

Day of Caring 2023!

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

For more than 20 years, **The Store Next Door Project**, a non-profit organization, has supported homeless teens in Lewiston schools with clothing, hygiene items, household goods and community resources.

They serve over 300 students in Grades K-12 every year. They provide tangible items such as new and gently used clean clothing and footwear, winter coats, boots, backpacks with school supplies, underwear and socks, toiletries and hygiene products, household goods and cleaning supplies, laundry items and laundromat vouchers, gas cards and bus/cab vouchers, food, LHS logo items and sports team gear. Concurrently, they also offer academic support and tutoring.

Most importantly, while addressing basic needs we provide emotional support and encouragement, and community referrals and connections to local resources and services.

Androscoggin Retired Educators Association purchased and filled 15 backpacks to help needy students begin school with the supplies they need. Various members donated 15 shopping bags of school supplies and provided a monetary donation of \$190.

Aroostook

Members of the Aroostook Retired Educators Association (AREA) continued our Day of Caring "Bulging Backpack Project" for the 13th year. We selected the Fort Kent Elementary School in the northern area of our county.

During each of our four summer luncheon meetings, we collected school supplies and monetary donations to purchase other needed items. Our committee members presented our Bulging Backpack Project to



Teachers at the Fort Kent Elementary School check out the table of student and teacher supplies from which they chose items to help them in their classrooms. The items are provided by the Aroostook Retired Educators Association.

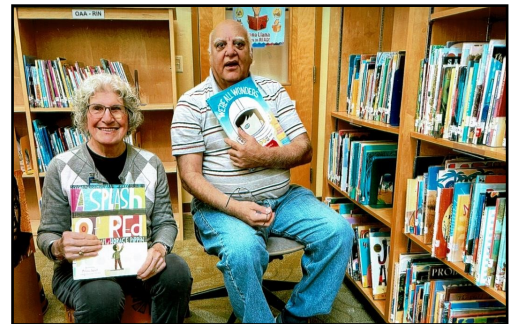
our chosen school on October 10, 2023 following their Harvest Break.

Thanks to the generosity of our AREA members, our tables were laden with school supplies to add to the school's supply closet. We also presented each of the 26 classroom teachers with a gift bag which included personal items, a thank you card and a monetary gift.

We were pleased to introduce our newly elected president of AREA, Lou Willey, who spoke briefly about the importance of the work of MEA-Retired and our chapter's involvement in the annual Day of Caring.

Cumberland

Members of the Cumberland County Retired Educators Association (CCREA) spent time organizing, alphabetizing, and shelving books in the library at the Ocean Avenue Elementary School in Portland. Students and teachers in Kindergarten through Grade 5 appreciated their work.



Jean Phillips and Tom DiPasqua joined members of CCREA to organize books in the Ocean Avenue Elementary School library.

Franklin

Franklin County Retired Educators Association (FCREA) members chose to help students and teachers at the Cape Cod Hill School in New Sharon by collecting a variety of school supplies to help begin the school year well supplied.



FCRE presented school supplies to Cape Cod Hill School. (L to R): FCREA member Caroleen Caldwell, Grade 5 teacher Nathan Geisser, and Joanne Dunlap, Day of Caring Chairperson.

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Hancock

The Hancock County Retired Teachers Association (HCRTA) collected school supplies at their September meeting. We chose to give them to the Airline Community School—a small rural elementary school located in Aurora that serves students in Amherst, Aurora, Osborne, and Great Pond.

HCRTA members met with the principal to learn what would be the most beneficial to students and teachers. We learned that the students were studying and working on science and math skills with focus on climate and weather. Any support we could give them toward that end was gratefully appreciated.



Administrative Assistant Deana Preble of Airline School in Aurora accepts student and teacher donations from Judy Bragg, secretary of Hancock County Retired Teachers Association.

Kennebec

Fourteen Kennebec County Retired Educators Association (KREA) members joined together to help teachers at the Laura E. Richards Elementary School in Gardiner 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 supplied lunch and a great time of fellowship with fellow teachers.

Workers for the day's event included Phil and Linda Sprague, Larry Given, Marc Poulin, Phil Gonyar, Carl Daiker, Gail Perry, Marshalyn Baker, Linda Ellis, Joan Meehan, Joann Tyler, Kathy Kelly, Marilyn Hall, and Kathie Choate.



KREA Treasurer Larry Given of Litchfield, President Linda Sprague of Belgrade, and Marc Poulin of Skowhegan joined other KREA members to help teachers prepare for the first day of classes at the Laura E. Richards School in Gardiner.

Knox

The South School in Rockland was chosen for the Knox County Retired Educators Association (KCREA) Day of Caring project.

The school maintains two closets of supplies to meet classroom and student needs. One closet is for classroom supplies and the other is a "Comfort Closet" stocked with personal care



KCREA members Beth Chamberlin, Jennifer Woodward, Susan McNeilly, and Linda Woodman present a variety of student and teacher supplies to Bethany Browne, school social worker. Excited students who will benefit from these donations are (L to R): August Terry, Lulu Williamson, and Oliver Terry. (The Terry brothers are twins.)

items such as shampoo, toothbrushes, socks, mittens, hats, jackets, and more.

KCREA provided school supplies and their donation of \$170 combined with the \$100 MEA-Retired grant provided classroom and comfort needs.

Mid-Coast

Members of Mid-Coast Retired Educators Association (MCREA) completed our Day of Caring project at the Bowdoin Central School in Bowdoin.

MCREA members unpacked boxes of supplies and organized them in their supply rooms. Thank goodness for a husband, Merle Wagg, who volunteered to move all those heavy boxes to storage shelves.

They organized and cleaned the supply room. They also photocopied many parent and student documents for the teachers' opening days and organized moving books from one classroom to another.

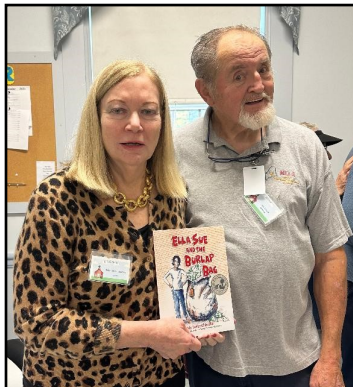


Debbie Wagg of Bowdoin is a retired ESP and is an active member of MCREA

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Oxford

For a number of years the Oxford County Educators Association Retired (OCEAR) has conducted a program to supply all of Oxford County’s public libraries with a book to add to their children’s collection. The program was inspired by Karen Ellis



OCEAR President John Kimball met author Robin Taylor-Chiarello to review her latest book that was placed in all 20 libraries in Oxford County.

book. *Ella Sue and the Burlap Bag*. Her children’s books have won many awards, and she is known internationally. We donated her first book, *Limbo, From African Slave to Honored Grave*, in a previous year. Robin serves on the National Council on White House History and brings history to life for young readers. The story about Ella Sue relates the young life of a girl growing up in a family of sharecroppers.

The books are distributed annually to 20 public libraries in Oxford County. The books have been well received and we look forward to continuing the program.

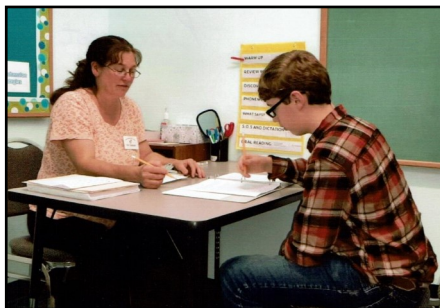
and Elaine Lagueux—whose enthusiasm was infectious. The books we select for our “Maine Books for Maine Kids” project are written by authors who have strong ties to Maine and who write about subjects of interest for the children of Maine. As retired educators, we feel a strong sense of pride in providing books for children in our county. Some of the books we have distributed are *A Little Brown Bat* by Melissa Kim, *Azalea Unschooled*, by Liza Kleinman, and *The Newest Flower* by Julie Y. Padgett.

OCEAR was pleased to hear from Robin Taylor-Chiarello about her second and latest

Penobscot

Members of Penobscot County Retired Educators Association (PCREA) gave a donation of \$200 to the Children’s Dyslexia Center in Bangor. Their mission is to provide free tutorial reading and writing instruction to children with dyslexia.

The donation will be used to purchase student and staff development materials that will assist as they offer educational assistance to a variety of Bangor area students.



Special assistance is provided for a student at the Dyslexia Center in Bangor. Donations were made by the Penobscot County Retired Educators Association.

Piscataquis

Members of Piscataquis Region Retired Educators Association (PRREA) collected monetary donations to give to the nurs-

es in all five elementary schools.

The school districts covered by the PRREA group of retired educators are RSU 4 (Guilford and Sangerville, Parkman, Wellington); RSU 68 (Dover-Foxcroft, Sebec, Monson, Charleston); RSU 41 (Milo, Brownville, LaGrange); and Dexter School District. It was suggested that nurses purchase socks and underwear for students who are in need.



(L to R): Greenville School nurse Jane Sullivan accepts donations from Jane Conroy, MEA-Retired secretary and PRREA member.

Somerset



Assistant Principal Erica Boudreau of Manson Park School in Pittsfield accepts a donation from Lorraine Mahoney, SEAR president.

Members of Somerset Educators Association Retired (SEAR) again participated in the annual Day of Caring project initiated by MEA-Retired by supporting another school in Somerset County.

We collected monetary donations to give to the Manson Park School in Pittsfield to be used to purchase student and teacher supplies. The \$100 matching funds to SEAR from MEA-Retired will also be given to the school library to help purchase books and other educational materials.

Waldo

Members of Waldo Educators Association Retired (WEAR) collected Day of Caring funds in many small ways. Members then choose two schools from our county to whom we donate a gift of \$100.

We contacted schools to learn how they plan to use the funds. Snacks will be provided to Searsport Elementary students during test time.

A second \$100 donation from WEAR was placed in the Student Activity Fund at Mt. View Junior High and Senior High School in Thorndike.



(Left) Principal Tenney Speigel of Searsport Elementary accepts a donation from Mary Alden, WEAR vice president.

Washington

Members of Washington County Retired Educators Association (WCREA) completed their long-term goal to provide a treasure chest filled with school supplies to each of the 36 elementary schools in Washington County.

The affiliate members decided to spend time brainstorming ideas that would benefit each of the eight high schools in the county. After several meetings the decision was made to make a \$500 donation to each of four high schools this year.

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WCREA members donated items to four high schools in Washington county. (Row 1, L to R): Nancy Kirkbride, Nancy Willey, Diane Elkavitch, Michael Elkavitch. (Row 2, L to R): Ruth Chaffey, Hazel Hammond, Gwen Strout, Dawn Noonan, Carolyn Mahar. (Row 3, L to R): Don Barnes, Rick Chaffey. Absent from photo: Betsy Fitzgerald, Barbara Maloy, Stephanie Strongin.

The intent for the use of the money is clearly stated in the letter provided to each principal. The donated money is to be used to aid a student or group of students to defray transportation and/or meal costs for students on a school-sanctioned field trip. Another option is to use the funds toward procuring a motivational speaker. Finally, the money may be used to do either or both options.

Schools selected to serve this year were Shead High School in Eastport; Narragansett High School in Harrington; Jonesport-Beals High School in Jonesport; and Woodland High School.

York

The 14th Day of Caring project completed by members of the York County Retired Educators Association (YCREA) is now completed.

Ten members joined the Wells Elementary School Parent Organization and Principal Kyle

Burnell to do something special for the students and staff at the school in memory of 9/11 victims.

We cleaned out and organized a shed that was stuffed full and sorted in three groups—keep, recycle, or throw away.

We weeded several raised gardens. We packaged school

bracelets for all 560 students in this Kindergarten thru Grade 5 School.

The Staples Store in Newington N.H., supported our efforts once again this year with a very generous donation of a variety of school supplies. Individual YCREA members also donated school supplies.

Our organization presented Mr. Burnell with a check for students and staff. As always, we all had a great feeling of accomplishment realized as we completed another special Day of Caring project.



YCREA members gathered outside the Wells Elementary School where they served students and teachers. (Back): Bill Soucy, Pat Kennedy, South Berwick; Parent/Teacher member, Maggie McLaughlin, North Berwick; Joan Warren, Lyman; Jane Bradstreet, Kittery; Diane Zehner, Saco. (Front): Jan Cerabona, Eliot; Catie McLaughlin, North Berwick; Janice Laughlin, Old Orchard Beach; Esther Morrow, Somersworth, NH; PTSA member.