

Day of Caring 2024!

MEA-Retired retirees once again were generous in providing school supplies, mounting bulletin boards, photocopying first-day-of-school documents, laminating words, weeding gardens, and volunteering to assist our active educators as another school year opened.

Our Day of Caring projects provided opportunities for educators to communicate with each other and to support one another as a new year began. The numerous tasks involved in setting up a classroom or organizing materials for another year can take many hours.

By volunteering in our schools, MEA-Retired retirees were able to assist with many of these tasks. This allowed our active educators time to focus on their new students.

The Community Participation Committee thanks all affiliates for scheduling their projects to coordinate with our annual Day of Caring held on the pivotal date of September 11 or as close as possible to that date.

A special message of appreciation is extended to our selfless educator retirees who are not only "life-long learners" but they are truly "life-long givers."

'Tis the Day of Caring season

By Susan Grondin, Chairperson
Community Participation Com.

Androscoggin

Members of Androscoggin Retired Education Association (AREA) continued working with "The Store Next Door" student assistance program. The initiative serves over 400 Lewiston children under the age of 18 in Grades K-12.

A community donation-based, non-profit store is trying to help students in Lewiston Public Schools obtain the necessities they need such as clothing, food, hygiene products, school supplies, and a safe place. This is crucial, as many of these kids come from broken homes and face terrible hardships that many others may not understand. They are trusted adults for these youth, helping them rebuild trust and feel safe. Many former students reach out as adults to thank them for their support.

The Store Next Door is located in the basement of the Gov. James B. Longley School building on Birch Street in Lewiston. It is a place where students can hang out, shop, eat, wash clothes, and even take a shower. AREA members donated school supplies and over \$400 in gift cards to grocery stores for the student assistance program.

Aroostook

Members of Aroostook Retired Education Association (AREA) continued our participation in the annual Day of Caring



(L to R): Rise Harris, Rita Roy, Susie Szava-Kovats, Janet Woods, and Donna Hurley delivered school supplies for students and teachers at Southern Aroostook Elementary School in Dyer Brook.

project with our "Bulging Backpack Project." Thanks to the continuous support of our generous members, we provided school supplies to teachers and students at Katahdin Elementary in Stacyville and Southern Aroostook Elementary School in Dyer Brook.

During our site visits, the classroom teachers filled out a "wish list" of supplies needed. AREA members brought school supplies and monetary gifts during our four summer luncheon meetings. We also made up a gift bag of special items for each classroom teacher with a "Thank you" card with a monetary gift from AREA to be used to purchase something special for their students.

We presented our tables of supplies and gifts at each school on their workshop day, October 11, and invited the teachers to "shop" from the tables for supplies that were on their wish lists.

We also placed "Thank you" notes and special treats in the common rooms for principals, secretaries and all other support personnel.

Cumberland

Members of Cumberland County Retired Educators Association (CCREA) donated a variety of school supplies such as pencils, colored pencils, crayons, glue, scissors, notebooks, picture albums, tissues, and note pads to teachers and students at Congin School in Westbrook. Staff expressed appreciation for the supplies that will be extremely helpful for many students as they begin a new school year.



(L to R): CCREA members Themia Raymond, Westbrook; Jean Phillips, Windham; Nancy Kilbride, Portland; Marie Solak, South Portland; Gisele Bougie, Portland; Jim Thornton, Westbrook; Roberta Morrill, Windham; Sandra Abbott, Scarborough; Linda Hussey, South Portland; Pauline Cormier, Portland; Dottie Megna, Portland.

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Franklin

The Mallett School in Farmington was selected by Franklin County Retired Educators Association to be our target school this year. We chose to work with four Pre-Kindergarten classes.

Of the four teachers in this grade level, two are new to the system this year. We invited them, either as a group or individually, to make a list of \$150 worth of supplies to provide for some little extras in their classes.

We also decided to surprise all the staff with donuts on a random morning as a “Thank you” for all their dedication to education.



Hancock

Hancock County Retired Teachers Association members were asked to bring school supplies to their first meeting on September 10. We collected four boxes of notebooks, pencils, erasers, markers, crayons, and other items to donate to our chosen school.

We delivered the donated items—a check for \$100, and four gift cards to Walmart (three for \$20 each and one for \$24.50) to Connors Emerson School in Bar Harbor. The school secretary and her

daughter (who is in second grade) were surprised and grateful to receive our donations.

Kennebec

Fifteen Kennebec County Retired Educators Association (KREA) members joined together to help teachers at the Atwood Elementary School in Oakland prepare for the first day of school in August. The school is home to students in Pre-K through Grade 2 classes.

They worked on bulletin boards, bus tags, room readiness, photocopying, collating, laminating posters, and clothes sorting.



KREA members Tom Wells, Joann Tyler, and Joan Meehan check in new library books at the Atwood Elementary School in Oakland.

KREA supplied morning donuts, coffee, lunch and a great time of fellowship with fellow teachers.

KREA workers included Phil and Linda Sprague, Larry Given, Marc Poulin, Phil Gonyar, Carl Daiker, Linda Ellis, Joan Meehan, Joann Tyler, Marilyn Hall, Tom Wells, Bonnie Nielson, Betty-Jane Meader, Nora Murray, and Kathie Choate.. Also joining our group were Jeff and Karen Malnick of Connecticut. (They are Phil Gonyar’s niece and nephew.)

Knox

Knox County Retired Educators Association members collected a variety of school supplies to assist the Thomaston Grammar School with keeping their supply closet stocked. We also received \$120 in donations from members to be added to the \$84.50 in Walmart gift cards and in matching funds from MEA-Retired.

These funds will be used to help fund the Wellness Committee Winter Festival. This event provides a variety of outdoor activities such as sled pulling races and a snowman making contest—among others. Students always look forward to this event and have lots of fun interacting with others and enjoying the winter outdoor fun.

Mid-Coast

Members of Mid-Coast Retired Educators Association filled six backpacks for students at Woodside Elementary School in Topsham, Harpswell Community School, and Beecher Stowe School in Brunswick.

Carolyn Aberg and Deb Wagg went to their local Walmart for a frugal morning of shopping with calculators in hand. We were extremely successful.

At checkout the cashier inquired about our quantity of school supplies. We informed her that we were retired educators shopping for those in need at local schools.

A gentleman behind us overheard our conversation and praised us for taking on this project. He said that “educators spend too much of their own money.” He handed us a \$50 bill for a donation to our cause. We left the store overwhelmed by his random act of kindness.



Deborah Wagg of Mid-Coast Retired Educators Association presented three backpacks to Richard Dedek, Principal of Woodside Elementary School in Topsham.

Oxford

Oxford County Educators Association Retired (OCEA-R) conducts an ongoing program of providing “Maine Books for Maine Kids.” Each year we choose a book that we think is wor-

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thy of consideration and that young people will enjoy.

We alternate between books for beginners and those for older age groups. These books are written by Maine authors who have strong ties to Maine and who write about subjects of special interest to the children of Maine. .

The books are presented to each of the more than 20 public libraries in Oxford County. This year's choice of books is *The Blue Lobster Visits the Eye Doctor* by Robin Taylor-Chiarelllo of Lovell.

Penobscot



More than 15 years ago, Donna Oliver and members of Penobscot County Retired Educators Association (PCREA) introduced the "Project Lioness Program" to fourth grade students in School Administrative District #63 (Eddington and Holden). Under her guidance and with the help of community volunteers, students design and sew quilts.

Students in the Holden Elementary School proudly display a quilt they created for other children in need.

The quilts are distributed to children locally and provide security, warmth, and comfort to children who are hospitalized, traumatized, or in a shelter.

This project provides a rewarding and fun service opportunity as well as teaching the importance of compassion and caring.

This year for PCREA's Day of Caring, a \$200 check was donated to Holden School fourth grade students. The funds will be used to purchase supplies so that this worthwhile quilt project can continue. Over just the past five years, students have donated 200 quilts to needy children! Amazing!!

Piscataquis

Piscataquis Region Retired Educators Association (PRREA) members presented \$100 checks to the Parent Teacher Organization in Piscataquis Community Elementary School, Greenville Consolidated School, and Ridgeview Consolidated School in Dexter.

The monies were to be used in ways to benefit the organizations as they help students and teachers in the various schools—ensuring positive growth and successes.



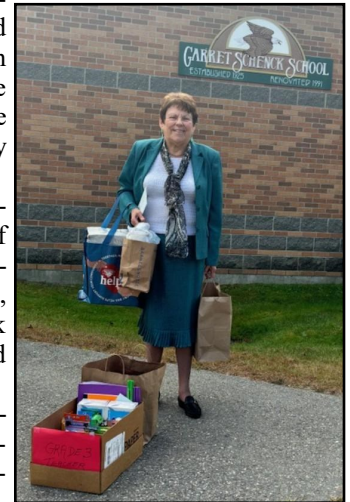
(L to R) Janie Lander, Jade Chisholm, Brianna Ricker, and Tedianne Thurlow assemble presentations for the PRREA Day of Caring project.

Somerset

Each year members of Somerset Educators Association Retired (SEAR) choose one school in Somerset County for which we collect supplies. We selected the Garrett Schenk Elementary School in North Anson this year.

Most often, our members purchase the school supplies out of their own pockets—pencils, notebooks, erasers, markers, folders, binders, glue sticks, notebook paper, and more. We donated \$100 to the library this year.

Pictured here is SEAR President Lorraine Mahoney of Norridgewock delivering school supplies to the school.



Waldo

Members of Waldo Educators Association Retired (WEAR) donated the \$100 subsidy from MEA-Retired to the Palermo Consolidated School to purchase some Reading Response to Intervention (RTI) books.

Additionally, WEAR donated \$100 to the Leroy Smith Elementary School in Winterport to be used to provide items and supplies for students' needs.



WEAR President Michael Lawson presents a check to Diane Carrillo at the Palermo Consolidated School.

Washington

The 2024 Day of Caring Project was the second year of a two-year goal established by the Washington County Retired Teachers Association (WCREA).

(Previously, we had completed our goal of providing a treasure chest of school supplies to each of the 36 plus schools in Washington County. At that time, we chose between four and six schools annually due to budgetary constraints).

We were very excited to be able to complete the project this year. The \$2,000 raised enabled us to have our treasurer, Barbara Maloy, write \$500 checks for East Grand High School, Danforth; Calais High School; Machias Memorial High School; and Washington Academy, East Machias.

Our affiliate membership prefers "the personal touch" whenever possible. We were fortunate to have Stephanie Strongin hand deliver the checks to Washington Academy and East Grand High School. Her children had attended Washington Academy.

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Betsy Fitzgerald and Barbara Maloy—long-time active members of the community at large—volunteered to do the same for Machias Memorial High School. Rick Chaffey, a veteran teacher at Calais High School, delivered the check to that school.

The letter enclosed with each check indicated that the money was to be used to defray transportation and/or meal costs for students on school-sanctioned field trips. Another option was to use the funds toward procuring a motivational speaker. Finally, the money could be used to do either or both options. Our affiliate is brain-storming opportunities for next year!



WCREA members assemble at a recent meeting. Front: Nancy Willey, Cherryfield. Second row: Barbara Maloy, Machiasport; Hazel Hammond, Columbia Falls; Ruth Chaffey, Dennysville; Stephanie Strongin, Machiasport; Rick Chaffey, Dennysville; Judy Randall, Jonesboro; Diana Elkavitch, Addison; Michael Elkavitch, Addison.

Volunteer

As we continue helping our schools and communities



York

Members of the York County Retired Educators Association (YCREA) completed another awesome Day of Caring event. This was our 15th Annual Day of Caring Project, and we spent our special day of volunteerism at the Great Works School in South Berwick. Principal Jerry Burnell and some of his staff (current and retired) helped with the assigned projects as well as many retired educators..

Several long-time YCREA members and one brand new member also joined us. A special welcome was extended to our newest retired member, Deb Butler. Deb has been very active in MEA.

The weather was beautiful, and Jerry had a wish list ready for us to tackle. I think we did an amazing job and pretty much completed our assignments.

We outlined a playground sized map of the United States to be painted later in the week. We put wood chips around a tree near the entrance to the school. We cleared brush around the edge of the lower playground. We painted trim around a couple of the school entrance doors. The last item on the list was staining an outdoor shed.

Thanks to ongoing support from Newington Staples we had a gift card for the school. Thanks to MEA-Retired, YCREA, and the generosity of individual members of YCREA. we were able to present Mr. Burnell with a sizable check to use for the benefit of his staff and students over the next year.

Nothing feels better than working with a group of people who just want to do something to make life a little better for others. What a great, memorable, and productive day to be available and able to help another school—its teachers and students.

There are so many opportunities for volunteerism. We are already looking forward to next year!



YCREA members Deb Butler and Bill Soucy participated in the annual Day of Caring activities by repairing and painting an athletic supply shed outside the Great Works School in South Berwick.