than 300 NEA-Retired delegates from all 50 states gathered in Orlando, Florida, for two days at the 40th Annual Meeting prior to the National Education Association-Representative Assembly.

Led by outgoing President Sarah Borgman of Indiana, the meetings ended her second three-year term—2017-2023.

Borgman's numerous accomplishments were celebrated by a parade of NEA leaders—President Becky Pringle, Vice-President Princess Moss, and Secretary-Treasurer Noel Candelaria.

President Borgman was praised for leading NEA-Retired members in a long history of activism and advocacy for public schools, Medicaid, Medicare, and pension protection. She was lauded

for her goal of raising PAC funds in order to support and elect candidates who are true friends of education.

Over the past five years members have contributed more than \$1 million to the political action committee. No member dues are ever allocated to political action efforts. All funds are raised in raffles, auctions, and personal donations.

At the 2023 annual meeting delegates and members contributed—through in-person and virtual auctions—more than \$42,000.

While this is a great amount, delegates were reminded that much remains to be done, especially with growing threats to the education profession and to public schools.

President Borgman was honored by NEA-Retired with the Distinguished Service Award, the organization's highest honor. Highlights of her exemplary service were shared.

President Borgman reminded those in attendance, "We will not give up on the wiping out and stealing of our money through GPO and WEP."

Our work continues. We ask that you please call or email the members of our Maine congressional delegation and request their pledge and full support of the current initiative known as the Social Security Fairness Act.

The gavel was ceremonially turned over to our newly installed NEA-Retired President-Elect, Anita Gibson from Alabama. She will assume her new leadership position as president of NEA-Retired on September 1.



Representing MEA-Retired at the annual NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA-RA in July in Orlando, Florida, were (L to R): Bo Zabierek, Sherman Mills; Belinda Micucci, Yarmouth; MEA-Retired President-Elect Molly Smith, Lisbon; and MEA-Retired President Bob Jean, Rockland.

"I am honored to stand before you as your NEA-Retired President-Elect," Gibson said.

"Working with you we will . . . develop future leaders as we push back against racial and social injustice and push back against forces that aim to dismantle our public school system . . . I pledge to you that with your help, we have nowhere to go but forward."

Gibson has served most recently as an NEA-Retired member of the NEA Board of Directors. President-Elect Gibson also served as president of the Alabama Education Association.

MEA-Retired was honored with special recognition as Runner-Up for our outstanding retired educator publication, *The Clarion*, as an Established State Retired Newsletter.

A "shout out" goes to Editor Kay Grindall and all the contributors who help to make this publication one of the best in the nation.

I had the honor and pleasure of having a conversation with Jean Dobashi of Hawaii, current NEA-Retired

vice-president. Realizing I was a delegate representing MEA-Retired, her focus turned to fondly reminiscing about one of our own, Tom Curran. Tom started serving as President of NEA-Retired in 2011. During his professional educational career in Maine, Curran was a teacher, guidance counselor and briefly an assistant principal. I first met Tom when we served on Maine Education Association's Human and Civil Rights Committee.

Curran held a variety of leadership roles that included MEA-Retired Executive Committee, MEA-Retired Vice President and President. Curran died in March of 2020.

Jean Dobashi and I parted with a hug agreeing that Tom Curran will always have a special place in our hearts and that his legacy lives on for many.



The big fund-raising event of the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting is the PAC auction. MEA-Retired President Bob Jean served as an auctioneer. He was assisted by Jean Dobashi of Hawaii. The event raised more than \$42,000 for PAC.



(L to R): NEA-Retired President Sarah Borgman of Indiana conducted the transfer of leadership to President-Elect Anita Gibson of Alabama. Anita will assume the position of president on September 1.

Day of Caring, from Page 1

student supplies to start the year—as well as monetary donations.

Stories of affiliate projects are featured in our December *Clarion*. In order to meet the deadline, the Community Participation Committee strongly suggests that projects be completed by the end of September or at least by October 10.

Some affiliates have already contacted schools and have dates lined up to help teachers and administrators in August before school starts.

Please consider communicating with a contact person to set a date for your project. Then, be sure to assign someone in your affiliate to write a short story

describing what your affiliate has done and take pictures to accompany your *Clarion* article.

Project descriptions with accompanying pictures from affiliates constitute the centerfold of *The Clarion*. Our deadline to submit information to *The Clarion* editor is October 25. We want to be sure to feature the work of

MEA-Retired retirees as they support educators.

Please contact me at scgrondin@hotmail.com if you need a form for matching funds up to \$100 or visit the MEA-Retired website to download a copy. Completed forms may be emailed or sent to Susan C. Grondin, 47 Hilltop Avenue, Lewiston 04240.

Legislative, from Page 2

Improves Social Security benefits for widows and widowers: People living in two-income households will no longer be penalized for having two incomes.

Repeals: The Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and Government Pension Offset (GPO) that greatly reduce Social Security benefits for many public servants which includes teachers, police officers and firefighters.

End of the five-month waiting period: Those eligible to receive disability benefits will no longer have a waiting period.

Caregiver credits: This Social Security benefit ensures

that caregivers are not penalized in retirement for taking time out of the workforce to care for children or other dependents.

Way to Strengthen the Social Security Trust Fund:

Presently, payroll taxes are not assessed on an wages over \$147,000. This legislation would apply the payroll tax to wages above \$400,000 so the wealthy would pay the same rate of payroll taxes as a waitress earning \$30,000 a year.

This provision would only affect the top 0.4 percent of wage earners. Essentially, this country's millionaires and billionaires would end u ay the same rate as

everyone else,

Extends the solvency of Social Security: This bill makes a significant contribution toward the program's solvency—making up more

than half the shortfall in the Social Security Trust Funds and extending the date at which benefits would be cut by 20 percent from 2035 to 2044.

Pre-Retirement seminars slated

MEA-Retired pre-retirement seminars will be held virtually by Zoom on two consecutive nights from 5:00-6:15 P.M. Members should attend BOTH nights. Below are the dates for the Zoom seminars.

FALL 2023 SEMINARS

Session 1	
Tuesday, October 17	MEA Benefits Trust & WEP/GPO
Wednesday, October 18	MEA-Retired & MainePERS
Session 2	
Tuesday, October 24	MEA Benefits Trust & WEP/GPO
Wednesday, October 25	MEA-Retired & MainePERS

WINTER 2024 SEMINARS

Session 3 –	
Tuesday, January 9	MEA Benefits Trust & WEP/GPO
Wednesday, January 10	MEA-Retired & MainePERS
Session 4 –	
Tuesday, January 16	MEA Benefits Trust & WEP/GPO
Wednesday, January 17	MEA-Retired & MainePERS
Session 5 –	
Tuesday, February 6	MEA Benefits Trust & WEP/GPO
Wednesday, February 7	MEA-Retired & MainePERS
Session 6 –	
Tuesday, March 5	MEA Benefits Trust & WEP/GPO
Wednesday, March 6	MEA-Retired & MainePERS

Interested active educators who are MEA members are invited to attend and must pre-register. Further information may be obtained from Pre-Retirement Committee Chairperson Bo Zabierek at 207-365-4329 or bozabierek@gmail.com

“Thank you” to our MEA-RA delegates



Representing MEA-Retired at the annual Maine Education Association Representative Assembly in South Portland on May 20-21 are (L to R—Row 1): Paul Bouchard, Fort Kent; Barbara Bricker, Gouldsboro; Claudette O'Connell, Bangor; Julie Gomez, Lewiston; Kay Grindall, Oakland. (Row 2): Ben Paradis, Cross Lake; Gary McGrane, Jay; Bo Zabierek, Sherman Mills; Roger Roy, Caribou; Bob Jean, Rockland, Jane Conroy, Dover-Foxcroft; and Belinda Micucci, Yarmouth.

Virgin Pulse: More MEABT benefits

By Michael Booth
MEABT Wellness Director

Rewards for your healthy lifestyle!

Virgin Pulse is an online health tracking platform with tools and support that will help you make changes to your physical health, activity level, mental health, and day-to-day stressors.

With over 100 points-earning activities, you can define what wellness means to you and earn your incen-

tive with your choice of health behaviors.

New To Virgin Pulse! Secret “Level 5”

We know that some of our participants reach Level 4 (18,000 points) with days still left before the end of the quarter. As an added bonus, we thought it would be **FUN** to add an additional

level to the program.

Once a participant reaches Level 4 (18,000 points), a new **Secret Level 5** will be unlocked. Upon completing Level 5, participants will earn a chance at one of five drawings each for \$50 in pulse cash. Select from



healthy activities and watch your rewards add up as you work to unlock that **Secret Level 5!**

	LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 4	TOTAL	NEW SECRET LEVEL 5
Points	2,000	5,000	12,000	18,000	18,000	Unlock Level 4 to find out
Reward	\$5 Pulse Cash	\$10 Pulse Cash	\$20 Pulse Cash	\$27.50 Pulse Cash	\$62.50 each quarter Pulse Cash	Eligibility for five \$50 Pulse Cash drawings

AARP’s TASH winds down as Legislature wraps up

By Pam Partridge
AARP Liaison

AARP Maine Volunteer group known as *Tuesdays at the State House* (TASH) had their last in person meeting at the capitol on June 27.

Both chambers were still voting on bills, and it was an opportunity to make a final appeal to legislators to support and fund priority issues for Maine’s 50+ community of senior citizens.

Topping the list that day were LD 964, “An Act to Create the Maine Paid Family and Medical Leave Benefits Program” and LD 1347, “An Act to Eliminate the Current Net Energy Billing Policy in Maine.”

Two days later Governor Mills published an Op-Ed in the **Portland Press Herald** explaining her support for paid family and medical leave (PFML). She also indicated that she will sign the budget agreement including the new program.

Adoption of a PFML program in Maine make us the 14th state to have such a program that benefits caregivers for the birth of a child, senior family members, ailing and failing senior citizens and more.

With concerns over how the current net energy billing policy plays a role in rising electricity costs, AARP has urged legislators to support LD 1347 which revises the policy.

Other issues AARP and TASH volunteers weighed in on during the 131st Regular Session of the Legislature with success were voting access, opposing bills they felt would restrict voting access; accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and zoning.

We also opposed bills that would restrict access for property owners to build ADUs. Other issues that were of great priority to AARP and our service to seniors in Maine dealt with prescription drug costs and a bill to allow reference pricing for Rx drugs negotiated by Medicare (has been carried over); SNAP benefits legislation; and funding to Area Agencies on Aging. LD 1306, a bill to

protect homeowners from the predatory practice of filing of unfair real estate fee agreements in property records, known as Non-Title Recorded Agreements for Personal Service (NTRAPS) has been signed into law!!

By the time this article is published, we will know which bills with costs attached were included in the second part of the state budget and which bills were signed into law.

TASH will be taking a break over the summer months and will start up again in the fall. We need many more volunteers to show up and support legislative initiatives to which AARP subscribes as most beneficial for Maine seniors.

Feel free to contact me if you are interested in serving in the halls of the capitol during the next legislative session. I may be reached at (207) 431-3470 or email pampartridge1@gmail.com.

See the list of FREE AARP Coffee Socials in Maine. . Go to <https://states.aarp.org/maine/coffees-2023>, and see a list of other interesting events, <https://states.aarp.org/maine/events-me>.

The monthly **Fraud Watch** program is continuing on Zoom throughout the summer. It is held on the second Thursday of each month at 10 AM. To register, just google “aarp maine fraud watch,” and you will receive the zoom link on email. Join and learn make new friends and learn many techniques to avoid falling prey to scams and to be sure to remain safe.

Free Coffee Socials

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

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

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

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

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

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

Opportunities for nominating a deserving individual to receive an honorary membership distinction in MEA-Retired are encouraged every year.

Article III of our MEA-Retired bylaws delineates the criteria for honorary 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 of a unified member to this position. 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 and Convention in May.

MEA-Retired Honorary Members are invited to attend the Executive Committee banquet on the evening

prior to the MEA-Retired Convention and Annual Meeting. They are also entitled to attend the convention at no cost. Special recognitions are made at the annual convention.

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. Contacts from our treasurer will provide appropriate remuneration.

A list of honorary membership awards is announced in the May annual meeting and convention booklet and in the August *Clarion*.

Time to nominate Honorary Members

By Bob Jean, President
Maine Education Assoc. Retired

Nominations must be received by our president by October 1. Please send to Bob Jean, PO Box 821, Rockland, ME 04861. Documents may be sent via email addressed to vegas04861@yahoo.com.

Deciphering treasures

By Kay Grindall

My cellphone rang; and as I glanced to see who would be calling, I read, “Raleigh, NC.”

Something inside me said, “This is not another telemarketer.”

So, I picked up the phone and greeted, “Good morning from Maine!”

He asked, “Is this Kay Grindall?”

I responded, “Yes.”

“Oh, good,” he sighed. “I hope you can help me.”

He proceeded to inform me that his elderly mother had passed two days ago and left notes around the house written in shorthand. He assumed they likely contained important information and should be deciphered. He thought they would relate to her demise.

He had gone to the library and signed out a shorthand dictionary, thinking he could decipher the outlines. Desperately trying to match the symbols on the notes with those in the dictionary proved to be an impossible task. Much to his dismay, he could not.

He then went online and googled “shorthand help.” A newspaper article about a group known as the Shorthand Writers of Maine (SWOM) came up with my name and phone number at the bottom of the newspaper article. (I started the group in 2003 with three members. Our enrollment is now more than 100.)

I assured him that I could help. We agreed he would take pictures of the notes and text them to me. I would then call and read them to him.

The first note came through. I called him and said, “Go in the living room and

lift up the carpeting to the right of the television. You will find money.”

He went to the living room; and I soon heard “There is money there!”

The message written on the next note instructed him to go to his mother’s dresser, look way back in the top middle drawer where he would find a green velvet box. This contained her diamonds, emerald, and ruby jewelry items.

Another note informed him that hanging behind the mirror in the entry hallway of the home was the key to the safe deposit box. Further notes contained important information relating to funeral plans—speakers, soloists, names of songs, flowers, etc.

This very important shorthand skill is no longer taught today. Most people think of it as being obsolete. However, it remains very relevant today because, you see, there are many similar treasured shorthand notes, letters, stories, and diaries stored in trunks and attics—with no one to read them.

I have received a number of requests for transcribing shorthand documents. These include diary pages, photo captions, recipes, love letters, and more.

One member of SWOM told of a postman coming to her home to deliver the mail that included a postcard written in shorthand. He rang the doorbell; and when she opened the door, he exclaimed, “I could read every word! I am so excited!”

He went on to explain that in the 1960’s he had taken a shorthand course while in the military so that he could

advance in an office position in an upcoming deployment. He was so pleased that he remembered so much shorthand.

Note: When I’m putting The Clarion together, it is so helpful to have a couple “fillers” to complete a blank spot on a page. I ran out of news this month and had to fill in a half page. Will you write a story or an editorial or suggestions? Send to me at 23 Hilltop Drive, Oakland 04963 or via email to kay_grindall@yahoo.com. Thanks.

CONGRATULATIONS “Century+ Club”



Madeline Griffith, 1/1/1918
Benita Russo, 1/1/1919
Martha Rollins, 6/22/1919
Irene Robertson, 10/23/1919
Lucille Walker, 1/1/1921
Francesca Perazzi, 2/4/1921
Meredith Monte, 10/9/1921
Hazel Frost, 1/1/1922
Frances Bryson, 1/1/1923
Josephine McAlary, 1/1/1923
Nancy McReel, 1/1/1923
Evelyn Davis, 5/10/1923

Return to normalcy at the RA

By Bo Zabierek, Chairperson
Pre-Retirement Committee

I really looked forward to being with the NEA-Retired conventioners at the Hilton-Orlando at Lake Buena Vista-Disney Springs this year. It was to be my second year as an NEA-Retired delegate.

July 1 was my two-year anniversary of being a retired educator. What would the faces of the formerly masked delegates reveal when I could see their smiles and even their chagrin. After all we are in the shadows of Disney and an unfriendly Florida governor.

It was to be NEA Retired President Sara Borgman's swan song, as we saw the recent transfer of leadership in our own MEA-Retired Association. I looked forward to her words of wisdom and levity.

My flight out of Bangor started with a delay because the crew needed two more hours of down time before they could work another flight.

This seemingly minor inconvenience set in motion a major situation. The next communication I received was a text from United Airlines telling me that due to an earlier flight delay, my 2:35 p.m. connecting flight was now a 4:20 p.m. departure at a different gate in Newark, NJ. This would be my connecting flight to Florida.

Soon, though, the 4:20 p.m. delay became 4:40 p.m. and then 5:15 p.m. Finally, we were sure we were going to board at 5:46 p.m. Then, came the ultimate—flight canceled!

I was stuck in Newark,

New Jersey, for two and one-half days.

I finally was able to book a late night flight. We departed at 12:15 a.m.—after having received five more delays notifications.

After totally missing the two-day NEA-Retired Annual Meeting, I joined my fellow MEA-Retired delegates at the NEA-RA at our new hotel, the Hyatt Regency Orlando.

It was great to attend a week of true normalcy at the first national conference without mandatory masking and covid testing—since COVID 19 crippled the nation.

I saw the smiles and recognized many faces from when I would attend the NEA-RA while an active educator.

I attended the Career and Technical Education caucus which hadn't had the opportunity to meet during our two recent virtual conferences originally scheduled for Atlanta and Denver.

We re-established plans to recruit and build our numbers to keep our place in the NEA 360 portal where we had already established a presence.

My wife Suzie flew in to assist with the NEA Multilingual Caucus which she joined last summer. She

became interested after I returned from the NEA-RA in Chicago last year with membership information and their tee shirt.

They were successful renewing and signing up new members as well as moving tee shirts and raffle tickets for the many items contributed by their caucus members.

It was quite a comfort to have her join me for the first time in the 12 years that I have attended the NEA-RA.

It's always great to see the Educators of the Year in the ESP, Teaching, and Higher Educators categories. Their speeches always inspire.

It was inspiring to see speakers come to the microphone who were attending their 50th RA. Another delegate had attended 63 years!

The Resolutions, the Constitutional Bylaw changes, the New Business Items were all so normal again. They were a refreshing reminder that we were back, and we were fighting for educators across the country and beyond right here in the belly of the beast.

A pro-education rally was held with other Florida locals from all parts of labor attending in the 100-degree heat of the Orange County Convention Center parking lot.

Back at the RA, we found President Joe Biden and his wife, Dr. Jill Biden—both NEA members—video conferenced in to show their appreciation and support for our union and all that educators do for our students all across this great land.

Committee galas and special dinners were attended in the evenings by many of our Maine caucus. Of course, we were all invited to “Maine Night” at the Tin Roof restaurant in Orlando which was well attended.

We got through it all without a hitch, and it felt good just to see something finally go just as it was planned.

As we said goodbye to each other during the informal gathering on our final evening at the hotel lounge, delegates swapped stories and contact information as we bid each other adieu.

I am not ready yet to talk about my return flight. However, suffice it to say that after another flight cancellation and another evening in a downtown Newark hotel room, my wife Suzie and I boarded a Greyhound bus at Newark's Penn Station for Boston.

Then, we booked a bus from Boston to Bangor—which was also delayed an

See NEA-RA on Page 11



Thousands of delegates from all 50 states gathered in the large convention hall to conduct business and elections of the National education Association.

Update of AARP services

By Pam Partridge
AARP Liaison

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3), the total losses to fraud reported by the elderly increased 84 percent from 2021 to 2022.* The losses were likely much higher since many incidents of fraud go unreported.

Tech and customer support schemes and investment scams are in large part due to cryptocurrency fraud. They were the financial loss leaders in the high rise of reported fraud by people over 60 during this period of time.

The report states the IC3 received 88,262 reports of fraud from persons over the age of 60 costing \$3.1 billion. That puts the average loss per victim at \$35,101—doing straight numbers math.

Over 5,000 victims lost more than \$100,000 apiece! California and Florida ranked 1 and 2, respectively, for the number of reports made at a cost of almost \$953 million. Maine ranked 37th with a loss of almost \$13 million.

Fraud experts set up call centers that overwhelmingly target the elderly. According to the report, the two categories of fraud that are most profitable for these criminals are the “Tech/Customer Support” and “Government Impersonation” scams.

A popular tech scam is one where a pop up appears on your computer screen telling you your computer has been infected with a virus, and you must call the number on the screen for tech support.

They may warn you that failure to do so can result in losing all of your files or locking up your computer, and that **you must act right away**.

Unfortunately, once the call is made and the *very caring sounding* person on the other end asks a series of questions, they then direct the victim to open certain windows and/or give login information. At this point they can steal your identity, access credit card information, and even clean out your bank account.

A common government impersonation scam is one where you get a call saying you owe back taxes. Furthermore, if they are not paid right away, there will be heavy fines, property will be seized, or you may get jail time.

The victim may then be directed to buy gift cards and asked to provide the gift card numbers and PIN numbers upon a return call.

Fortunately, banks are training their employees to

recognize the signs when a client may be a victim of fraud because of the type of withdrawals they are making. They will then offer information about fraud and scams.

Merchants are also watching out for signs of victimization such as a customer making a purchase of multiple gift cards. You may have noticed signs lately near cash registers and gift card displays in big box stores warning that a request to pay a bill with gift cards may be fraud!

If you are a victim of fraud, or even a target of an unsuccessful attempt at fraud, it should be reported. Let local law enforcement know, and call the AARP Fraudwatch Help Line—877-908-3360. You can also call the Federal Trade Commission at 877-382-4357 to file a complaint. For more information, go to aarp.org/fraudwatch-network.

AARP Maine sponsors an interactive virtual Fraud Watch program on ZOOM the second Thursday of every month where two timely fraud topics are discussed. Attendees who have been targets of fraudsters or who know of someone who has been scammed are invited to share their stories. “Red

flags” that were raised pointing to a scam in progress are identified to help participants avoid being victimized by similar scams in the future.

Google, “AARP Maine Fraud Watch” to register for future informative, helpful programs. Remember, “If you can spot a scam, you can stop a scam.”

*Federal Bureau of Investigation, Annual Elder Fraud Report 2022. The FBI encourages the public to read this annual publication, so they are aware of the problem and can avoid victimization. It is 22 pages, fairly large text, lots of charts and comparative data.

To access the document, the pdf file can be found online by googling “FBI 2022 annual elder fraud report,” or go to: <https://htv-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/files/2022-ic3elderfraudreport-643e8e89685c2.pdf>

NEA-Retired Executive Council meeting

The NEA-Retired Executive Council met in person in the NEA Building in DC to choose the 2023 “Award Recipients.” These awards are for Membership, Communications, Jack Kinnamon Scholarships, and Distinguished Service Award.

Reports were also presented from a number of NEA Staff. New specific language was added in terms of the NEA Organizing Grants. Grant money cannot be used for the purchase of computers or for any type of computer equipment.

Matt Bennett will be providing staff assistance to the newly formed Committee to study “continuous membership.” Our own Julie Jagusch has been appointed

to be on the Committee. Jagusch has also been appointed to be on the newly formed Racial and Social Justice Committee! WAY TO GO JULIE!

Staff person Mary Alice Heretick provided updates and agenda information regarding the Retired Annual Meeting (RAM) which will be held June 29-30 in Orlando, FL.

The tentative RAM agenda is on the NEA-Retired website. Steven Gorrie provided an election report update. Election information is also on the NEA-Retired website.

Anita Gibson from Alabama has been officially declared the winner for

By Bobbie Margo, Chairperson
NEA-Retired Communications Committee

the position of NEA-Retired President. Gibson’s term is for three years.

By the numbers: 39 applications were received for Jack Kinnamon Scholarships, but only 17 met the requirements.

Five individual scholarships of \$3,500 each will be presented at the RAM to students from Arizona, Florida, Massachusetts, Ohio, and Oregon.

NEA active membership is down by 31,000. This could be the result of the loss of payroll deduction. NEA-Retired membership is 323,279. This is a loss of 648.

Overall, NEA membership tallies are 2,889,773.



By Verona Blake
Oxford County Educ. Assoc. Retired

Warm memories of a wonderful teaching career

She went from teaching and coaching to being a dorm parent and a dean of students.

She loved working with her students and she tried to instill core values such as kindness, honesty, generosity, and faith to help them with their choices through life.

Besides the mentors of her family in education like her Grandfather Read, Grandmother Helen Grover, her mother and some aunts and uncles, teachers like Scott Kelly drew her to a pride and respect for becoming one.

Scott Kelly had been a teacher to her and her brother and sisters. Before retiring, Kelly also had Mary's son in class.

She is a person who cares so deeply and helps anyone she can. She would literally give you the shirt off her back.

BJ's faith in her church is strong, and you will find her on some Sundays giving the worship services when the need arises. She helps with church suppers and with providing food baskets at Thanksgiving to help the local food pantry.

She drives people to appointments, grocery shopping or any errands that they need to do.

She is truly a rare gem and still serves in an occasional substituting opportunity. She serves on the Alumni Board and Hall of Excellence at Fryeburg Academy.

BJ is a loving and supportive mom to her son, Luke and his wife, Jennifer. They have blessed her with granddaughter Leona, whom

she absolutely adores. She is her number one priority and never misses an opportunity to see her. She just beams when she has a picture or video that she can share.

Her family connection



The joy of BJ's life is her family—son Luke and wife Jennifer and granddaughter Leona.

remains strong with her two sisters and their families. When they have a get-together, it is quite a crowd.

Living in a rural area and staying connected with a lot of her students through her alumni work, she will often run into someone who will call out Mrs. Jones or a student athlete who calls out "Jonesy!" She loves catch-

one and everyone. She was giving guidance from the sports fields, to formatting word documents, and to life in general. Her compassion and care for her students and coworkers was never ending.

"Even today, even though she is not inside the walls of the school everyday she is still supporting the alumni association and those still at Fryeburg playing, coaching and teaching. She still steps on the field to participate in our annual alumni field hockey games."

My nickname was Beth, BJ and my former field hockey players also called her "Jonesie."

Colleagues are very important to Mary. Milly Millett of North Waterford, our parish treasurer, responds, "Beth displays a strong work ethos as well as a great sense of humor. She lets her faith and love of family shine through in all she does."

Education is so important to her. She wants students to have the opportunity to further their studies to keep learning to have doors open for their



BJ was a friendly, kind, inspiring welcome for students and staff at Fryeburg Academy.

(now Husson University) in Bangor. She received her degree in accounting and minor in business finance.

She is not only my classmate but a very good friend. We went in different directions after high school but reconnected when we both became employed back at Fryeburg Academy.

Mary had a well-rounded career—tire salesperson and assistant manager for Noyes Tire Company. She was also a loan supervisor and made a change to the classroom where she taught for 30 years at Fryeburg Academy.

To say that she "wears many hats" is to put it mildly.



This Fryeburg junior varsity field hockey team "was of one of my best teams. Though they were JV at the time, they also had great seasons as varsity players," reminisced Mary who is standing at the far right.

ing up with them.

In fact, one of her students, Jennifer Stacy Bartlett of Denmark, remembers her teacher and coach: "BJ was always here to support any-

future. She has set up a Grover Women's Athletic Award for a deserving senior to receive at graduation.

See BJ, Page 11

Membership, from Page 12

for public schools, students and educators.

MEA-Retired's Legislative Committee Chairperson Crystal Ward, a retiree from Lewiston, works practically full-time contacting legislators regarding issues on our behalf. The more members we have, the stronger we are, and the more we can do for our members, the students, and the active educators.

Your input needed

I am privileged to have the opportunity to represent MEA-Retired on the MEA Board of Directors for the next three years. To serve you to the best of my abilities, I invite your input, suggestions, questions, and concerns on issues that directly impact our retired lives.

Please send your ideas to kay_grindall@yahoo.com or call 207-512-0027 or mail to 23 Hilltop Drive, Oakland, ME 04963. Thank you.

I hope to hear from you.

BJ, from Page 10

Our friendship connection remains strong. We are either texting or meeting for a breakfast catchup session. We also have a "lunch bunch" of ladies with whom we arrange to meet once a month. Staying up to date with these friends is always a great time.

BJ has a wonderful circle of friends beyond her family. She is a self-sufficient woman; but she knows if she ever needs help with anything, we are ready for the call. I feel so blessed to be a part of this special circle of friendship.

Congratulations to you for this honor. I will sign off with, "Thank you for being a great friend!"

God bless and Go Raiders!

Known as BJ's long-time best friend since high school, Verona lives in Brownfield and retired from the position of administrative assistant as registrar, at the front desk, and in admissions at Fryeburg Academy for 40 years. She and her husband Glenn have one daughter, five grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.

NEA-RA, from Page 8

hour. We finally arrived home in the early hours of the next morning after driving from the Bangor airport to our home in "The County!"

We retrieved our luggage, which had arrived at the airport the very next day.

Just for kicks, I decided to check the status of our rescheduled plane flights from Newark. I learned that they were canceled for three more days. Had we stayed with the airlines, we would have returned to Bangor in

the wee hours of the morning two days after we returned home via ground transportation—thanks to Greyhound.

But these travel experiences can happen in any travel plans. The delays in no way discourage me from running to be a delegate another year.

One learns so much from being a delegate at the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and the larger NEA-RA. It is always an invaluable time of learning, networking, and advancing in the most recent initiatives.



We received announcements, PAC donation updates, caucus meeting reminders, and more details about RA events on our smartphones as well as on our new voting devices.

September: New retirees begin their retirements Give them a gift!
Order while supplies last!



- Long-sleeved Denim Shirts @ \$47
- Short-sleeved Denim Shirts @ \$42
- Navy Blue Hats @ \$25
- Red, Iris Blue Tee Shirts @ \$23
- Red, Ultramarine Golf Shirts @ \$37
- Lapel Pins @ \$10

Prices include tax and postage/handling

Name _____ Email _____

Mailing Address _____ City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Tel. _____ Affiliate _____

Qty.	Item	Size	Color	Unit Price	Total Cost
	Sizes S. M. L 1X or 2X: Add \$2 3X or 4X : 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)



Membership Matters: Dues are due

*By Roger Roy, Chair
Membership Committee*

MEA-Retired’s fiscal year runs September 1 to August 31. Therefore, dues for the 2023-34 year come due on September 1, 2023.

Most K-12 educators pay their dues by payroll deduction through MainePERS, but some pay annually. If you wish to change from paying once per year to monthly automatic pension deduction, now is the time to request the funding change.

For members who retired from higher education, payment of annual premiums is the only option. So this article stands as a friendly reminder to pay your dues.

Lisa Collins is our MEA liaison for all retiree questions and/or membership issues. She may be reached by sending an email message to her at lcollins@maincea.org or by calling 1-800-281-3191, Extension 2400. I suggest you

make this a priority and pay soon. Watch for your MEA-Retired membership card in the October *Clarion*.

If a family member, friend, or former colleague is not yet a member, this would be a great time to ask them to join. You may consider gifting them a membership. Lisa can handle all the paperwork if you call her.

In fact, one school had five educators retire in June. One of the retirement gifts each one received was their first year’s membership dues in MEA, MEA-Retired, and NEA-Retired! What a great idea!

If you are paying annual NEA-Retired dues, this would be a great time to purchase a lifetime NEA-Retired membership.

For a one-time fee of \$300, you could be

finished paying annual NEA-R dues. The lifetime membership cost has been \$300 for about eight years. That amount may be close to increasing, so now is an opportune time to enroll for life.

I hate to sound repetitive, but this is another issue Lisa can handle for you. Active members of MEA may obtain lifetime membership in NEA-Retired, so they would never have to pay dues to NEA when they choose to retire.

Ask Lisa about the pre-

retirement program for NEA-R lifetime membership.

Being a member of your retiree unions is a sound investment in your future. For your membership fee, you qualify for many money-saving benefits through NEA, as well as having people actively advocating for your retirement benefits in Washington. They are continually working to find solutions to the Social Security inequities.

At the state level, MEA and MEA-Retired are working diligently on your behalf. Government Relations Director John Kosinski is on the job constantly in Augusta, spearheading our legislative efforts throughout the year.

John works diligently and tirelessly with members of both parties—with anyone who is an ally in our concerns



See Membership, Page 11