



THE CLARION

December 2023

The Newsletter for Retired Educators
Maine Education Association Retired Vol. 135, No. 2

72nd MEA-Retired
Annual Meeting
and
Convention

May 2, 2024

“We Shine for Everyone!”

From our President



Bob Jean

Horrific.
Senseless.
Surreal.

Our beloved Lewiston, Maine, has now joined the list of far too many communities across the country who have experienced the terror and brutal loss of life inflicted by a gunman.

The terror did not end with the shootings. The situation was still volatile as law enforcement continued to search the area for two days. Those in the impact area continued to shelter in place and wait.

Unless we were there, we can't even begin to imagine the emotions they must have been feeling. While many Mainers will slowly heal and this will become a distant memory for them, the people of Lewiston-Auburn and sur-

rounding towns will never forget.

How could they? The emotional scars will remain forever.

Some of us attended a leadership meeting on the morning of the 26th. We did some good work, but our minds were on our friends, relatives, and MEA-Retired colleagues in Lewiston-Auburn and surrounding communities.

Of course, we were also thinking about the victims and the families of the 18 murdered and numerous others injured.

On the drive to the meeting I could see many blank faces on drivers I met coming toward me. An air of

See Our President, Page 6

Dental enrollment season opens

Open season for dental coverage with Northeast Delta Dental will be November 1, thru December 15, 2023, for all MEA/NEA-Retired/MEA-Retired members.

If you are currently enrolled as a unified MEA-Retired member, your renewal will be automatic. The coverage will become effective February 1, 2024.

Current rates are \$56.38/single, \$96.04/two-person, and \$151.23/per family. Rate change information will be sent to members at the beginning of November.

Questions? Contact Lisa Collins: lcollins@mainecea.org or call 207-888-3804.

Don't miss out!

By Rheba Michaud, Chairperson
Convention Committee

Be ready for a new and improved MEA-Retired Convention and Annual Meeting on May 2. Doors will open at 8:30 at which time attendees may enjoy a light brunch, view vendors, check out affiliate tables, and visit with friends and colleagues.

Our theme is “We Shine for Everyone”. Decorations and affiliate display tables will complement the theme.

Our keynote speaker is Mark Holmquist, the Chief of Police in Scarborough since December 2021. Prior to

See 2024 Convention, Page 14

We need delegates! YOU?

MEA-RA: 4 delegates and 9 alternates
NEA-Retired Annual Meeting/NEA-RA: 4 delegates

By Larry Given, Treasurer
Kennebec Ret. Educ. Assoc.

MEA-RA

Maine Education Association Retired has 11 delegate seats at the MEA Representative Assembly held on May 18-19, 2024. The president and president-elect are automatic delegates to the MEA-RA.

Five of the other delegates will be returning—we need to elect four more to have a full contingency. Delegates are elected to three-year terms. All expenses are paid, and mileage to the MEA-RA will be reimbursed.

Candidates must be “unified” members which means one must be a member of MEA, MEA-Retired, and NEA-Retired.

The MEA Bylaws, also found on the website Governance Documents - Maine

See Delegates, Page 3



Leadership training a success

MEA-Retired President Robert Jean opened the recent leadership training with a moment of silence for the families and friends of the individuals who lost their lives and those injured in the mass shootings in Lewiston the night before.

People were asked to keep our retirees and the communities of Lewiston, Auburn, and Lisbon in their thoughts and prayers as they sheltered in place per order of law enforcement.

MEA Deputy Executive Director Krystyna Dzialo was the keynote speaker. She indicated three areas on which to focus: membership, communication, and connections with members upon their retirement. Superinten-

dent offices are a source for information about educators who are considering retiring.

MEA and MEA-Retired would be able to provide membership forms, communicate the dates of the pre-

See Training, Page 5

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“promoting the economic, professional, and social welfare of retired educators”

Pension Updates



By Crystal Ward, Chairperson
Legislative Committee

Hello MEA- Retired,

The Maine Legislature will begin their short session in January 2024. Several bills were carried over from the last session and will be considered at this time. The major bill that critically impacts retirees is LD 70:

An Act to Eliminate the Cap on Retirement Benefits for State Employees and Teachers to Which a Cost-of-Living Adjustment Is Made.

In summary, this bill provides that cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) increases for retired state employees and educators and their beneficiaries apply to a retiree's entire retirement benefit instead of only to the first \$24,186.25 of the retirement

benefit.

This would completely fix the mess made in 2011 and return to the original law that said COLA's would apply to the whole pension amount.

Admittedly, to completely fix this terrible mess would be costly, but **beginning to fix** the mess is possible. A definitive plan, process, and steps must be started now. Kicking the can down the road must stop and is not a plan.

As the old saying goes, "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time!"

Now is the time to start biting the big, old, destructive 2011 elephant! We need to start planning NOW to develop a plan and be ready to implement when the issue arises in 2024.

Let me explain how current and future retirees have been and continue to be harmed by the 2011 changes. From the 1960's to 2011, every retiree was promised a pension based on a formula plus a yearly COLA up to 4 percent based on the federal Consumer Price Index (CPI) that was current each year.

In order to reap the pension and benefits of this promised annual COLA

when we retired, we active educators were required to pay from 4 percent to 7+ percent from our paychecks to MainePERS. The COLA we paid in advance was to help maintain our incremental buying power as prices in the economy (inflation rate) would be expected to go up.

The implementation of that formula was clear to all, and the promise was clear and easy to understand. It was repeated to us often. That process worked very, very well.

Pension earned plus COLA would work every year. Our buying power and pensions were to keep up with inflation. This is the plan we were promised and it worked very well. It enabled our retirees to live the lifestyle for which they worked all those years.

Everyone did their part, and the promised plan worked well--until 2011.

In 2011, the State of Maine Legislature changed the COLA law. The NEW law said we retirees would no longer receive a COLA on our whole pension amount every year!

No!

Instead, we would receive only "up to 3 percent," and it would be computed on

a base of only \$20,000 and not on our entire pension amount.

The law was changed once to allow for the COLA amount to be compounded and added to the base, which is now 24,911.84.

By the way anyone whose annual pension is at or below this base amount receives a COLA on the whole pension now.

Every year a retiree **does not receive the COLA on**

See Pension Update, Page 6



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

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

We pay 60 cents for every *Clarion* returned due to "incorrect address." Please send address changes to Lisa Collins at 800-281-3191, Ext. 2400 or 207-888-3856 or via email at lcollins@maineea.org.

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NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA RA

July 1—July 7, 2024
Philadelphia, PA

June 30—July 6, 2025
Portland, OR

July 1—July 7, 2026
Denver, CO

June 29—July 5, 2027
Indianapolis, IN



MEA-Retired is here for you!

December 4, 2023, 9 a.m.
Executive Committee
MEA Headquarters, Augusta

March 4, 2024, 9 a.m.
Executive Committee
MEA Headquarters, Augusta

April 1, 2024, 9 a.m.
Board of Directors Meeting
Best Western Hotel, Waterville

Meet/greet begin at 9 a.m.
Meetings begin at 9:30 a.m.

Contact affiliate leaders
with ideas and concerns.

MEA-Retired Delegates

MEA-RA
May 18-19, 2024
We need 4 delegates
and 9 alternates

**NEA-Retired Annual
Meeting and NEA-RA**
July 1-7, 2024
We need 4 delegates

Will you consider?

Delegates, from Page 1

Education Association (maineea.org), specify the following: "Delegates representing retired members shall be apportioned in accordance with the ratio of one (1) delegate per five hundred (500) members or major portion thereof."

As of 8/31, MEA-Retired's membership count was 5,339. Remaining MEA-Retired delegates and term expiration years are as follows:

Bo Zabierek and Bob Jean (April 2025); Barbara Bricker, Julie Gomez, Belinda Micucci, and Ben Paradis (April 2026); Molly Smith (April 2027).

We need to elect four delegates—each having three-year terms.

In addition to the delegate vacancies, we also have 9 of the 11 alternate delegate positions open. Two alternates will be returning, so the nine vacancies align as follows: three 3-year terms; three 2-year terms; and three 1-year terms.

We have two returning alternates: Phil Gonyar and Roger Roy (April 2026)

Just a note of explanation: The term of a delegate expires in April before the MEA-RA usually held in May.

If there is ever a situation where MEA needs to call a special meeting, the "current" delegates (who served in the most recent May MEA-RA) are then eligible and called upon to attend any meeting up until April 30.

We need unified members to serve as a delegate or an alternate. Will you give these opportunities some thought and fill a seat. See information on Page 16 about dues for these three memberships.

Interested candidates should submit the "Notice of Intent" located at www.mainea.org/mea-elections by January 19, 2024. If more delegate candidates file than the number of positions, an election will be held.

NEA-Retired Meeting NEA-RA

Additionally, we have six delegate seats to the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA Representative Assembly in Philadelphia, PA, July 1-7, 2024.

All meals, travel, and lodging expenses are paid.

The president and president-elect shall serve as elected delegates to the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and the NEA-RA.

The other four delegate seats are one-year terms open to our MEA-Retired unified members. Will you consider serving?

Interested candidates should submit the "Notice of Intent" form located at www.mainea.org/mea-elections by January 19, 2024.

If more candidates file than the number of positions, an election will be held. Candidates must be "unified" members. Unified means one must be a member of MEA, MEA-Retired, and NEA-Retired.

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@maineea.org.

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

The first two pre-retirement seminars were held on October 17 & 18 and 24 & 25. Two hundred MEA members pre-registered for each session, and four more seminars will be held this winter.

President Bob Jean created the Zoom link and monitored the meetings. He welcomed the attendees and gave a review of our charge and a reminder that union membership should continue right into retirement.

He then introduced me as committee chairperson and I reviewed the benefits of the four levels of membership available to retirees and urged unified membership.

I reminded them that less than \$9 would be deducted from their monthly pension checks upon retirement. I also informed them about the benefits of joining an affiliate

Seminars prepare for retirement

By Bo Zabierek, Chairperson
Pre-Retirement Committee

as well.

Our featured presentation for the evening was presented by Sharon Beaulieu of MEA Benefits Trust. She described the health insurance options offered by Anthem through the Medicare Advantage plan and dental through Northeast Delta Dental.

She answered questions and sent individual worksheets for each participant

See Pre-Retirement, Page 13

Pre-Retirement seminars slated

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

WINTER 2024 SEMINARS

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

Interested active educators who are MEA members are invited to attend and must pre-register—contact Lisa Collins at lcollins@maineea.org.

Further information may be obtained from
Pre-Retirement Committee Chairperson
Bo Zabierek at 207-365-4329 or bozabierek@gmail.com





By Susan Grondin, Chairperson
Community Participation Com.

It was 1994. I had been elected again to represent educators at the annual National Education Association Representative Assembly in New Orleans.

I received a phone call a couple of weeks before the meeting date. "Hi Sue? My name is Vicki Amoroso from Rumford. I was wondering if



L to R: Peg Newberg of Harpswell and Larry Given of Litchfield congratulated Pearl Mack of Chicago as the winner of our Maine basket of goodies at a recent NEA-Retired auction. The 2018 RA was held in Washington, DC. (File photo)

you would like to room together in New Orleans for the NEA RA?"

That was the start of a great friendship that has lasted almost 30 years. For at least 22 years, Vicki and I were

RA: Experience like no other...very rewarding!

delegates to the NEA-RA. We spent many hours on the floor of convention centers participating in the democratic process of governing the NEA and making decisions for our educator colleagues in all 50 states.

The meeting over the Fourth of July and our desire to be delegates meant missing many family gatherings and birthdays. However, today, I would do it again. The Maine educators, leaders and MEA staff I met through the years impressed me with their dedication to supporting the causes and issues facing all educators.

The experience and excitement never waned, and the opportunity to represent educators at the national level "fed my soul."

We were in attendance for many important decisions. By far, one of the most memorable is the critical influence Maine delegates made in persuading the NEA delegates to vote in the affirmative to take action on the Government Pension Offset and Windfall Elimination Provision (GPO/WEP).

These Social Security provisions penalize educators hired prior to 1984 by reducing the amount of one's pension if you contributed to Social Security and qualify for benefits. Other groups who have public jobs like law enforcement and firefighters to name a few, are also impacted.

Individuals and spouses in 15 states are penalized for working in a non-Social Security position. These federal laws extend to spousal and survivor benefits. Intended to assist individuals with their pension, the laws have done the opposite.

Many educators can attest to a possible two-thirds reduction in their pension depending upon individual circumstances.

Sue Shaw presented this situation to MEA for action. She encouraged contacting our representatives in Congress, wrote letters and articles outlining the provisions of the law and she spoke to many groups to inform people of the impact on their pension.

As a result, MEA leadership decided to bring this issue before the NEA-RA for support to take the necessary steps to repeal GPO/WEP.

Maine delegates strategized as to how we could persuade large states, like California with over 1,000 delegates, as well as other states impacted to join us in

our desire to begin the conversation at the federal level.

Each Maine delegate was assigned a state contact and our role was to present our position to repeal the impact of the GPO/WEP.

Talking points were composed, and we started lobbying the other states. We asked each state president to speak with their delegates and to support our new business item.

A formal request known as a "New Business Item" (NBI) was submitted at the NEA-RA.

We requested that NEA consider the impact on our members and research the steps to be taken for Congress to repeal GPO and WEP. Passage of the NBI rested on the support of the majority of vot-

See Delegate, Page 5

News Flash!

SS progress underway We just learned that HR82 Social Security Fairness Act of 2023 was introduced in the U. S. House by Congressman Garret Graves of Louisiana on January 9, 2023. The bill is "To amend Title II of the Social Security Act to repeal the Government pension offset and windfall elimination provisions." It has 294 co-sponsors in the House.

Additionally, the comparable bill in the U.S. Senate, S597, has the same exact wording as HR82. This bill was introduced in the U. S. Senate by Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio on March 1, 2023. The bill has 45 co-sponsors.

Will you take a few minutes to contact our congressional delegates to encourage them to continue advocating for the passage of these two critically important bills. See email contact information below for our congressional delegates. If you do not have a computer, send a handwritten letter.

Rep. Chellie Pingree (District 1): 354 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515 (202) 225-6116
<https://pingree.house.gov/contact/contactform.htm>

Rep. Jared Golden (District 2): 1710 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515 (202) 225-6306
https://golden.house.gov/address_authentication?form=/contact

Sen. Angus King (District 1): 133 Hart Building, Washington, DC 20510 (202) 224-5344
<https://www.king.senate.gov/contact>

Sen. Susan Collins (District 2): 413 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510 (202) 224-2523
<https://www.collins.senate.gov/contact/email-senator-collins/form>

Training, from Page 1

retirement sessions, and collaborate with a district to offer programs for actives as they approach retirement.

Local association leaders are another important source for communicating with our actives. They can reach out to staffs and distribute flyers, brochures, and invite educators to an association meeting.

UNISERV directors would be able to guide Association leaders in determining what types of programs would be of interest to our active educators and explain the role of a UNISERV director. Krystyna mentioned several activities that have been successful such as the "Annual Membership Picnic."

As educators leave the profession

After Krystyna's presentation, the attendees participated in a question/answer/sharing session that addressed membership and programs. A key question was why did you join MEA and then MEA-Retired? Responses included an advertisement to join, friend recruitment, insurance and benefit protection, legal protections, desire to be involved with one's professional organization, advocacy, fellowship, and community participation.

Affiliates have been successful at recognizing new members and reaching out to veteran members. A brainstorm session listed successful ideas to interact with our members: free lunches for new members, membership certificates, one year dues paid for MEA-Retired, a

individuals who will assist members as issues arise.

Attendees were asked about programs for affiliate meetings. There were numerous ideas such as supporting Wreaths across America, Meals on Wheels, and college scholarships. Silent auctions, author visits, Christmas craft making, sing-alongs, musical entertainment, and individuals sharing travel experiences have been well received by MEA-Retired members.

As the day ended, an anonymous survey was distributed. Attendees indicated the success of the leadership training day.

Affiliate leaders and MEA-Retired leadership intend to incorporate many of the ideas presented today into our ongoing strategic plan to implement best practices. Everyone acknowledges the importance of uniting and collaborating with other leaders to capture what is important to our members.

Roberta Morrill of Windham is president of Cumberland Country Retired Educators Association. She commented on the day: "Our speaker gave us some very interesting information, and it was very beneficial to share affiliate ideas with those sitting at my table. It would be helpful to share ideas more often."

Linda Sprague of Belgrade is president of Kennebec Retired Educators Association. She agreed, "The meeting was informative and many ideas were discussed on ways to increase membership. The brainstorming in our small groups was helpful and fun, as we shared ideas for programs for our monthly meetings."

The leadership training day is usually held in the fall every other year when a new president is installed at the May annual meeting.

Bob Jean, Molly Smith, Jane Conroy, and Susan Grondin contributed to the contents of this article.



MEA-Retired leaders met in Waterville for the biennial leadership training. MEA Deputy Executive Director Krystyna Dzialo was the keynote speaker in the morning session.

mid-year or at the end of a school year, contact via email or mail can be challenging.

Connecting active educators with MEA and MEA-Retired will continue to be a goal of both Associations. Krystyna also explained the relationship between MEA and MEA-Retired and how we support each other.

President's letter listing programs for meetings, personal contact, cards for birthdays, get well or congratulations, publishing a newsletter, and an affiliate website.

Resources for our retirees were discussed: MEA Benefits Trust and MainepERS. MEA-Retired, and MEA can provide answers to questions or suggest

Delegate, from Page 4

ing delegates in attendance at the nationwide assembly.

MEA President Idella Harter spoke to the NEA-RA Assembly when the NBI came up for a vote. Despite opposing voices, the NBI passed and was an item to be addressed by NEA. Admittedly, the cost of repealing these laws has been the major hurdle over the years. Today, NEA is still seeking Congressional support and making some headway. Our members, active and retired, frequently contact our representatives in Congress requesting

their support for a repeal.

As for Vicki and my 30-year friendship, we might never have discovered our common interests and enjoyment in each other's company had it not been for the MEA and NEA. We were fortunate to travel to many cities and to meet hundreds of people by attending many NEA-RA's.

Have you considered stepping up to represent MEA-Retired in the state and/or national representative assemblies? There are four openings for the NEA-RA roster of delegates held at the end of June and the beginning of July and four

openings to the MEA-RA held in South Portland in May.

YOU could fill a vacancy and have an experience of a lifetime. It is not too late to join our group of 2024 delegates who are headed to renowned, historic Philadelphia! The application process can be accessed at MEA's website: maineea.org. The deadline to submit your bio and candidate statement is **January 19, 2024**.

Mark your calendar and add a reminder on your Smartphone to obtain a form and register to be a delegate. You are needed. As I did, you may just be on the brink of a most treasured friendship.

Pension update, from Page 2

their **WHOLE PENSION AMOUNT** as they were promised. Consequently, they fall behind! Their cost of living does not keep up with inflation. They made plans to retire in good faith, and now the quality of life is exacerbated by lies!

They were promised one set of retirement guidelines and have now been forced to live under a whole different set of financially debilitating rules.

They believed the promises they were told! They didn't realize that when they made plans to retire that they would be forced into such a disadvantaged lifestyle

Our pensions have decreased every year and are well below the amount they

would and should have been—if the promise had been kept! Yet, inflation continues to fluctuate and increase well beyond the “up to 3 percent!”

Year after year of going behind results in a retiree losing **thousands** of dollars.

This is a compounding math problem!! Think about it for a moment. You worked for 35 years or more with the belief that if you paid into MainePERS, you would receive a pension PLUS a COLA on that pension amount every year. Many people planned for retirement based on this information.

From 2011 to 2024, retirees received LESS-LESS-LESS. Most current retiree pensions are thousands of dollars less than they would

have been under the original law. This hurts everyone in MainePERS whose pension amounts are more than the base amount.

DO NOT BE FOOLED!

When MainePERS says we will be getting a 3 percent COLA, keep in mind that it means only on the first \$24,911.84 of your pension! Any pension amount over that figure receives 0 COLA percent.

PLEASE contact your State of Maine representatives, senators, and Governor Mills as well. Please send them your stories as to how you were promised one “retirement pension plus annual COLA” plan and are now forced to live under a whole different set of guidelines that greatly hurts all of us in so many ways!

Let me ask you this question: Have you had to reduce your grocery bill? Have you cut your prescription pills in half because the entire cost is now too prohibitive?

Have you missed your children or grandchildren's special events out of state because travel expenses are now used to heat your home and pay electricity?

Have you had to cancel subscriptions? Are you having to use savings or CD's to pay your regular monthly bills? Are you forced to live a retirement for which you were not prepared?

Our politicians need to know how greatly 12 years of reduced and/or NO COLA benefit have created unimaginable hardships and severely restricted the bare necessities of life.

Our President, from Page 1

quiet reflection ruled the day.

I stopped at a busy convenience store for gas and coffee. The customers in the long line were patient and kind. As I pulled out some cash to pay for the coffee, the cashier said, “I'm not charging for coffee today.”

At our meeting place I asked the man-

ager about the policy on leftover food if we had low attendance. She said, “There are no policies today.”

It was one of those times when people understand how fragile our world can be and it softens them up as they think about what's really important in life.

Why can't this be the norm?

Why can't we sustain this?

Why does it take an evil, atrocious act of brutal violence or a devastating disaster to bring out the best in some

individuals?

We feel helplessness in times such as these. There isn't much we can do to console the citizens most impacted by this heinous act.

Here is what we can offer: Compassion. Love. Hope.

Stay strong, Lewiston, Auburn, and surrounding towns. With our heavy, loving, compassionate hearts, MEA-Retired is here for you and wish you the best as you begin your healing journey to a life that has changed forever!

Help is available

Are you or others you know experiencing PTSD, stress, or anxiety? Do you need a caring listener who could provide some comfort and coping strategies? 988 is a free and confidential crisis hotline that is available 24/7 for people in distress.

Although the hotline does deal with suicide prevention, it is also there to provide resources to anyone dealing with grief, trauma, and any type of mental health concern. 988 is there when you need it.

Submitted by Priscilla McFarland
Franklin County
Retired Educators Association

*Good afternoon, fellow retirees:
I am writing about the recent events that took place in Lewiston, Maine. As a member of the Androscoggin Retired Educators Association, I am only reflecting on my personal experience as an educator who lives within five miles.*

When I think about the tragedy that took place in Lewiston, I feel that sudden sense of loss that everyone experienced. Family, loved ones, friends and neighbors—it affected us all.

On that evening, I felt immediate panic, worried about what happened and sure that people I knew might have been hurt. As more information was released and I recognized names of people who went to my school, I was de-

pressed and melancholic.

Memories of those students have continued to bring smiles and tears. When I saw the number of posts from students in our communities, I recognized the magnitude of this tragedy. Realizing how much I was affected, I was overcome with sadness, thinking of those families and close friends who were languishing in grief.

In an instant our local communities have changed forever. We have felt tremendous support from everywhere, but over time we will be left with a future that feels very different.

Thank you to everyone for your support!

David Wing, Retired Principal/Coach
Oak Hill High School & Maranacook

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.

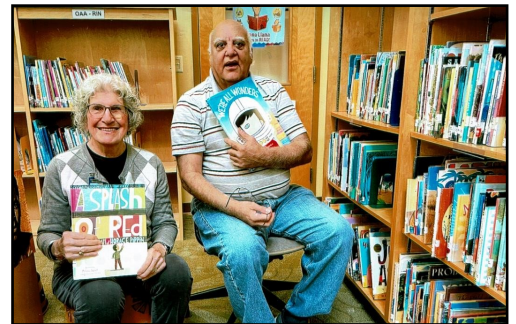
our chosen school on October 10, 2023 following their Harvest Break.

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.

See Day of Caring, Page 8

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.

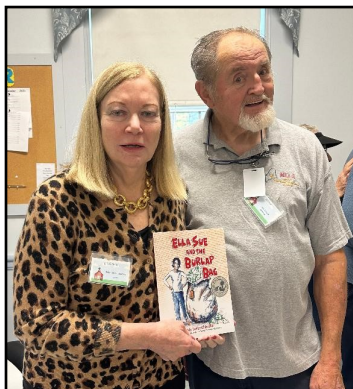


Debbie Wagg of Bowdoin is a retired ESP and is an active member of MCREA

See Day of Caring, Page 9

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.

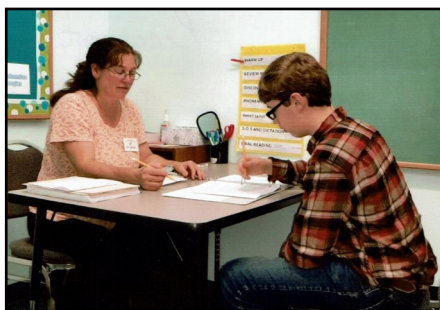
and Elaine Lagueux—whose enthusiasm was infectious. The books we select for our “Maine Books for Maine Kids” project are written by authors who have strong ties to Maine and who write about subjects of interest for the children of Maine. As retired educators, we feel a strong sense of pride in providing 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 New-est 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.

See Day of Caring, Page 10

Day of Caring, from Page 9



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; Narragagus 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.

Volunteer

As we continue helping
help our schools and

Merry
Christmas
December 25

**FREE
Coffee Socials**

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Partnership for
Caring**

Retired educators remain eligible to participate in the "Partnership for Caring" financial assistance program. The criteria reads: "MEA will assist local affiliates to meet exigent expenses of an unpredictable nature incurred by members or their immediate families. Specifically, the MEA will match, dollar-for-dollar, up to \$1,500 in contributions raised by a local affiliate or combination of affiliates to meet such expenses."

When an affiliate raises funds to assist a needy unified member to help with catastrophic circumstances (fire, flood serious health diagnoses, etc.), MEA will match the raised amount up to \$1,500. An application is posted on our MEA-Retired website and Facebook page.

A well-deserved accolade for a marvel of a man

Longtime People Plus member Claude Bonang got a big surprise last month when he showed up to perform at a Brunswick Rotary lunchtime meeting.

When he tried to take the stage to play music with his beloved spoons, rhythm bones, and musical saw, he was asked, “Hold on for a minute!”

What followed was a standing ovation for Claude as he was given the Rotary Club’s “Paul Harris Award” for community service and generosity.

The 93-year-old educator, historian, author, musician, artist, gelato scooper extraordinaire, and YouTube star admits he was stunned.

For 32 years, Claude taught biology at Brunswick High School, where his enthu-

siasm, creativity and class field trips to Harpswell to collect sea life in the tide pools motivated many students.

He also cooked over Bunsen burners a meal of locally harvested clams, mussels, and periwinkles for his AP Advanced Biology students after their unit studying mollusks.

He was known as a kind and dedicated teacher. People Plus member Ruth Thibodeau had him for biology class and says he was always willing to give her extra help.

Outside of class, Claude made whimsical sculptures out of clam, mussel and scallop shells as well as sea urchins and starfish. He sold his creations at craft fairs or

donated them to good causes. One such cause to which he donated his crafts for decades is the “Music in April” fundraiser for People Plus.

Born in Brunswick to a French-Canadian family of nine children, Claude graduated from Brunswick High in 1948 and from Bowdoin College in 1952.

After teaching for two years at Lisbon High School, he went to teach in France and lived on the Left Bank of Paris. He has traveled all over Europe.

He returned to Maine and spent three years teaching at Brunswick High School before leaving to

earn a master’s degree from Stanford University in Palo Alto, California.

Claude’s journey as a musician started when he was given a ukulele as a child. He learned that along with the guitar. Later, he mastered the harmonica, pan flute, and melodica.

Now, he concentrates on the spoons, harmonica, musical saw, and rhythm bones. He made the rhythm bones from cow ribs that he obtained from Bisson & Sons Butcher Shop in Topsham.

He has thrilled residents with his creative music in nursing homes from Boothbay to Lewiston.

He has been a consistent participant in Rotary’s Maine’s “Got Talent Variety Show” and shared his gifts with the Maine State Musical Theatre’s “Footlight Follies.” He has also performed on the bones with the Fiddleicious Orchestra.

Of course, he has performed at People Plus. In fact, he was the first entertainer at the People Plus Center when it moved to Union Street. He also performs every year at the “Gelato Fiasco Scoop-a-thon” to benefit the Teen Center.

Obviously, retirement from teaching in 1987 didn’t slow Claude down. He has authored several works of local history. First, he self-published *Memories in Verse*—a book about his family and his life growing up in Brunswick. He illustrated it as well.

In 2006, he self-published a second edition, *Memories in Verse and Prose* which is about events and changes that have evolved over the years in the town of Brunswick. It also includes some of his own life experiences.

Retired educator recognized with award

By Charmaine Daniels
People Plus Staff

Claude lives in Brunswick with his wife, Ann, a former math teacher whom he married 60 years ago. They have two sons and two granddaughters. He still corresponds with 300 people via email—many of whom are former students. His legacy continues.

One more thing to know about Claude that you don’t want to miss: He is on YouTube dressed as the Lone Ranger and playing the spoons to the tune of the *William Tell Overture*.

That performance was filmed in 2016 when he was 86. His creation has had 12,850 views! If you want to see it, type this in your web search engine: Claude Bonang plays the spoons.

People Plus is the Brunswick Area Senior Community Center and supports an engaged, healthy, and independent life for older adults, while joining others to build community for all ages. Dedicated to intergenerational community participation and support, we offer numerous choices for fitness and wellness services, recreation and learning opportunities, education and outreach. We are home to the Brunswick Area Teen Center Program. Visit our website: peopleplusmaine.org or find us on Facebook!

(This article was also reprinted with permission from the Brunswick Times Record.)



Retired educator and renowned musician Claude Bonang of Brunswick shares his musical talents with the local Rotary Club. He is also available to perform for other groups as well. Interested folk may call Claude at 207-725-5181.

MEABT responds to Lewiston

By Faith Campbell, Trustee
MEA Benefits Trust

Our family members were in disbelief on October 25 when we heard from our Bates College student that she was in her dorm hearing gunshots. We were fortunate to be able to bring her home for the weekend.

Unfortunately, for too many other families, the reality was much more devastating and brutal. What a needless tragedy for far too many people whose lives have been shattered by these senseless murders.

We are still a bit shaken but we know that our anxiety is small compared to those who were more directly affected. Our most sincere heartfelt

sympathies to the families and friends of victims and to those who were so brutally injured. Our best wishes to all as we come to terms with the realization that this tragedy has befallen us so close to our hearts and homes.

Space and urgency usually find my articles reporting on Medicare and other retiree health insurance issues and not on other employment and retirement benefits.

The Maine Education Association Benefits Trust (MEABT) responded to the Lewiston tragedy and a shooting threat. They provided critical incident support counselors to school employees returning to work in the school districts of Auburn, Lewiston, MSAD #75 and Winthrop. These services are part of our Members Assistance Program (MAP).

Our contract with Anthem includes 44 counselor service hours a year as our usual responses are normally infrequent and of a much limited scope.

As of this writing, the MEABT has provided 193 hours of service. Each hour of service beyond 44 is usually charged back to the Trust by Anthem at the rate of \$300 an hour.

MEABT Executive Director Jennifer Kent reached out to Anthem of Maine's President Denise Mc McDonough for an offset. The Trust and Anthem were able to reach an agreement in which Anthem would cover an additional 200 counseling hours without any additional costs to the Trust.

The Maine State Legislature passed LD # 258 which increased the state's retired educator's health insurance contribution percentage from 55 percent to 60 percent. LD #258 was passed as a supplementary budget item which means that it goes into effect 90 days after the Legislature's adjournment. The effective

date of this legislative change was October 25, 2023.

Originally, the MEABT staff and Board of Trustees were told that the legislation would be retroactive to July 1, 2023, and that members would be entitled to a retroactive payment adjustment.

However, the state's Revisors and Attorney General offices have ruled this legislation is not retroactive. These state offices claim the retroactive reimbursements in previous state insurance share percentage increases were improperly issued.

The initial legislation was introduced and rejected by the Legislature during the regular session. If it had passed during this session, the increased benefit would have been effective on July 1, 2023. Members would have received the full benefit beginning in July instead of having to wait until November to realize the full benefit.

MEA
Benefits Trust

Christmas is around the corner—give a retirement gift!



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

Prices include tax and postage/handling

Name _____ Email _____

Mailing Address _____ City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Tel. _____ Affiliate _____

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

Questions? Contact Rena Kearney at rkearney@ainop.com or 207-429-9041. Prices include tax and postage/handling.
Make checks payable to MEA-Retired and mail to Rena Kearney, PO Box 377, Mars Hill, ME 04758.

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

October is the month AARP Maine holds its annual meeting to honor its volunteers and celebrate its programs and advocacy work. The gathering was held in Lewiston at the beautiful Franco Center.

The **Steadfast Advocate Award** is given to a volunteer individual or couple who spend many hours supporting the AARP mission.

The 2023 award was presented to Ruby Parker and Deb Alford. Together, they are active in their local community in southern Maine.

They are members of Tuesdays At the State House (TASH) and advocate for legislation and policies that help people who are 55 and older.

Many of these bills and policies help Mainers of all ages, such as affordable broadband expansion and utility rates.

The **Beacon Community**

Award is given to a Maine town that is “collaborative, engaging, and action-oriented and that focuses on helping older adults live, and thrive, in place.”

This year’s award was given to “Age-Friendly” Sullivan, whose mission since 2018 has been to be an inclusive community for people of all ages.

Volunteers carry out numerous projects and programs, often collaborating with established local organizations, funded with grant monies, to support community members.

Examples include a community garden, a new walking trail, an Earth Day cook-out, transportation services, and home safety modifications.

The **2023 AARP Maine**

Andrus Award for Community Service, in honor of AARP’s founder, Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus, went to the very deserving Phil Chin. Phil received the award as the lead spokesperson for AARP Maine’s Fraud Watch Network.

Phil came to Maine with his wife Mary Louise after retiring from a long career as a news writer, editor, and producer for a major network in New York City.

He began volunteering with AARP Maine in 2006 as a volunteer instructor with the Driver Safety Program before becoming the lead spokesperson for the Fraud Watch Network.

With other volunteers he helped establish the AARP Maine Speakers’ Bureau whose trained members do

AARP holds annual meeting

By Pam Partridge
AARP Liaison

presentations on fraud throughout the state. Attendees learn ways to protect themselves from becoming victims of scams and fraud.

Phil hosts the monthly Fraud Watch program held on Zoom on the second Thursday of each month. He is a regular guest speaker on radio station WLOB with host Ray Richardson. Don’t miss these opportunities to learn more about our own personal safety.



Pre-Retirement, from Page 3

based on their school’s Anthem health insurance plans.

Tuesday night wrapped up with representatives from Horace Mann who presented the GPO/WEP penalties that Social Security penalizes recipients for contributing and receiving state pensions opted for by states in lieu of Social Security.

We were pleased to introduce our committee’s newest member, Jim Thornton of Cumberland County, who facilitates questions through the chat for our Horace Mann representative, Dominic Vermette.

Additionally, Joan Warren of York County reflected on the benefits of membership in her county and facilitated Wednesday’s zoom sessions with Alex Rand from MainePERS covering the many facets for a successful retirement experience.

Members were also reminded to expect an invitation to enroll in their new portal which is being rolled out incrementally. Please invite active MEA members who are still teaching to consider one of our winter seminars in January, February, and March.

Get taxes done FREE

AARP will do your taxes free! The program, aimed at taxpayers 50 and older, is free and doesn’t require AARP membership. You’ll get assistance from volunteers certified by the Internal Revenue Service. You can even get your tax return sent electronically for free, which will speed your refund.

To get help with preparing your tax return from an IRS-certified volunteer, book an appointment using the “Site Locator.” You can’t just walk in empty-handed or with a shoebox full of receipts. Here’s what you will need:

All correspondence received from the IRS and your state/local taxing authority.

Social Security cards and/or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number notices/cards or other official documentation that show the taxpayer identification numbers for every individual on your return.

Government-issued photo ID for each taxpayer.

Checking or savings account information if you want to direct-deposit any refund(s) or direct-debit any amounts due.

Identity Protection PIN (IP PIN) (for each individual if applicable). Don’t have one? The IRS can send you one.

Most taxpayers have a choice of

taking either a standard deduction or itemizing their deductions. You need to have more itemized deductions than the standard deduction. If you have a substantial amount of deductions, you may want to itemize. If so, bring receipts and other documents delineating deductible payments.

AARPMaine has a list of services.

CONGRATULATIONS “Century+ Club”



Benita Russo, 1/1/1919
Martha Rollins, 6/22/1919
Irene Robertson, 10/23/1919
Lucille Walker, 1/1/1921
Frances Bryson, 1/1/1923
Josephine McAlary, 1/1/1923
Nancy McReel, 1/1/1923
Evelyn Davis, 5/10/1923

Convention, from Page 1

joining the Scarborough Police Department, Mark was a 24-year veteran of the Maine State Police where he retired in November 2021 at the rank of Lieutenant.

During his 24-year career, Mark served for 12 years with Troop A in Alfred conducting rural patrol in York



Mark Holmquist

County and 12 years in the Major Crimes Unit in Gray. Mark was promoted to Lieutenant in 2017 in the Major Crimes Unit and finished the final year of his career as the Troop Commander at Troop A.

Mark also retired as a First Sergeant from the US Army Reserves in December 2021. Mark served for 25 years in the US Army, Maine Army National Guard and US Army Reserves.

The highlight of his military career was his service as a Sentinel at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery from 1992-1993. The majority of his Army Reserve service was in the role of Senior Drill Sergeant, assigned to a training unit specifically tasked to turn citizens into soldiers during basic combat training.

An added feature is the provision of attending two breakout sessions this year instead of just one. Be sure to indicate on the registration form on Page 15 your first and second choices for each session. I encourage you to register early because sessions have limited attendance, and we anticipate they will fill up fast.

Following are the four breakout sessions:

Maintaining Mobility by Matt Cary, MPT, CMP, MBA. Matt attended the University of New England and graduated in 2001 with a master's degree in Physical Therapy. After working across the U.S. in a variety of settings and states, Matt returned to Maine in 2006 and began working at MaineGeneral Medical Center in Augusta. Matt has clinical skill and experience in areas of orthopedics, neurologic care, sports injuries, and geriatric care.



Matt Cary

Matt has additional training and several certifications in orthopedics, Multiple Sclerosis, safety and fall prevention training, and balance training. He has been Director of Outpatient Rehabilitation at MaineGeneral since 2019.

When not in the office, Matt enjoys outdoor activities such as skiing, hiking, paddling and spending time with his family.

Gardening for Pollinators and Wildlife by Lynn Lubas of Dover-Foxcroft. Do you want to attract pollinators and other wildlife to your yard? Anyone can plant flowers that will add color, fragrance and beauty to their surroundings while enticing pollinators to visit. You don't need a large area, just the willingness to try. We will discuss using annuals, perennials and native plants to add to your gardens, window boxes and hanging planters.

We will also discuss the benefits of using native plants and why it is important to help pollinators. Every garden, no matter how small, will benefit pollinators and wildlife.



Lynn Lubas

Lynn Lubas is retired from the Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District and has completed the Master Gardener program through the University of Maine's Piscataquis County Extension Office. She is an avid gardener of flowers, perennials and vegetables.

In her spare time Lynn enjoys hiking, biking, kayaking and playing pickleball and volunteering with several local community meals programs and teaching people about nature and the importance of taking care of our world for future generations.

European Travels by Rena Kearney of Mars Hill. Rena taught 42 years in elementary grades before retiring in 2005. However, she is still substitute teaching—at the high school level. She has served her community as a trustee of the town library and on the town council. She is chairperson of the local food cupboard and a member of the Mars Hill Rotary Club.

Rena is a member of Delta Kappa Gamma, an honorary teacher's society—served as state president and state treasurer. At the International level, Rena has been on the Finance Committee, Educational Foundation Trustee, and Nominations Committee. Rena has served Aroostook Retired Educators



Rena Kearney

Association as president, Board member, and is currently assistant treasurer. She serves her church as treasurer and plays the organ and piano for services.

Join Rena and visit Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Iceland and learn of their customs and traditions.

Hiking the Appalachian Trail by Traci Halverson of Easton. She has taught Grades 4 thru 7 in Easton and has

coached at the University of Maine at Presque Isle. Driven by her two passions—education and the outdoors—she started her own business, “Back to the Basics” which can be found online at backtothebasicsyurt.com.

Traci believes that the traditional classroom is extremely important; yet, she has witnessed what can also be taught outside the classroom.

In her spare time, she enjoys hiking. In 2021, she hiked the 100-Mile Wilderness, a hike from Monson, Maine, to Katahdin, and spent time backpacking in Wyoming and Montana. She recently finished the Appalachian Trail, solo, thru-hike. Since returning home, she has started sharing her thru-hike experiences with schools, social groups, and a variety of other organizations.



Traci Halverson

A new **Attendance Award** will be presented to the affiliate with the largest percentage of members at convention and annual meeting. Presidents, encourage your members to come to the convention and annual meeting. Plan to carpool and make a fun day of it. You will be given a statue and a name plaque with the affiliate's name on it with the date of the award. This plaque will be on display at the MEA building in Augusta. Additional recognitions will be added each year.

Affiliates are asked to bring a poster to display their activities for the year. If you desire, you may add a raffle item or treat. Tables will be available for your affiliate display free of charge. Please let me know that you will need a full or half table. Sometimes two affiliates share a table.

Again, we will hear speakers give the latest on COLA, pension, health insurance, MainePERS, and other important information about retirement.

We will have a short business meeting for you to vote on changes the Board will propose. We will have a solemn Memoriam Tribute. Grants and scholarships will be awarded by the Legacy Committee. Membership and Community Participation Awards will be presented to deserving members.

You will see exceptional, noteworthy affiliate leaders in the state as they receive the counties' Leadership Awards. President Bob Jean will be presenting the President's Award.

MEA-Retired offers two gifts to our dues-paying members. One is *The Clarion* that keeps us informed about our leaders and interesting lives of our fellow

See Convention, Page 15

Convention, from Page 14

members. The award-winning publication also provides up-to-date information about various opportunities for volunteerism and programs. It keeps us informed of the latest developments to our pension, insurance, and COLA.

The second gift is a wonderful day-long convention and annual meeting—a great opportunity to meet and share a day with members from all around Maine. This is the only opportunity to gather and share a day together.

A change in the cost of convention was enacted by our MEA-Retired Board of Directors at its November 6 meeting. For more than 15 years, the cost of convention has been \$20. Considering the increase in costs during these 15 years, it is reasonable that the cost would increase.

Beginning this year, the cost is \$30—which doesn't even begin to cover the cost of just lunch which is about \$45—not including the cost of the auditorium, rooms, chairs, tables, etc. You are getting a deal big time with meals and drinks, speakers, raffles, book exchange, breakout sessions, and more.

We listened to your suggestions from last year. We hope to see you in Augusta. Winter is coming and spring will be here before we know it. Mark your calendars. See you there!

72nd MEA-Retired Convention & Annual Meeting

“We Shine for Everyone!”

**Keynoter: Chief Mark Holmquist, Saco Police Department
Former Sentinel at Arlington National Cemetery**

May 2, 2024

Augusta Civic Center, 76 Community Drive, Augusta

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

Name _____ Tel. _____ Affiliate _____

Address _____ City/Town _____

State _____ Zip _____ Email _____ Age 90+ FREE _____

Registration: \$30—coffee/juice/food, vendors, raffles, prizes, book exchange, awards, affiliate displays, buffet lunch, entertainment, annual business meeting, fellowship

Two breakout sessions featuring four topics: Select 1st and 2nd choices for each one.

- (1) European Travels (2) Gardening Tips (3) Hiking the Appalachian Trail
(4) Maintaining Momentum

Session 1 (10-10:45 a.m.): ___ 1st choice ___ 2nd choice
Session 2 (10:55-11:40 a.m.): ___ 1st choice ___ 2nd choice

This form may be duplicated—submit a separate registration form for each registrant. Registration is to be postmarked by April 20, 2024

***Make check payable to MEA-Retired. Send with registration form(s) to
Carl Bucciantini, Registrar, PO Box 352, Greene, ME 04236-0352.***

Questions? Convention Chair Rheba Michaud, rmichaud143@charter.net (207) 564-7494

Book table at convention

Tables will be set up at our MEA-Retired convention 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 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. Bring books and take books.

So, when you start your spring cleaning, begin with your bookcases and share your reading material. For more information, contact our convention coordinator, Rheba Michaud at 207-564-7494.



Convention Booklet Deadlines

December 1: Leadership Award Bios & Photos to MEA-Retired President-Elect

February 1: Leadership Award Bios & Photos to booklet editor

March 1: Reports from MEA-Retired officers, liaisons, and committee chairpersons

March 26: Necrology Reports

Names of all deceased who contribute to the *education* of students—bus drivers, custodians, cooks, secretaries, coaches, ed techs, teachers, principals, crossing guards, superintendents, Dates of decease: April 1, 2023, thru March 26, 2024

**Please send to kay_grindall@yahoo.com.
Mail to 23 Hilltop Drive Oakland 04963**



Membership Matters: Gifts that keep on giving

*By Roger Roy, Chair
Membership Committee*

While you're making out a Christmas list and doing your shopping, don't forget union membership.

Do you know someone who is planning to retire in 2024? Or a friend who has retired and not yet joined our educator organizations?

Are you a member of

MEA-Retired? Do you know someone who should be, but isn't?

Are you a lifetime member of NEA-Retired?

Are you a member of your local affiliate?

If you pay your dues annually, did you remember to pay your dues this year?

Give yourself or a loved one a gift that will be beneficial for the future. If you are not yet retired but are seriously thinking about it, consider early enrollment in MEA-Retired or lifetime membership in NEA-Retired.

Remember, MEA-Retired is working continually to represent your interests in Augusta. They are protecting your retirement and benefits.

If you are not yet a lifetime member of NEA-Retired, give yourself a lifetime membership. For only

\$300, you are a member for life, and no longer have to pay annual dues to NEA.

If you have a child or a loved one who is an educator, you can gift them a lifetime membership in NEA-Retired while they are still actively working.

If you want to keep in touch with former colleagues, join your local affiliate. Even if you no longer reside in the area wherein you taught, you can join the local affiliate where you live and/or the local affiliate where you taught.

For example, I am a member of both Aroostook

Retired Educators Association and Higher Education Association Retired. My wife and I really enjoy the fellowship.

Another idea is to have a silent auction or raffle at an affiliate meeting whereby a membership package could be the prize. Only \$80 will give some affiliate member a year's membership in MEA, MEA-Retired, and NEA-Retired.

Christmas is a great time to strengthen or renew our communal bonds and to look forward to all that the new year holds.

As of our November 6 Board of Directors meeting, MEA-Retired's total membership stood at 5,440. Let's continue to do everything we can to meet or exceed the 5,500 mark in 2024. Let it start with me.

Enjoy the holidays, and enjoy your family and friends!

Give a Gift

NEA: \$35
MEA: \$30
MEA-Retired: \$15
Affiliate: Dues vary

Join us Today!!

MEA-Retired Membership

Give a gift of MEA-Retired membership. Just \$15