



THE CLARION

December 2022

The Newsletter for Retired Educators
Maine Education Association Retired Vol. 134, No. 2

MEA-Retired

71st Convention
and Annual Meeting

Augusta Civic Center
May 4, 2023

From our President Why Land Acknowledgement?



Gary McGrane

Most of you who know me are aware of my Native American background, a background that closely ties us all to the planet we call home. That is why I begin every meeting I host with an acknowledgement of Mother Earth (the "Land Acknowledgement.")

I ask myself, "Who am I to think I am worthy of acknowledging the land?" I feel that a

spirit much older and bigger than I should do the honor. This land that I gratefully acknowledge has known my DNA since before I took my first breath. This land whose beauty is boundless, a beauty that encompasses you and me.

So let me tell you who I am, who we are. I was born of snowfall and sunshine, of earth and moisture. My

See President, Page 6

Don't miss Convention

By Rheba Michaud
Convention Committee Chair

Have you marked May 4, 2023, on your calendar with a reminder to set aside the day to attend the MEA-Retired Annual Meeting and Convention?

Run and check! If you've not reserved that date, do it now! Plan to join us at the Civic Center in Augusta. You will enjoy

great laughs and refreshing humor by our own Maine Humorist Gary Crockett of West Gardiner.

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 *biggah* 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 Legislature.

After retiring from the legislative position, he decided to be a full-time humorous speaker. Then, of course, we

See Convention, Page 10

Election time! We need delegates! YOU?

MEA-RA: 5 delegates and 9 alternates

NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA-RA: 4 delegates

MEA-Retired seat on MEA Board of Directors: 1 delegate

By Larry Given
Kennebec Retired Educ. Assoc.

MEA-RA

Maine Education Association Retired has 10 delegate seats at the MEA Representative Assembly in May. Five of the ten delegates will be returning—we need to elect five more to have a full contingency. Delegates are elected to three-year terms.

In addition to the delegate vacancies, we also have 10 alternate delegate positions.

One alternate will be returning, so the nine vacancies align as follows: three 3-year terms; three 2-year terms; and three 1-year term.

We need members to serve as a delegate or an alternate. Will you give these opportunities some thought and step up to fill a seat?

The annual MEA-RA will be held at the Sheraton Sable Oaks Hotel in South Portland on May 20 & 21, 2023.

Interested candidates should submit the "Notice

of Intent" form located at www.maineea.org/mea-elections by **January 20, 2023**. If more delegate candidates file than the number of positions, an election will then be held.

NEA-Retired Meeting NEA-RA

Additionally, we have six delegate seats to the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA Representative Assem-

See Delegates, Page 3

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Make early plans to attend!
71st Convention and Annual Meeting
Augusta Civic Center
May 4, 2023
You will enjoy laughter by
Renowned Maine Humorist Gary Crocker
<https://www.garycrocker.com/>



Legislative Updates: Elections have consequences

By Crystal Ward, Chairperson
Legislative Committee

Phew!!!

The midterm elections are over. The citizens have spoken. Just the counting of ALL ballots is left to complete. Because the election process is left to the states to decide, every state has a different set of guidelines.

The counting process will not be officially certified by ALL states for several weeks. There is still counting going on in Maine as of November 10, 2022.

Maine election consequences:

1. Our governor will be Janet Mills for another four years.
2. Both the Maine House and Senate will have a majority membership of Democrats.
3. There should be no passage of major attacks on our MainePERS pension.
4. Several bills will be submitted during the new Legislative session in January. One will raise the state's share of our health insurance premiums from 55 percent to 65 percent.

Another initiative that will be presented to our legislative assembly is to restore the COLA being computed on our full pension amount. It used to be computed on that amount until it was discontinued in 2011. More to come on this critical issue—and we need people to testify in support of this bill!

5. Last year the Republicans and Democrats worked together on several issues that benefited our retirees. It is hoped that this will continue and grow.

National election consequences as of November 10:

1. **U.S. House of Representatives** may have a majority Republicans which means a change in the makeup of House leadership and all committee chairpersons. Furthermore, the majority of membership on each committee will be Republican.

2. **U.S. Senate** is too close to call as of this writing. Recounts could result in a 50-50 split with both parties having won 50 seats. In this case the vice president would cast a vote to break the tie.

Additionally, there will be a run-off election in December in the state of Georgia

because they require a candidate to win by 50 percent plus one. They do not have Ranked Choice Voting. This will be a very expensive battle!!

3. During the election several Republicans spoke about changes in Social Security and Medicare. NEA will have to be very alert as to where this initiative will go!

4. Since no party has a two-thirds majority, a President's VETO will be very powerful.

5. One can only hope that everyone received the clear message that the people want the parties to work together for the good of ALL the people!



6. Now for the "Lame Duck Session." Remember the NEW people elected do not get sworn into office until the first week in January 2023. It appears the Democrats are going to try to pass what they can during the "Lame Duck Session" between the elections in November and the start of the new session in January with newly elected Congressional delegates. (Both parties do this when there is a change in power).

HR 82 to fix the Social Security Offset is still alive and could be voted on in the House BUT then the Senate would be the problem. Last glimmer of hope is a compromise bill out of the Ways and Means Committee.

We appreciate all the folk

See Elections, Page 4

AARP Maine celebrates volunteers

By Pam Partridge
AARP Liaison

Retired hospital administrator Jean Saunders of Saco was presented the AARP Maine 2022 Andrus Award. The Andrus Award is named in honor of Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus—a renowned educator, first female principal in California, and the founder of AARP.

A news release from AARP Maine said, "The award celebrates and honors those who make a difference in the lives of others, and it is the most prestigious and visible award AARP presents each year. Jean Saunders' extraordinary public service actively embodies Dr. Andrus' motto, 'To serve, not to be served'."

Jean received the award in recognition of her many years of work in Saco with their Age-Friendly Community program in which she continues to be involved.

See AARP, Page 3

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.

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NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA RA

June 30—July 6, 2023
Orlando, FL

July 1—July 7, 2024
Philadelphia, PA



MEA-Retired is here for you!

December 5, @ 9:30 a.m.
Executive Committee Meeting
MEA Building, Augusta

March 6 @ 9:30 a.m.
Executive Committee Meeting
MEA Building, Augusta

April 3, @ 9:30 a.m.
Board of Directors Meeting
Best Western Hotel, Waterville

Contact affiliate leaders with ideas and concerns.

Delegates from Page 1

bly in Orlando, Florida, at the end of June into July.

Two seats are reserved for our president and president-elect. The other four delegate seats are one-year terms open to our MEA-Retired unified membership. Will you con-



sider serving?

Delegates will attend the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting on June 30 and July 1. The NEA Representative Assembly will be held in Orlando, Florida, from July 3 through July 6, 2023.

Interested candidates should submit the “Notice of Intent” form located at www.mainea.org/mea-elections by January 20, 2023. If more candidates file than the number of positions, an election will be held.

Just a note of explanation: Terms of new delegates begin in May and end in April of the

following year. The term of a delegate expires in April before the MEA-RA.

If there is ever a situation where MEA needs to call a special meeting, the “current” delegates are then eligible and called upon to attend any meetings up until April 30.

Returning MEA-Retired delegates and expiration years of their terms are as follows: Jane Conroy, Paul Bouchard, and Claudette O’Connell (one year expiring in April 2024); Bob Jean and Bo Zabierek (two years expiring in April 2025).

We have one returning alternate. Barbara Bricker’s term expires in April 2025.

One final note to explain how the number of MEA-RA delegates is determined: We are allowed one delegate for every 500 members. We have a few more than 5,000 members as of August 31; we have 10 delegate slots.

We will have another delegate next year if our membership as of August 31, 2023, is at least one member over the halfway mark between 5,000 and 5,500. So, if we have 5,251 (or more) members as of that date, we would be eligible to send one

more delegate to MEA-RA.

MEA Board of Directors Member

Very, very important is the election of an MEA-Retired member to serve a three-year term on the MEA Board of Directors. The retired term begins in July 2023. The responsibilities of this Board position are delineated in MEA bylaws found at www.mainea.org.

Board members are automatic delegates to the MEA and NEA Representative Assemblies. The MEA-Retired member would also attend the two-day NEA-Retired Annual Meeting before the NEA-RA.

They are also paid an annual stipend and are reimbursed for mileage and expenses incurred to attend meetings and seminars.

Interested candidates should submit the “Notice of Intent” form located at www.mainea.org/mea-elections by January 20, 2023. If more delegate candidates file than the number of positions, an election will then be held.

One final note on these positions: Candidates must be “unified” members— One

Will YOU be a delegate?

must be a member of MEA, MEA-Retired, and NEA-Retired.

This requirement applies to candidates who are interested in being an RA delegate or a candidate for the MEA-Retired seat on the MEA Board of Directors. (See information about the cost of dues for these three memberships in the red box on Page 16.)

More information on all of these positions of leadership in MEA and MEA-Retired may be obtained from MEA Administrative Assistant Erin Noyes at 1-888-622-4418, Ext. 2218 or email enoyes@maineaa.org.

Visit our websites for more details and activities: www.mearetired.org and www.mainea.org.

AARP from Page 2

She has been instrumental in services and program resources for the benefit of residents of all ages.

Such programs include a new on-demand transportation program and an adaptive bicycling program for older residents to experience the “joy of a bicycle ride” again. The mission for *Age-Friendly Saco* is to enable residents to age in place in a multi-generational approach. Other awards and recognitions were given during the celebration.

AARP Maine recently held three huge shredding events in Portland, Augusta and Bangor with help from AARP volunteers and county sheriffs departments. A total of 26,000 pounds of sensitive documents were shredded and kept out of the hands of identity thieves. The response was so big that more shredding events will be planned for 2023 in additional communities.

Additionally on the topic of fraud, “Tis the season to be ripped off,” by cybercrooks who are masters at spinning

a tale to get your money. Buyer beware! Inflation creates the perfect environment for unbelievable deals and offers by fraudsters who set up fake sites with ghost merchandise as a means to get your personal information and credit card numbers.

Remember, if something sounds too good to be true, it **IS** too good to be true. Know from whom you are buying and to whom you are giving credit card information. If a seller asks to be paid with gift cards, that’s a huge red flag. Online coupons and order confirmation emails are vehicles for attaching malware. It is safer to confirm an order through the website where the purchase was made.

“If you can spot a scam, you can stop a scam.” Shop safely this holiday season. You can join the monthly virtual series, “**Fraud Watch with Phil and Pam**” for a discussion on fighting scams and fraud in Maine.

It is AARP’s continuing effort to develop ways to protect the most vulner-

able among us from becoming victims of fraud. These discussions are free and open to all. You do not need to be an AARP member to join the conversation. To register for any month, google, “AARP fraud watch with Phil and Pam” and you find a link for the next show.

Noël Bonam, AARP Maine State Director, has been working with the members of the Executive Council and state volunteers this past month to collect information for the State Plan 2023.

Weekly volunteer meetings will be suspended during most of November, but they will resume in December. These meetings will prepare volunteers for the new legislative sessions— both state and national. We always need more people to help—are you interested?

AARP Maine welcomes new volunteers to serve in a variety of roles. Visit the website at <https://states.aarp.org/maine/> or call their office at 1-866-554-5380 for more information on volunteerism. They provide excellent training and support.

Canadian Rockies so memorable

By Beth Chamberlin
Knox County Ret. Educ. Assoc

When traveling reopened in Canada, my husband Paul and I booked a ten-day “Tauck Tour—The Rockies” by Rocky Mountaineer. Mandates included vaccinations, a booster, and the download of an ArriveCan app. We also were required to wear masks on trains and planes. However, we did not allow any of these issues to interfere with our fun.

We started our adventure in Vancouver, British Colum-



Mt. Robson in British Columbia is the most prominent mountain in North America's Rocky Mountain range and in the Canadian Rockies.

bia, which is an absolutely beautiful city with breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean, beautiful mountains, and a sparkling skyline.

We enjoyed a tour of Vancouver on a float plane ride and also took a bus tour of the city making many stops. We enjoyed Stanley Park, which is a stunning green space, about one-fifth larger than New York City's Central Park, where there was a most amazing, very interesting Totem Pole display.

We had a great time touring Granville Island and enjoyed lunch outside at one of the many open food booths. We also had a docent led tour of the Bill Reid Gallery, which is a contemporary Aboriginal art museum. We hated to leave this cosmopolitan city.

In an early morning ride on the Rocky Mountaineer Gold Leaf Service glass-dome coach, we viewed green fields of the Fraser Valley. It was amazing to see the river canyons surrounded by the Cascade Mountains.

On day two of our train trip, we traveled into Alberta and climbed

the high peaks to the Continental Divide. We had a breathtaking view of Mt Robson—standing at 12,972 feet, the majestic mountain is the highest peak in the Canadian Rockies.

The white linen meal service in the dining car was elegant with outstanding entrees. We ended our train journey in Jasper where we spent two nights in the National Park Lodge. What beautiful scenery and great hiking experiences awaited us!

We stopped at Icefields

Parkway enroute to Lake Louise. We traveled in a bus/van known as an Ice Explorer on the Athabasca Glacier—one of the biggest glaciers outside the Arctic Circle.

Paul and I brought “crampons” with us, so we could put them on our shoes and walk on the slippery icefield. It was so neat.

We then went to Lake Louise, which is inside Banff National Park. The lake is a beautiful shade of turquoise blue. We walked all along

the lake and we were in awe of the beautiful vistas.

We then rode our tour bus to the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel, which is a show place. It was built in the 1880's by the Canadian Pacific Railway. Banff National Park is over 2,500 square miles, so there was plenty to see.

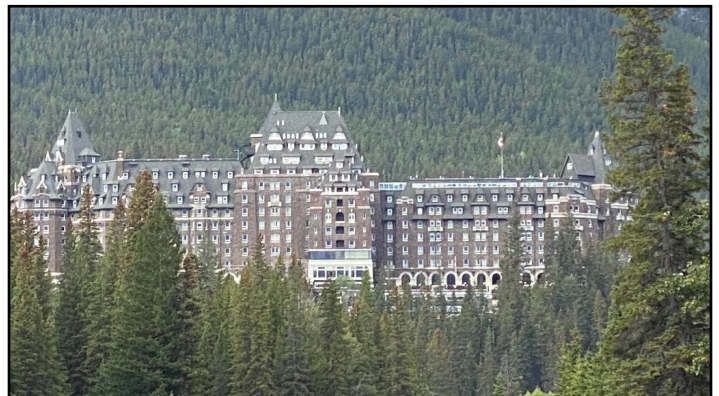
We took a float trip down the Bow River which was a



We enjoyed a two-day tour in Jasper National Park and stayed at the Lodge. The tour included highlights—the Columbia Icefield (explored via Ice Explorer and Skywalk) and Athabasca Falls. After the overnight stay, we visited Maligne Lake, Peyto Lake, and more landmarks.

highlight of the day. We spent our last day in Calgary, which has a population of over 1.3 million people, sightseeing in this bustling city.

I encourage retirees, who are in good health to travel. There is plenty to see right here in Maine and our other New England states. By booking a tour, details are all handled for you. It really is a smooth way to travel.



Fairmont Banff Springs hotel stands as a landmark in the picturesque alpine town of Banff, Alberta. Canada's “Castle in the Rockies” has been providing legendary hospitality to guests for more than 130 years.

Elections, from Page 2

who chose to be candidates in the recent election. It is a huge undertaking to step forward to be willing to serve the citizens of Maine in public office and to campaign so strenuously. It is a great commitment of time, energy, and finance to “keep on the campaign trail.”

However, now that the election is over, isn't it nice to

have all those political ads removed from the television and the political signs taken down from the sides of the roads and in the fields?

Take a small breather during November and December. We will get back to work in January and February on whatever bills are submitted in the new term.

Thank you for all your help!

The 2022 fall MEA-Retired Pre-retirement Seminars kicked off on October 18th and 19th after a tech check session on the 17th with hosts and presenters led by MEA IT Director Lee Pullen.

Representatives from MainePERS, Horace Mann, and Anthem practiced screen sharing, answered questions

to admit people into the seminar while fielding questions in the chat which he asked Patty during breaks in the presentation.

Martha Frost from Horace Mann presented the WEP\GPO information that pertains to educators who have earned both Social Security and MainePERS bene-

Rand of MainePERS who presented all the processes that go into a successful transition into retirement. He reviewed worksheets and formulas to determine benefits and discussed the life insurance requirements and other relevant information that lead to a smooth transition. He also included a very

popular decision made by many retirees who are collecting pensions—returning to the classroom full-time after retiring.

On October 25 and 26, the second pair of seminars were held to conclude the fall seminars. Ed hosted Tuesday with Sharon Beaulieu from the Augusta Anthem office and P.J. Kenney from Horace Mann's Auburn office presenting the WEP\GPO segment.

Joan and Alex repeated their roles Wednesday in the MainePERS presentation to conclude our fall seminars.

Carol Rosinski teaches at Connors Emerson School in Ellsworth and says of her Zoom experience: "Thanks so much. It's

Pre-Retirement sessions well received

By Bo Zabierek, Chairperson
Pre-Retirement Committee

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 teaches K-12 Fine Arts and Gifted and Talented classes, does the yearbook, and advises a Civil Rights team. She says, "I really felt like a deer caught in the headlights before these sessions. Now I understand the process, have a plan and I know who to contact if I need help! Thanks for providing this service!"

See the schedule below and spread the word to active educators, ed techs, and other school personnel who are thinking about retiring. Preparation ahead of time is key to success. It is best to attend these sessions several times.



Conducting MEA-Retired's pre-retirement sessions on Zoom enables the MEA-Retired to reach so many more prospective retirees from all over the state at the same time. Participating in a recent session are (L to R): Bo Zabierek, Sherman Station; Joan Warren, Lyman; Alex Rand, MainePERS; and Ed Nunery, Cumberland Foreside.

from the chat and admitted participants to the sessions—all to prepare for the upcoming sessions.

MEA-Retired President Gary McGrane greeted Tuesday's attendees by reviewing the different levels of membership: county, local, state, and national while stressing how affordable the dues are and that they can be deducted from their pension checks.

Committee member and Tuesday night's host Ed Nunery presented a Powerpoint presentation about the advantage of membership and answered questions throughout the chat.

He then turned the program over to Patty Whitcomb from the Portland Anthem office to present the Anthem insurance and Medicare Advantage information to our future members. Ed continued

fits. She discussed the formula for determining penalties that would be deducted from Social Security checks after their MainePERS retirement pension goes into effect.

Ed continued to monitor the chat and pass questions on to Martha. Ed thanked all the presenters and attendees and reminded members to attend night two on Wednesday for the MePERS presentation.

Committee member Joan Warren hosted Wednesday's presentation and admitted members to the seminar presented by MainePERS after reminding attendees about the advantage of membership in MEA-Retired. She shared personal stories of how she has benefited as a retiree of her county association.

She then presented Alex

2023 Pre-Retirement Schedule on Zoom Spread the word among actives

Winter Session 3:

Tuesday, Jan. 10 @ 5 p.m.—MEA Benefits Trust and GPO/WEP
Wednesday, Jan. 11 @ 5 p.m.—MainePERS

Winter Session 4:

Tuesday, Jan. 17 @ 5 p.m.—MEA Benefits Trust and GPO/WEP
Wednesday, Jan. 18 @ 5 p.m.—MainePERS

Winter Session 5:

Tuesday, Feb. 7 @ 5 p.m.—MEA Benefits Trust and GPO/WEP
Wednesday, Feb. 8 @ 5 p.m.—MainePERS

Spring Session 6:

Tuesday, Mar. 7 @ 5 p.m.—MEA Benefits Trust and GPO/WEP
Wednesday, Mar. 8 @ 5 p.m.—MainePERS

Bo Zabierek, Chairperson, bozabierek@gmail.com, 207-365-4329

Your opportunity to submit resolutions

By Claudette O'Connell, Chair Resolutions Committee

Resolutions are belief statements that determine the direction of an entity—such as our MEA-Retired Association. Resolutions are not action items; therefore, they do not have any budgetary impact on the Association.

A sample resolution statement is as follows:

Resolved: That MEA-Retired believes members should encourage young people to research (investigate) careers in education.

We invite you to consider suggesting some resolutions that would improve our retired lives or make suggestions as to beliefs in education. These resolutions would be presented at our annual meeting on May 4, 2023.

The following form may be reproduced and filled out and submitted as indicated. If folks have questions, I may be reached at (207) 942-6137.

Volunteer!



SMILE
“Seniors Make It Look Easy”

Maine Education Association Retired 2023 Proposed Resolution Form

Submission Deadline: February 15, 2023

The following is proposed: (Check one)

Amend an existing MEA-Retired resolution

Propose a new MEA-Retired resolution

Resolved: That MEA-Retired believes _____

Reason for submission: _____

Submitted by Individual MEA-Retired committee (check one)

Name: _____ Tel. _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Affiliate _____

Committee: _____

Committee Chair Signature: _____

MEA-Retired Resolutions Committee response:

Submit to MEA-Retired Annual Meeting for approval

Edited and submitted to MEA-Retired Annual Meeting for approval

Reason for edit: _____

Proposed resolution denied as received after the submission date

Proposed language constitutes an action item

A copy of this form indicating the MEA-Retired Resolutions Committee response will be sent to the contact individual or committee chair prior to the annual meeting in May. Submit this form to Claudette O'Connell, Chairperson, Resolutions Committee, 320 Howard Street, Bangor, ME 04401 or scan and email your resolution to this address: cladet456@gmail.com.

President, from Page 1

blood flows through my veins like rushing water. My heart beats like thunder. My skin is brown like mud, and my spine is strong like a tree.

Yes, this is I, proud and free. We are all integral parts of Mother Earth. Mother Earth never leaves us alone. She is present in our being. Any day when you find yourself overcome with emotions and tears live your

eyes, she reminds us that she is with you.

Mother Earth's love surrounds us always. She yearns for us all to use our talents and passions for the greater good of all. She yearns for mankind to cleanse itself of bad habits and respect the beauty that is all around us.

This land is neither yours nor mine. This beautiful land, this Mother Earth, is our responsibility. So know that during the recitation of

the Land Acknowledgement Mother Earth is reaching out to you, that she recognizes you. Care for her as much as she cares for you. She knew you before anyone else.

I hope these words, whatever you take from them and wherever you are on life's journey, will cause you to reflect on the blessing given to us by Mother Earth, and that you will be kind to her.

Woliwoni. (“Thank you” in the Abenaki-Penobscot language.)

**By Susan Grondin, Chairperson
Community Participation Committee**

MEA-Retired retirees realize the importance of projects to support educators and students as a new school year begins. Again this year affiliates provided backpacks, food, books, school supplies, and monetary donations as schools opened for another year.

MEA-Retired encourages Affiliates to time their projects to take place on or around September 11, the date for Day of Caring. The goals are to involve our retirees in schools and to provide needed supplies to support the education community while building relationships that extend far beyond the Day of Caring projects.

Affiliates completing a project can receive \$100 in matching funds to assist in the cost of the materials for their project such as coffee/donuts in the morning and lunches for the workers. Forms are sent to each Affiliate President and are available on the MEA-Retired web site.

Volunteering in the community is a benefit to everyone and MEA-Retired retirees provide many hours of service to local organizations. A tally sheet for recording one's hours has been sent to local affiliate presidents or designees.

Members are asked to log time spent volunteering. Each affiliate reports total hours for its members in April and sends the name of the member with the most hours to the Chair of the Community Participation Committee.

MEA-Retired asks our members to log the hours they participate in physical activity like walking, jogging, square dancing, raking, and skiing. A sample tally sheet is available from the affiliate president or designee. Affiliates are to report total hours for its members and send the name of the person with the most physical activity hours to the Chair of the Community Participation Committee in April.

The Community Participation Committee has three positions open. Please contact Susan Grondin (scgrondin@hotmail.com) if you are interested in joining this committee.

Day of Caring: "It's all about helping students and teachers!"



Cumberland County Retired Educators Association members collect donations for their Day of Caring project. (L to R): Sheila Gagnon, Old Orchard Beach; Pauline Shufeldt, South Portland; Priscilla Schwartz, Cape Elizabeth; Linda Hussey, South Portland; Francesca Perazzi (hidden), Portland; and Mary Salamone, Portland

building in South Portland. Funds also helped with the purchase of a large freezer to hold food items..

Franklin

Retirees in the Franklin County Retired Educators Association participated in the annual Day of Caring project again this year. They provided much-needed school supplies to Pre-K thru Grade 5 teachers and students at the Cape Cod Hill Elementary School in New Sharon.

Hancock

Members of the Hancock County Retired Educators Association (HCREA) collected a variety of school supplies for student and teachers at Cave Hill School in Eastbrook.

See Day of Caring, Page 8

Androscoggin

This year Androscoggin Retired Educators Association (AREA) completed two projects: Twenty backpacks for elementary students were delivered, by Cindy Peters, in groups of four to the five elementary schools in Lewiston: Geiger, Farwell, Connors, McMahon and Montello.

Each group contained four different patterns. The groups were tied together with a tag explaining the project and the name and contact information for the AREA President.

The September AREA meeting speakers were Jamie Caouette and Joel Morse from The Store Next Door program which is part of the Lewiston School Department. Members were asked to bring toiletries and items like shampoo, toothpaste, soap, hand lotion, after shave, and deodorant to donate to the homeless student store program.

The program helps homeless students from Pre-K to 12th grades. Lewiston has 200-400 homeless students per year; and because of the cost of apartments, the number is going up.

We learned there were six "tent cities" in this area.

Many have parents working, but they are still not able to pay for an apartment. There are many homeless students ages 13 -19 who "live wherever they can." The Store Next Door space has show-ers, washers, dryers, clothes, shoes, food, personal care items, school supplies, tutoring and much more. Hard to believe in 2022!

Aroostook

Aroostook Retired Educators Association (AREA) has completed our 12th Annual Day of Caring project.

This year, our committee worked with the Fort Fairfield Elementary School through our "Bulging Backpack" program.

We collected school supplies and monetary donations at our four summer meetings. We used the wish lists that the teachers filled out to help with our shopping for requested school supplies.

We were invited to give our presentation at a morning faculty meeting. We talked about the importance of the work of MEA-Retired and our chapter's involvement in the Day of Caring.

Thanks to the generosity

of AREA members, we were able to present ten classroom teachers and ten special program teachers with tables of school supplies. Our donations also included a gift bag which contained a "Thank You" card, a cash gift of \$25 to use for special items for their classrooms, and a school pin that had been proudly worn by a retired educator.

We then invite the teachers to "shop" from the backpacks and tables of supplies. The remaining items are placed in the school's supply closet for future use by teachers who need them at various intervals throughout the year.. Day of Caring committee members included Janet Woods, Donna Hurley, and Rose Harris.

Cumberland

Cumberland County Retired Educators Association (CCREA) collected money by passing the Happy-Sad Basket during a recent meeting to provide funds to support our local Locker Project.

We also collected food items for the project which had to be moved to a larger

Kennebec

Members of the Kennebec Retired Educators Association (KREA) gathered at Vassalboro Community School (K-8) to help prepare teachers with many tasks to prepare for the opening day of school.



Phil and Linda Sprague of Belgrade laminated and cut words for a "word wall." The Spragues are KREA co-vice presidents.

The principal had asked teachers to sign up ahead of time and delineate tasks they would like to have done. Retirees chose jobs from the list—photocopy, collate, check in books, work on bulletin boards, laminate, prepare student folders, and complete many more tasks. Coffee/donuts and lunch were provided. Their work was greatly appreciated.

KREA members participating in the service project were Kathleen Choate, Linda Ellis, Phil & Linda Sprague, Larry Given, Marc Poulin, Joan Meehan, George & Lauree Davis, Roberta Morin, Nora Murray, Winnie Turner, Diane Engler, Marilyn Hall, Joyce Small, Kathy Kelley, Vicki McMullen, Dot D'Alessandro, Carl Daiker, Phil Gonyar, and Jeff & Karen Malnick (Phil's visiting family members from Connecticut).

Knox

Members of the Knox County Retired Educators Association (KCREA) recently completed their Day of Caring project.

Three members, Susan McNeilly, Linda Woodman, and Bob Jean, delivered two large tubs of classroom supplies to be shared among all the teachers.

In addition to the sup-

plies, a donation of \$185 was made to the First Grade Team. Those funds are earmarked for a "cozy cove" area to be developed in one



(Back): KCREA members Linda Woodman, Bob Jean, and Sue McNeilly. (Front): First graders Alison Nicolet and Hayden LeGage and their teacher, Molly McKenzie.

of the classrooms. The cove will be a place used for quiet reflection when a student just needs to have a few minutes away from the group.

The principal and staff are very thankful for the donations and loved the idea of our Day of Caring! We hear that every year in all the different schools we have donated to over the years!

Mid-Coast

After the disastrous June fire that destroyed Dike-



MCREA members decorated bags of goodies for teachers and staff at the Dike-Newell School in Bath.

Newell School in Bath, Mid-Coast Retired Educators Association (MCREA) reached out to give support to the teachers and staff of the school.

In addition to a donation of \$500, 49 gift bags were presented to staff members. The colorful bags included various items—bookmarks, pens, apple-shaped stress balls, chocolate snacks, and \$10 gift cards. We enjoyed decorating the bags, and they were well received.

Penobscot

Members of Penobscot County Retired Educators (PCRE) presented a gift of \$200 to the Suzanne M. Smith Elementary School in Levant. This donation will help teachers make progress toward a districtwide goal to create classroom libraries.

To quote Principal Lori Day, "Teachers must not



Students enjoy reading and the convenience of having books at their fingertips in the classroom libraries.

only teach children to read, but to kindle a passion for reading. To do that, teachers need varied and rich classroom libraries."

PCRE considers it an honor and a privilege to be able to help schools in their communities through this annual Day of Caring initiative.

Piscataquis

Members of Piscataquis Region Retired Educators Association donated \$100 to nurses in schools in five different districts—Dover-Foxcroft, Milo, Greenville, Dexter, and Guilford.

It is believed that school nurses often determine the needs of the students—clothing, medical, health needs, and hygiene products.



(L to R): Courtney Arcaro, school nurse of SeDoMoCha School, received a check from PCREA President Rheba Michaud to provide snacks for hungry students.

See Day of Caring, Page 9

Convention Booklet Deadlines

February 1: Leadership Award Bios & Photos

March 1: MEA-Retired Officers Committee Chairs Reports

April 1: Necrology Reports

Necrology Note: Names of all deceased who contribute to the education of students—bus drivers, custodians, cooks, secretaries, coaches, ed techs, teachers, principals, Crossing guards, superintendents, etc.

Dates of decease: April 1, 2022, thru March 31, 2023

Please send to kay_grindall@yahoo.com.

Mail to 23 Hilltop Drive Oakland 04963

Somerset

Members of Somerset Educators Association Retired (SEAR) provided a variety of



(L to R): Anna Wilber; Steffanie Begin, Administrative Assistant to the Principal; Vanessa Cuning, Administrative Secretary; and Ron Wilber of SEAR delivered school supplies and a donation to staff at the Forest Hills Consolidated School in Jackman.

school supplies for students and teachers and a cash donation of \$100 to be used in the library at the Forest Hills Consolidated School in Jackman.

School supplies included pencils, pens, markers, notebooks, glue sticks, scissors, and more. The items were divided evenly into three boxes for Grades 1, 2, and 3.

Waldo

Waldo Educators Association Retired (WEAR) decided to donate \$100 to each of the nurses at the K-8 Drinkwater School in Northport and the K-8 Lincolnville Central School in Lincolnville.

We know that nurses deal with students in a variety of circumstances and often know best what the students need. During the year they discreetly help them when opportunities arise. Hopefully these funds will help to provide whatever is needed to take care of the students.

Washington

Washington County Retired Educators Association (WCREA) has participated in the MEA-Retired Day of Caring since it was implemented in 2010.

In 2016, our affiliate established a long-term goal to provide a treasure chest filled with supplies to each of the approximately 30 elementary schools in Washington County.

Many changes have occurred due in part to the impact of the pandemic and this project is no exception. We have added sanitizing supplies to the treasure chests as well.

In addition, last year's members were given the opportunity to make a monetary donation instead of providing the actual items and many preferred to do this again this year. The four schools selected this year were Calais Elementary, Down East Christian, Indian Township, and Rose Gaffney schools.

Keeping with tradition, individual members volunteered to deliver the treasure chests. Our county covers a large geographic area so usually members residing near the school offer to make the delivery. Dora Adams, Dawn Noonan, Nancy Willey, and Ruth Chaffey made the deliveries to these schools.

Our affiliate has received numerous handwritten notes of appreciation as well as verbal thanks from principals, faculty, staff, and students. It is gratifying to know that our contributions



(L to R): John Sprague, Barbara Maloy, Ruth Chaffey, Dawn Noonan, Judy Randall, Mary McFadden, Dora Adams, and Don Barnes delivered school supplies and a donation to staff at four different schools in Washington County.

to the educational experience for the students in our county are appreciated and helpful. We look forward to this project every year.

York

What a memorable experience York County Retired Educators Association (YCREA) members had at the Horace Mitchell School in Kittery. Twelve members helped out to complete a list of tasks that was handed to us when we arrived.

Tasks that were completed included weeding the front entrance garden, cleaning out the recess shed that was filled with outdoor toys,

books that were still in boxes.

Bill Soucy spent quite a bit of time on his knees pulling out all the wisps of grass that had grown up between the bricks in the walkway of the courtyard at the entrance of the school.

Three students from Traip Academy (high school) in Kittery joined us for the day to fulfill some of their community service hours that are required for graduation. It was great to connect with those young people.

Jan Cerabona of Eliot has been state chairperson of the annual Day of Caring event for 11 years and has partici-



Some of the YCREA members who helped with the 13th annual Day of Caring Project are (Row 1, L to R): Jan Cerabona, Joan Warren, Shirley Jones, Esther Morrow, Pat Kennedy. (Row 2): Janie Bradstreet, Diane Zehner, and Bill Soucy.

sorting and sizing used clothing items that are made available to needy students, organizing shelves in the basement area for more storage of supplies, checking in and stamping new library

pated in the annual YCREA event for 13 years. She says of the annual statewide event, "It is amazing what we can do when we work together to make a difference for teachers and students in the schools in our counties.

"Many schools have been aware of what we retirees are doing and know we are there to help them."

"As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands—one for helping yourself, the other for helping others."

—Audrey Hepburn

Convention from Page 1

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.

The four breakout sessions from which you may choose one to attend are as follows:

Line Dancing with Jim and Lynn Lubas of Dover-Foxcroft. They are invited back this year by popular demand. Get moving, learn some basic steps, and have fun rocking and stepping forward and backward to the rhythm of the music.

Prison Advocacy with Jan Collins of Wilton is another very interesting, enlightening choice of volunteerism. Have you ever thought about the dear young children who are left to bear the stigma of having a parent in prison?

Jan Collins is a 26-year veteran high school science teacher with a Master's degree in Instructional Leadership and Earth Systems Science. After retirement from the classroom, Jan began a second career as Assistant Director of Maine Prisoner Advocacy Coalition when



her son was incarcerated at Maine State Prison.

The United States leads the world in incarceration. We have 5 percent of the world's population and 25 percent of the world's incarcerated population—more than seven times the rate of other developed nations. Why? How does incarceration affect education and how does education affect incarceration? The two are inextricably intertwined.

Most people who are incarcerated enter the prison system at a young age and almost half leave behind young children. As students these children will face additional challenges at home and in the classroom.

Many families are embarrassed to say why their parent(s) are not available for school events. Learn how we as retired educators can help them and their families as they navigate life with such a deep loss.

Planning for End-of-Life Decisions with John Nale of Waterville. The Elder Law Offices of John and Mark Nale are a law firm run by family, committed to helping families. For more than 20 years they have dedicated their lives to serving the legal needs of seniors in Maine.



Planning for the procedures that are inherent in our end-of-life decisions with Attorney John Nale of Waterville should prove vital to all of us as we advance in age. The Nale brothers specialize in caring for the legal and family options of

Maine's elderly. Their expertise includes long-term care options, accessing government benefits like MaineCare, and concerns about elder abuse or neglect.

Knowing that family is the ultimate relationship, John says, "Our holistic, 'person centered' approach requires us to look at the whole person and listen to what is really important to our clients. We incorporate respect, dignity, enhancement of quality of life, and self-determination as primary goals."

The World of the Wild will be presented by Earl Brechlin of Bar Harbor. He is a registered Maine guide and author of adventure guides and casual histories about Maine and New England.

A long-time journalist, Earl is the editor of the *Mount Desert Islander*, a weekly newspaper in Bar Harbor. He previously worked his way up from print shop employee to become editor of the *Bar Harbor Times*.



Earl's recent book is *Wild! Weird! Wonderful! Maine*.

This book is not just about the woods, waters, mountains, lobsters, and lighthouses that define Maine. From Kittery to Eastport and from Fort Kent to Monhegan, Maine is home to natural wonders, quirky characters, remarkable inventors, and legends.

He uses a multi-media approach interspersed with humor and anecdotes about different people and happenings all around the entire State of Maine. He studied, interviewed, and researched three years to assemble the information in this fascinating book. His wife Roxie is a retired kindergarten teacher.

The morning session will have speakers who will highlight our professional issues like pension and COLA. There will be time to take in our many vendors and exhibitors. Affiliates are asked to prepare a table to display highlights of their year.

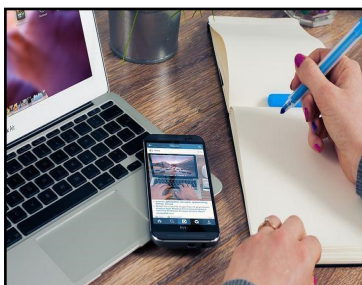
President-Elect Bob Jean of Rockland is in charge of our popular book exchange. Share books you've read and take home some to read. Children's books are also available—now that we have more time to read to our youngsters.

Corley Anne Byras of Augusta is in charge of our PAC silent auction and a 50/50. This PAC money pays for our members to attend NEA Convention during the summer—no dues from MEA-Retired go toward the NEA-Retired Convention.

Our day starts with coffee, tea, juice, fruit and Danish at 9 a.m. At noon a delicious buffet lunch is served. What a bargain for only \$20. Don't miss out on a great day of socialization, networking, and seeing colleagues and friends.

LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

We have more than 5,000 readers—there have to be many more stories out there! Opinions? Ideas? Suggestions? Deadline for the February *Clarion* is January 5. See Page 2 for submission.



Books for Swap



Once again tables will be set up at our MEA-Retired convention in Augusta for our **FREE** book swap. Bring books you have read and take books donated by others. It is a great way to expand your reading and clean out bookshelves. You do not have to bring books in order to take books.

Children's books will also be available. We always need new books to read to our grandchildren now that we are retired and have more free time to spend with family. For more information, contact our coordinator, Bob Jean, at 207-593-6597, or send an email to him at vegas04861@yahoo.com.

When Labor Day arrives, we retired educators still have that nervous excitement that comes with the beginning of a new school year.

Although we are happy to be retired, we do feel nostalgic at times—missing school, the interaction with colleagues, engagement with students. One way we have found to remain connected is to volunteer as story coaches for SpiritCorps.

We know you invited



SPIRIT SERIES

Kent Pierce and Lance Cromwell of SPIRIT SERIES, Maine, to address the MEA- Retired Board of Directors meeting in May. We also read the article on SpiritCorps in the August *Clarion*. We appreciate your help getting the word out. Despite your efforts, they have unfortunately only received one inquiry from our membership.

Our experiences as story coaches have been very valu-

able. It is meaningful and engaging. We're looking forward to returning to story coaching as the SpiritCorps 2022-23 program begins.

By sharing our participation with fellow retirees, we are hoping the following stories might inspire some to join the growing community of story coaches in Maine.

The growth of this program here and across the country is only limited by the number of volunteer story coaches who choose to participate in this valuable experience.

As a retired educator, I delight in not always knowing what day of the week it is. At times, I honestly wonder what else I might do to contribute to my community and be of use to others. Even though I am busy and enjoy retirement in multiple ways, I sensed something was missing. I wanted to do more—something both meaningful and satisfying.

Through SpiritCorps I clarified that missing component as students and their voices. As a volunteer story coach, I now have purposeful connections with students through their writing and speaking. In addition, there are numerous rewards from volunteer coaching with SpiritCorps. I now have an extended community.

As a story coach, I support classroom teachers in their efforts to develop writers by providing students with additional feedback on their stories. I am partnered with different grade levels for a wider perspective.

Story coaches meet the students where they are in the writing process and help to build confidence with authentic, positive reinforcement, encouragement, and thoughtful questions. The results are gratifying. If you are looking for a way to stay connected with students, teachers, educational trends and community through your own professional development, SpiritCorps may be just what you are looking for. It just might ignite the dormant writer in you!

—Betsy Lane

Yarmouth Educator/Administrator

Do "Back-to-School" ads and changing foliage make you nostalgic

for the rewards of working with students? I have been retired for five years, yet the school calendar remains a part of my routine. After a fun-filled summer in Maine, I long for more structure after Labor Day. Last year a friend and former colleague introduced me to SpiritCorps—a national writing program born from the COVID-19 pandemic. This volunteer-driven program serves as a community of support for student writers.

My friend has been a story coach for a couple of years and encouraged me to consider becoming a volunteer. She assured me that it is not time-consuming. It is remote, so you provide the feedback at a convenient time in your day. You only work with four students at a time, and the feedback is all positive. We aren't the teacher or the editor, but rather the mentors and encouragers of student writing.

I deliberated for a couple of months before signing on. What held me back? I was concerned about working with 7th through 10th graders as my background was with Grades K-4 students. While the remote aspect was appealing, what would it be like to provide feedback to a student I didn't know or couldn't see?

I was nervous about jumping into a commitment I might not be able to maintain. I met with two staff members who stressed the program's core value to help students find their voice in a purely supportive role. I watched the training videos and gradually decided to give-it-a-go.

I started last May for the final intensive project of the school year. I nervously awaited reading The Pitch. My

mentor Lance mentored me by reviewing my feedback before sending it to the student. His encouragement and advice increased my confidence. Since I only worked with four students at a time, it was not an overwhelming task. Once completed, I looked forward to reading the first draft, then the second draft. I connected to these students and realized I was truly getting to know them through their writing.

The stories were compelling. My task was to encourage and support the writer and to withhold judgment on spelling and grammar; that was the teacher's job. I thoroughly enjoyed reading and responding to the work. It brought me back to the joy of supporting student voices through writing. It was gratifying, and my heart, soul, and brain were invigorated.

The final presentation is a video of the student reading the piece. After three weeks, I finally saw the student! It was rewarding to see the video presentation, and I was proud of each student's growth.

SpiritCorps serves students by granting opportunities for adults like we retired educators to provide thoughtful feedback and celebrate their efforts. SpiritCorps has partnered with the State of Maine Department of Education and seeks to serve 12,500 students across the State of Maine in the next two years.

As the school year begins, I encourage you to consider volunteering your time—up to 15-20 hours throughout the school year—to teach, support and expect kids to do their best. That is where the fun begins!

—Ellen Honan, Retired

Yarmouth Teacher/Administrator

Retirees have the skills to help

By Patrice Baker, M.Ed.

Director of Prevention Programs

We're hoping more of our members will be looking for something very meaningful and rewarding in these free retirement days.

Awards, scholarships, and recognitions

By Hugh Keene, Chairperson
Legacy Committee

NEA-Retired Jack Kinnaman Scholarship

The NEA-Retired Jack Kinnaman Memorial Scholarship was created in memory of Jack Kinnaman, vice president and former Advisory Council member of NEA-Retired.

Jack represented NEA-Retired on The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education. If we want to give all of our students the leadership they deserve, we need to elect champions who will fight for our neighborhood public schools.

The NEA Fund for Children and Public Education is fueled by educators coming together to fight for real leaders at the federal and state level regardless of political party.

Jack was also involved in numerous active and retired local, state, and national association positions. He is most fondly remembered as NEA's *Cat in the Hat*.

Jack cared about students, especially those who were financially impacted and needed a helping hand, and it is his family's wish that the scholar-

ships created in Jack's honor go to such students.

Scholarships of \$2,500 will be awarded, and only students who are members of the NEA Aspiring Educator Program are eligible to apply. Information about the NEA Aspiring Educators Program is available here: <https://www.nea.org/about-nea/our-members/aspiring-educators>

The Jack Kinnaman Memorial Scholarship application submission timeline is open from January 1 to April 15—the final deadline for submitting the online application. It is available online at the NEA-Retired and MEA-Retired websites.

All of the following scholarship application items must be submitted together in one package consisting of the completed application cover page and the following documents:

(1) List of the NEA Aspiring Educators Program activities in which you participate at the local, state, and national level;

(2) Personal essay up to 200 words describing your NEA Aspiring Educators Program involvement on the local, state, and/or national level(s);

(3) A paragraph demonstrating financial need, with explanation on how this scholarship will help to complete a degree in teacher education;

(4) A copy of most recent transcript with a GPA of 2.5 or higher;

(5) Two letters of recommendation—one from a fac-

ulty member or NEA Aspiring Educators Program advisor and one from a non-relative

The scholarship application must be submitted as one package—application, letters of recommendation, and official university/college transcript.

The preferred method of submission is via email to RetiredAnnualMeeting@nea.org.

Packets may also be sent in the mail by April 15, 2023, to National Education Association, Attention: Jack Kinnaman Scholarship, 1201 16th St., NW, Suite 519, Washington, DC 20036.

MEA-Retired Sheehan Honor Grant Ritter Grants

MEA-Retired also offers a scholarship in memory of Anne Sheehan, a retired educator, a member of the MEA and MEA-Retired Board of Directors and MEA Representative Assembly.

Anne was also chairperson of the MEA Government Relations Committee for 15 years, a delegate to the NEA-RA, and a member of the NEA Resolutions Committee. Unfortunately, she passed very suddenly in 2009. Her family created a memorial fund honoring her long-term commitment to education, MEA, and political activities.

This "honor grant" in memory of Anne is for active teachers pursuing further education. Applicants must be full-time educators practicing in Maine and be en-

rolled in a humanities program leading to a graduate degree in the arts, sciences, or education.

The teacher must demonstrate financial need. Grants may cover expenses incurred in attaining advanced degrees.

Applications are distributed at the September Board meeting or emailed to affiliate presidents. They are also on the MEA and MEA-Retired websites and are available from all affiliate presidents. Questions may be sent to mghw79@gmail.com.

Applications must be submitted by February 1. A presentation will be made at our convention and annual meeting in Augusta on May 4.

MEA-Retired awards grants to affiliates up to \$300 from a bequest from Past President Jane Ritter. Monies must be designated to projects that make a difference for members with special needs.

Projects include providing transportation for retired educators to attend affiliate meetings, visiting shut-ins, sending flowers in the hospital, buying greeting cards and postage stamps, etc. Funds cannot be used for any typical and usual routine association business.

Our Legacy Committee will meet to determine which county affiliates submit projects that qualify to receive the funds. Ritter Grants will be presented to affiliates at our convention and annual meeting on May 4.

Ritter applications must be submitted by February 1 to me at 179 Cook St., Auburn, ME 04210.

Anthem reaches an agreement

In the October edition of *The Clarion*, I reported that the two parties had failed to reach an agreement, and I'm now pleased to inform you that effective November 15, 2022, Fore River Urology will be rejoining Anthem's provider network. If you have any questions regarding this announcement, please contact Anthem's customer service at the phone

number on the back of your ID card.

I also wanted to inform you that **IngenioRx, Anthem's Pharmacy Benefits Manager, is changing its name to CarelonRx effective January 1, 2023. As a result of this name change, Medicare Advantage members will receive a new ID card in the mail in December.** This name change will not im-

By Jennifer Kent, Executive Director
Maine Education Association Benefits Trust

impact your benefits and coverage or any manner in which you now fill your medications.

You will still be able to fill your prescriptions through home deliveries and specialty pharmacies, as well as at any retail pharmacy in the network. You will also not need new prescriptions for medications you are already taking.

Reading the article in the August *Clarion* about Gil and Anita Roy of Oakland who hosted exchange students resonated with me and our family. It brought back many pleasant memories of the eight foreign exchange students that my late wife Barbara and I hosted during a 16-year period starting in 1990.

Like the Roys, we knew nothing about hosting foreign exchange students until we received a call from Caribou High School looking for a family to host a female student from Argentina.

After some initial discussion with our two daughters, we agreed to invite her to live in our home for the remainder of the school year. Solange became part of our family.

Because she was here for a



(L to R): Marianne Birchier of Switzerland; Tanner and BJ Kopishke (Bob and Barb's grandson and daughter) of Liberty, and Jessie Bircher.

short exchange of six months and had already been here for three months with another family, our initial hosting experience was short but most memorable.

One month into the next school year, we once again received a call from Caribou High School looking for a family to host a female student from the Netherlands. She would be here for the entire school year. After discussion and agreement, we welcomed

Maureen (Mo).

Mo needed a little "tough love" during the first couple of months she was with us but quickly "got her act together." We had another memorable experience.

A year went by, and my wife and I decided we would like to host another student. This time, we started at the beginning of the hosting process by submitting an application to American Field Service (AFS).

Just after school opened, we welcomed Lisa from Italy into the family for the entire school year. It was another exciting and memorable experience. Our next students were Mili from Argentina, Ornpawee (Oumpa) from Thailand, and Marianne from Switzerland.

After making the decision to host one more, we then decided to host a boy. We had raised two daughters and all of our exchange students had been girls. So after a year without a student, we welcomed Suphasit (Mac) from Thailand. Like our previous experiences, hosting Mac was extremely memorable.

The only eye-opener was our food bill. Unlike our female students, Mac could really put away the food.

Like the Roys in the August *Clarion*, we also provided extensive travel experiences for most of our exchange students—to Florida, New York City, and Washington, DC. We took Mac to Boston because he wanted to see Harvard University.

With the exception of Boston, the trips were made easier because we have/had family in those areas. To

this day, we are in contact with all of our "kids" through Facebook, text messages, and the occasional phone call.

Some have traveled to visit us—one of them on multiple occasions. In addition, Lisa did her first year of college at the University of Maine at Presque Isle which is only 12 miles from where we lived in Caribou.

Oumpa came to the U.S. to do her graduate work at George Washington University in Washington, DC. My wife and I traveled to Europe twice to visit our European "kids" and their families. Needless to say, we were treated like royalty. We also got to see their countries better than any professional tour could do.

Sadly, we never made it to Argentina and Thailand. Our oldest daughter spent one of her college summer vacations in the Netherlands living with Maureen and her family. She worked as an au pair for an American couple for one month before spending the remainder of her time serving in a restaurant in Valkenberg.

Our youngest daughter, after completing a college semester abroad at Oxford Brooks University in England, traveled with a friend through Europe visiting France, Spain, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands.

Opening hearts and home

By Bob Souther
MEA-Retired Treasurer

During their travels, they visited with Lisa in Italy and Maureen in the Netherlands. After returning to the states and starting her teaching career, she traveled to Argentina to visit our South American "kids."

Hosting foreign exchange students has provided memorable experiences and opportunities we would not otherwise have had. It has enhanced the lives of our daughters and provided many opportunities for travel and meaningful connections with young people in other countries.

Truly, I would strongly recommend hosting foreign students. The mutual lessons and camaraderie and love that are cultivated among family members are unmatched anywhere else.

As you read Gil's story in the August *Clarion*, our "empty nests" may not be for everyone. We may still want to provide homes and love and opportunities for students. Might this be for you as well?

PAC auction at 2023 convention!

Will you provide some items?

Some great projects for the slower winter months:

Knit? Sew? Crochet? Woodworking?

Metal creations? Dishes? Antiques?

Bake some goodies? Make some unique crafts?

We will also have a 50-50 raffle.

Contact Corley Anne Byras, Auction Chairperson
207-213-6880 or corleybyras@gmail.com

MEA Benefits Trust updates

By Faith Campbell
MEA Benefits Trustee

I hope you have enjoyed this year's wonderfully mild autumn weather. I found it enjoyable to be able to admire the colorful foliage while taking some longer than usual walks and hikes.

It was a boost to record and review my activity levels on my health-related app. My challenge is to continue during the winter months.

Luckily, Trust members can check on our website www.meabt.org under the Wellness link to find some great suggestions. Our Community Wellness Director Mi-

chael Booth and his staff are at your service to answer questions and offer recommendations.

As you know, we learned in early October that Fore River Urology and Anthem of Maine have resolved their contract dispute effective November 14. It is our understanding that Fore River will adjust bills for services provided during the interim contract period.

Members who have a billing question may contact Anthem directly by using the information on the back of the card. If a concern still exists, inquiries may be directed to the Benefits Trust at www.meabt.org or 1-888-622-4418.

I recently participated in the three-day annual International Foundation of Employee Benefits Plans conference. This conference is part of my ongoing training which is required to be a MEABT Trustee. Many

sessions discussed new federal legislation such as the "No Surprises Act" which attempts to limit out-of-network patient costs including air ambulances. I found the website www.cms.gov to have several helpful fact sheets pertaining to this legislation.

Mental health care parity regulations and Medicare's increased ability to negotiate

drug prices were other major convention topics. I was introduced to and intrigued by the concept of Virtual Primary Care (VPC) which differs from many telehealth programs.

In this program the patient is assigned a primary care health provider who manages their health care including preventive, follow up, referrals, etc.

Membership, from Page 16

Maine.

One issue is that higher education locals are organized differently than K-12 locals. For example, In the University of Maine System, AFUM, the local for higher education faculty, covers seven different universities and cooperative extension service program retirees.

Contracts are negotiated statewide for the seven universities with multiple campuses under one faculty contract. A similar organization structure exists for professional staff (UMPSA) and for clerical staff (ACSUM).

In the Maine Community College System, there is a statewide union for faculty, and another for professional, administrative and clerical staff.

However, when it comes to retirees from those locals, the one local affiliate, Higher Education Association Retired (HEAR) is supposed to represent all the retirees and their varied interests.

Our retirement systems and our healthcare systems are completely different from those of public educators in K-12, but they also differ among themselves.

Susan Feiner, in her role as president of HEAR, is

working with the officers and members to try to address this issue. I congratulate them on their efforts, and I hope that an overarching plan can be formulated so that all the retired educators across higher education are represented and their issues addressed.

I want to remind everyone that the most effective recruitment tool is always asking a former colleague to join your association.

Besides wanting to be part of a union for protection of our retirement and healthcare benefits, some are interested in the social gatherings our affiliates organize.

Most are attracted to service opportunities in their communities and local schools. Of course, legislative lobbying activities and decisions by our legislators that directly impact our pensions and insurances are always of utmost importance.

Invite others to share in the fun and remind them that NEA and NEA-Retired represent our interests at the national level. MEA and MEA-Retired represent our interests at the state level.

Our local affiliates represent our local interests of service and volunteerism and socialization. All organizations are important, and all work in cooperation with each other.

A great Christmas gift for retiring educators.....membership dues!

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 gives 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 available in the App Store and on Google Play. Check it out today! See the resources.

Download the MEA App Today!

Scan the QR code for the Apple App Store.



NEA-Retired Executive Council update

By Bobbi Margo
Communications Committee

The NEA-R Executive Council met recently in person at the NEA Building in Washington D.C. Old Business consisted of requested changes to the “Spirit of Membership” Award by Membership Chair Tom Wellman.

Feedback from the Retired Annual Meeting (RAM) was discussed. The 2022 NEA-Retired elections went well as reported by Elections Chairperson and Parliamentarian Steve Gorrie.

The Rules for the hybrid configuration worked well, especially when returning to live speeches and no nominations allowed at the RAM.

The fourth version of the election rules will be constructed due to the expected return to all in-person at the 2023 RAM and RA. This upcoming version will be based on the updated 2019

version including some items from 2021 and 2022.

Positions open for the 2023 elections are as follows:

NEA-Retired President (three-year term); Executive Council

(two positions—three year terms);

NEA Board of Directors (two positions—three-year terms);

Alternate (two positions—three-year terms); Resolutions Committee (six positions—one-year terms);

The 2023 dates of meetings on our calendar are as follows::

February 15-17—Executive Council (Virtual);

March 10-12—NEA Summit. Location TBA;

March 12-14—NEA-Retired Conference. Location TBA;

May 7-9—(tentative) Spring Executive Council .

Location TBA;

June 29-30—NEA-Retired Annual Meeting in

Orlando, Florida;

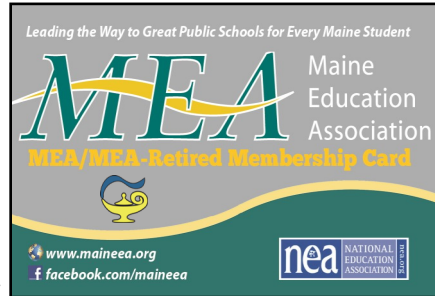
July 2-6—NEA-RA in Orlando, Florida.

NEA officers virtually greeted the Executive Council with legislative, CORAL, PAC, grants, and Kinnaman reports and updates.

The Council had training sessions on guidelines, mentoring of state retired presi-

dents, officer training, and PAC captain guidelines.

The three days of meetings ended with a continuation of strategic planning conducted by Cory Wofford. This strategic planning program will continue in the Council meetings throughout the next several years. Much will be done to ensure the work of NEA-Retired will continue in the most effective, professional ways possible.



Great Christmas gifts for retired educator friends! Order while supplies last!

Maine Educator



- Long-sleeved Denim Shirts @ \$47
- Short-sleeved Denim Shirts @ \$42
- Navy Blue Hats @ \$12
- Red, Iris Blue Tee Shirts @ \$23
- Red, Ultramarine Golf Shirts @ \$37
- Lapel Pins @ \$10

Prices include tax and postage/handling

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Questions? Contact Rena Kearney at rkearney@ainop.com or 207-429-9041. Prices include tax and postage/handling.

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

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



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See Page 1



Membership Matters: Recommitment to reaching out

*By Roger Roy, Chair
Membership Committee*

As we contemplate the arrival of 2023, we need to recommit ourselves to maintaining and serving our current members and to inviting newly retired educators to join our ranks.

MEA President Grace Leavitt recently assembled a task force to focus on mem-

bership across all categories of our membership: NEA, MEA, NEA-Retired, MEA-Retired, and our local affiliates. NEA is implementing a new program known as Collaboration of Retired and Active Leadership (CORAL) whose goal is to have retired educators work with active educators to increase membership in all our units.

While Maine was not successful in winning one of ten grants offered nationally, the task force is still determined to move forward with plans to achieve our goal of membership increases across all our categories of members.

What piqued my interest the most was the recognition that higher education retirees have not received the recog-

niton so greatly deserved. Despite occasional mention in the past, higher education is finally being recognized as a category that has great

potential for membership increases across the college system throughout the State of

See Membership, Page 14

Give a Gift

NEA: \$35
MEA: \$29
MEA-Retired: \$15
Affiliate: Dues vary

Join us Today!!

MEA-Retired Membership

You did it!
Congratulations

Bob Jean, NEA PAC Captain

Ten states met or exceeded the 4% challenge to increase NEA PAC Fund giving and the number of donors for 2021-2022
MEA-Retired is one of those ten states!

