



THE CLARION

February 2023

The Newsletter for Retired Educators
Maine Education Association Retired Vol. 134, No. 3

From our President



Gary McGrane

Although this is one of my last opportunities to use this forum as the MEA-Retired President, I thank everyone for the accomplishments we have made during this past year. We have some very able and capable people heading up our various committees. Thank them.

As we celebrate the new year, may the experience lift our loved ones to new heights as we usher in the new year in an atmosphere of joy, love, and community. We must be forever vigilant.

Those who are part of the MEA-Retired family have made a difference in the lives

of our fellow members. We are also fortunate to have the opportunity to truly make a difference and witness the numerous positive legislative outcomes during the past two years. May our success continue.

As the premiere organization for retired educators, MEA-Retired Executive Committee and the Board of Directors have shown what a dedicated community of retirees can accomplish when we work together.

Here's hoping we continue to make progress for our members in the legislative session whether it be in Augusta or Washington, D.C.

To make sure of our suc-

cess we all need to stay involved. There are numerous ways. Sign up to be a delegate to attend the annual MEA or NEA Representative Assembly.

In the meantime watch for MEA's "Under The Dome" legislative updates. These notices will be more frequent as the legislature meets and committee hearings begin. We will have ample opportunities to step up and speak up, so be ready to let your voice be heard.

Our members are counting on our leadership. We all need to do our part. Until we meet again, have a wonderful start to the new year.

Be safe and have a healthy, productive 2023.

Needed: Three nominations for MainePERS trustee position

A vacancy on the MainePERS Board of Trustees exists, and the Governor's Office is seeking representation from MEA-Retired to fill that position.

John Kimball of Norway is our current trustee and has served the remainder of the position held by Phil Brookhouse of Auburn who had to resign due to health reasons. Sadly, he passed on November 10 and is greatly missed.

John will continue to

serve in the present position until a new trustee is appointed by the Governor and approved by the Legislature.

Interested MEA-Retired unified members are invited to send their resumes to President Gary McGrane at your earliest convenience. The Executive Committee will present three names for consideration by the Governor's Office.

According to Dr. Rebecca Wyke, Executive Director of MainePERS, the proce-

cedure is as follows: "The candidates shall submit resumes that are forwarded to the chief executive officer of MainePERS and to the Governor of the State of Maine. The name chosen by the Governor will then be presented for approval by the Legislature; whereupon, notification will be sent to the chosen candidate."

Time commitment is estimated to be 8 to 10 hours per month—more if serving as an officer or on a committee.

Meetings are held monthly on the second Thursday of from 9 a.m. until adjourn-

See MainePERS, Page 5

MEA-Retired

71st Convention
and Annual Meeting

Augusta Civic Center
May 4, 2023

Don't miss Convention

By Rhea Michaud
Convention Committee Chair

Happy New Year! May we all be healthy and enjoy this warmer than usual winter. May 4th will be here before we know it. Now that you turned your calendars to 2023, be sure to mark May 4 MEA-Retired Annual Meeting and Convention on your new calendar. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

Invite friends and colleagues to join the fun day! You will be able to visit lots of displays and vendors. You can pick up some raffle items and books to read.

We all agree that laughter is so healthy for the soul. You will enjoy hearing renowned Maine humorist and keynote speaker Gary Crocker after lunch.

Speaking of lunch, it is a "buffet bargain" for just \$20!

See Convention, Page 10



**PRESIDENTS
DAY**

February 20, 2023

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/>



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Legislative Updates: Many changes coming our way

By Crystal Ward, Chairperson
Legislative Committee

Hello MEA-Retired!

Its tax time! Remember we had a victory last session!

"Tax Break for Maine retirees: Exempts additional Maine retirement pension from income tax, improving the deductions for residents from \$10,000 to \$25,000 in tax year 2022, \$30,000 in tax year 2023, and to \$35,000 in tax years 2024 and beyond.

These changes in taxable income will provide \$36.8 million in income tax relief for Maine retirees in 2022, with an average tax cut of \$560 in just the first year.

Retirement pension income from any source will be tax exempt in Maine by up to \$35,000 per individual for tax year 2025—providing an annual average tax cut of approximately \$795.

Military pensions and annual social security income remain fully exempt in Maine."

RUMOR CONTROL!!

No! The federal government isn't sending Ameri-

NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA RA

June 30—July 6, 2023
Orlando, FL

July 1—July 7, 2024
Philadelphia, PA



cans a fourth stimulus check in 2023! Congress would need to pass legislation authorizing another stimulus check in 2023. This has not yet happened.

We are off and running... with the new 131st State of Maine Legislature. Here is the official statement for the first (long) session: "Welcome to the Maine Legislature. The First Regular Session of the 131st Maine Legislature convenes Wednesday, December 7, 2022. Statutory adjournment is June 21, 2023."

Bills had to be entered by the end of December 2022. As always it will take time for them to be brought to the floor, but we know the following:

The following bills have been entered;

1. **Sen. Joe Rafferty of Kennebunk (District 34).** He has submitted a bill to waive the certification fees for retirees who want to return to the classroom.

2. **Rep. Jan Dodge of Belfast (District 97):** To increase the COLA to apply to the entire pension check amount instead of a lower designated amount.

To align the percentage of annual COLA to keep pace with current economic

inflation rates. As we know the inflation rate this year is extraordinarily high. The cost, an additional 6.1 percent (\$551million) would keep us from going backwards!

To increase the State's share of payment for retired teacher and ed. tech health insurance premiums 5 percent each year until the state is funding the total cost. Currently the State pays 55 percent.

3. **Sen. Henry Ingwersen of York (District 32).** He has submitted a bill that would provide a benefit package for people in MainePERS that would include a long-term disability plan.

The new Federal Legislature (Washington D.C.) began on January 3. The U.S. Senate is majority Democrats and the U.S. House of Representatives is majority Republicans. President Biden is a Democrat.

First order of business will be to elect Legislative leaders for the next two years. Bills will have to be entered again on the Social Security Offset (GPO/WEP) issue. When that is completed, I will let you know the bill reference numbers.

As you know this very long fight for fairness continues with NEA working hard every year.

Last session we came much closer and hopefully progress will continue. We will have to watch carefully as to what the House Republicans may want to do with Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. Many changes to these benefits were discussed during the election campaigns of 2022. I hope for bipartisanship. Democracy is the art of compromise!

With the new Republican rule that the next budget cannot go higher than the 2023 budget, there will have to be cuts. I fear it will just



Don't forget that when filing Maine income taxes in 2023 for the 2022 fiscal year, the first \$25,000 of our MainePERS pension is not taxable. Military and Social Security pensions remain not taxable.

be more mudslinging and investigations and nothing getting done.

Your support and help are very valuable in the Legislative process! To receive the ongoing legislative updates, contact MEA Government Relations Director John Kosinski and ask to be included in the "Under the Dome" newsletter email list. You will receive the latest news and how to be involved. He may be reached by email 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 50 cents for every *Clarion* returned due to "incorrect address." Please send address changes to Lisa Collins at 800-281-3191, Ext. 2400 or 207-888-3856 or via email at lcollins@maineea.org.

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MEA-Retired is here for you!

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

May 3, 5:30 p.m.
Executive Committee
Banquet & Meeting
Banquet Room
The Senator, Augusta

May 4, 9:30 a.m.
Convention/Annual Mtg.

Contact affiliate leaders with
ideas and concerns.

If you want to develop healthy habits, the MEA Benefits Trust is here to encourage, inspire, and reward you in your journey to better health. Your health plan comes with a rewards program and helpful resources to support your health and well-being.

Even small steps can lead to change. Our **Virgin Pulse online wellness platform** can help you define what wellness means to you. You can be rewarded for your healthy habits with up to \$250 in cash incentives and choose from more than 100 point-earning activities.

Retirees enrolled in an MEABT health plan and their enrolled spouse or domestic partner, or dependents age 18 or older, are eligible for program rewards. Here is how to get started:

Register for Virgin Pulse by going to join.virginpulse.com/MEABT.

If you are already a mem-

ber, then sign in at member.virginpulse.com

Questions? Contact Virgin Pulse Customer Service at 855-689-6884.

If you are enrolled in our **Medicare Advantage Plan**, you are also eligible to participate with **SilverSneakers**. Becoming more active just got easier with SilverSneakers®GO™, your one-stop shop for SilverSneakers.

Download the SilverSneakers GO™ app to access a library of on-demand workout programs and videos. You can also access live digital classes straight from the app.

Enrolling in SilverSneakers is easy:

Locate your SilverSneakers Member ID (3 ways!)

Visit SilverSneakers.com and use the Check Your Eligibility Link.

Download the SilverSneakers GO™ app.

Call the Member Experi-

ence Center and speak with one of the representatives, 1-888-881-7776 OR Support@silversneakers.com

Create a SilverSneakers Account & Enroll

Digitally, you can enroll at SilverSneakers.com and access:

SilverSneakers LIVE™
SilverSneakers On-Demand™
SilverSneakers GO™
Mobile App

At a participating location, take your SilverSneakers ID# and complete simple forms

That's it! You're ready to start getting active!

Exclusive Member Portal: Enhancements to the SilverSneakers.com portal delivers fresh, relevant content to enhance overall health and wellbeing.

Silver Sneakers On-Demand™: Follow-along videos and programs with various formats to support

It's never
been this
easy to be
active!

Join in 2023!

By Jennifer Kent, Exec. Director
MEA Benefits Trust

cardiovascular strength, endurance, flexibility and mental health.

Live Interactive Classes: SilverSneakers LIVE™ classes and workshops are offered daily, and are focused on exercise and overall wellbeing.

SilverSneakers GO™: This mobile app is the SilverSneakers on the go companion, providing exercise guidance that can be adjusted based on ability.

NEA-Retired updates

By Sarah Borgman
NEA-Retired President

January, 2023 . . . and we turn the calendar to 2023! Happy NEW Year!!!

Scholarships: The Jack Kinnaman Scholarship application portal is now active online at www.nea.org/retired. Five scholarships of \$3500 each will be awarded to five outstanding recipients at the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting in June.

Please help us increase our pool of applicants by spreading the word. An applicant must have been a member of the Aspiring Educators (AE) program for at least a year before applying and a current member. The purpose of the scholarship is to help AE's majoring in education earn their degree and become certified to teach.

The deadline to apply is April 17, 2023, at 5 p.m. EST.

Questions? Contact JoAnn Smith Mashburn at joannsmi@yahoo.com.

Webinars: NEA has placed money in the budget for two webinars just for re-

tired members. I'll soon have those dates and topics. Plan now to spread the word to all members...not just leadership. Topics will be of keen interest to all retired educators.

NEA conducted a budget hearing for leadership in January. Many informative and relevant topics were discussed as budgetary items were considered. These included objectives for colleagues, students, workplace conditions, and many more issues relevant to success in today's classrooms.

March 12-14 NEA Summit Conference in San Francisco, California.

I suggest you read the potential workshop topics and choose before you begin registration so you don't have to keep referring to the listing. There are some really good and varied workshops listed to meet various needs.

Remember, if you are funding others to attend, please bring those who have

never attended one of our Retired Conferences before. It is always good to expose new members to leadership possibilities.

As always we will be holding silent and live auctions so shop those after Christmas sales for some good bargains.

We will also be passing the "hats" for the Jack Kinnaman Fund so please come prepared. It has been increasingly difficult to find a bank to make a deposit for cash so plan now to bring checks made out to The NEA Foundation with Jack Kinnaman in the memo line.

Goals: Have you checked your benchmarks along the way? Dates? Who,

what, when, where? Any roadblocks? Found the detour? And how is YOUR commitment to NEA Retired? Still going strong or does it need a boost?

Racial, Social, Justice Committee: The co-chairs of this committee, Felecia Owens and Judy Rohde, will be contacting those who indicated to me you would like to start either specific training for your leadership or general membership and/or establish an RSJ Committee. Please respond to them. If you're serious, now is the time to get started.

"You can't fall if you don't climb. But there's no joy in living your life on the ground." ---Author Unknown

2023 Pre-Retirement Schedule on Zoom Spread the word among active educators

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

Reminder: Don't let the pen go extinct

By Susan Grondin, Chairperson
Community Participation Com.

I like to write in cursive. I like watching my hand form the swirls and lines associated with the formation of each letter of the alphabet.

I like the challenge of writing in a straight line without the use of lined paper or a ruler. More importantly, I like you, the recipient of my writing, to enjoy reading the letters as they support each other to express my sentiments in the card I mailed.

As I review the holiday

cards I received this year and envision each person who sent one, I am happy. The number of people who have retired the practice of sending cards is increasing each year.

Email messages, a posting on Facebook, or text messages seem to have replaced a card for most people.

A conversation with my mother, who now lives with me, about the number of cards she received makes me aware of the importance of this gesture. Her sent cards included her change of address and phone number. Yet, she wonders if the post office has not rerouted cards she may have received at her old address. Is it that or have we moved in a direction of computerized everything?

Or worse... no card at all. Going to the mailbox and

finding a written missive that is not a bill, is still enjoyable. Seeing your name on the envelope, checking the return address, and then opening the flap to read a few words bring a sense of connection. You have reached out to me. You have shared your message of health and happiness for another year and holiday.

A family tradition has been to send postcards when we travel and to bring home extra ones for my mother. She has sent a weekly postcard to her only grandchild for over 40 years. Missed weeks were due to health issues and hospitalizations.

A reading of them captures the daily lives of his grandparents, his accomplishments, important family events, and noteworthy historical happenings.

These postcards were sent to wherever he was living: Maine, California, Connecticut, Washington, Vir-

ginia, or Hawaii. A communication from one generation to another that brings pleasure to both the sender and the receiver and takes little time to compose.

As we begin another year and make resolutions, perhaps one could resolve to send a note or card once a month to someone. As our retirees become more housebound or find themselves in assisted living situations, correspondence becomes increasingly important.

The words "Just thinking of you and want to say hello" can be the high point of that person's day. Many MEA-Retired affiliates send cards to their retired educators expressing birthday wishes or words of encouragement for those with an illness or who have recently lost a beloved family member. A great project.

A memory moment opportunity that I hope you will consider for 2023.



AARP policy priorities in 2023

By Pam Partridge
AARP Liaison

Moving into 2023, Tuesdays at the State House (TASH) volunteers gathered at the Capitol on January 4, with Noel Bonam, AARP Maine State Director; Bridget Quinn, AARP-Maine Associate State Director for Advocacy and Outreach; and Carl Bucciantini, AARP Maine Volunteer State President.

Dressed in our signature red shirts, we were ready to begin legislative advocacy work with members of the First Regular Session of the 131st State of Maine Legislature.

Before being "turned loose" in the halls of the Capitol, we were introduced to the summaries of the AARP Maine State Policy Priorities for 2023. Many issues are being carried over from 2022.

•Support for Maine's Unpaid Family Caregivers. It's estimated 180,000 unpaid Maine family caregivers provide in-home care to loved ones—all this while working other jobs. AARP supports the creation of Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFLM) so that caregivers who work don't have to choose between caring for a loved one and losing pay—or even their job.

•Lower Prescription Drug Costs. Prescription drugs must be affordable, and people should not be forced to make a choice between heat, food, and necessary medications.

•Help Older Mainers Live Independently. AARP research finds older Mainers want to live independently in their homes. We need greater access to home and community based services and improvement to the quality and availability of direct care workers.

•Fair and Affordable Utility Rates. This is another essential pocketbook issue for Mainers struggling to balance household and personal expenses. Discussions of rate changes must be fair, reasonable and transparent and allow public involvement.

•Accessible and Affordable Internet. High speed internet that is accessible and affordable is necessary for all Mainers for work, telehealth services, and businesses.

Housing Affordability and

Choice. AARP supports the following: choice and flexibility in housing types; increased funding for affordable housing construction; equity in housing; funding for repairs and modifications in order to improve accessibility.

We spent the rest of the day meeting with legislators, giving them copies of the AARP Maine State Policy Priorities, and sitting in on chamber votes on LD 3, "An Act to Establish the Winter Energy Relief Payment Program to Aid Residents with High Heating Costs and to Finalize the COVID Pandemic Relief Payment Program," for which AARP had testified in support before the holidays. As you know by now, it passed in both chambers with the two-thirds majority needed and was signed by the Governor later that day.

It was a productive day. I met my new Senator for the first time, was warmly greeted by him in all the busyness of that first day of the session, and encouraged to contact him any time. Our legislators are very accessible! That's not true in every state.



See AARP, Page 5

Happy Mid-Winter!
February 2 has been recognized as the midpoint between the Northern hemisphere winter solstice and the spring equinox. The 45th parallel runs through Maine which puts us more or less exactly midway between the Equator and the North Pole.

This means that we will gain two hours of daylight between February 2 and March 20. It is no wonder so many cultures mark February 2 with observances such as "Groundhog Day," "St. Brigid's Day," and "Candlemas." Keep Heart.

Daylight is lengthening, and the temperatures are becoming warmer. Let's resolve to seize our good fortune and enjoy the continuing opportunities of following a healthy lifestyle.

Please do not hesitate to visit our Maine Education Association Benefits Trust webpage, www.meabt.org, for suggestions and inquiries regarding your available healthcare related services.

My appointment as an MEABT Trustee is a fiduciary position. This means that I must meet legal requirements to best serve your benefits and

trust membership. Several annual requirements were met at our recent November Trustee training meeting.

The legal counsel staff of Eaton Peabody, Attorneys at Law, conducted the federally required trustee annual fiduciary training. The Trust's auditing firm WIPFLI and the investment firm HM Payson presented late-year status reports.

(WIPFLI is a top consulting and accounting firm serving more than 100,000 clients across today's most complex industries.)

The MEABT Trustees are expecting the final revisions to these last two reports early in 2023. MEABT Executive Director Jennifer Kent will issue a final report to the Trustees and general membership in her annual report.

One of the Trust's responsibilities is to analyze data in order to provide best matched programs and services to our members. This requires ongoing data review.

One recent example is Ms. Kent's observation of a significant jump in Medicare Advantage claims in August,

2022. Her investigation found that the primary cause for this period was outpatient visits.

Our next step is determining the nature of these outpatient visits. If members are catching up on health screenings classified as "outpatient," then, all the better. However, if members are using outpatient care because of reluctance to use preventative measures, then, the Trust needs to be responsive to these needs.

The Trustees were recently informed that the most widely used Medicare health care plan categories used by our members are circulatory systems, neoplasms, and musculoskeletal systems.

The Trust follows medical usage trends in an effort to provide the most useful insurance coverage to our members. The Trust also analyzes this data to provide programs and services to our members.

The Trust continues to track the impact of new state and federal legislative mandates. Of note, the US Department of Labor recently issued a final rule that plan fiduciaries may consider

MEABT informative updates

By Faith Campbell, Trustee
Mea Benefits Trust

climate change and other environmental, social and governance factors when they select retirement investments and exercise shareholder rights.

These types of investments were curtailed in 2020. The rationale was that fiduciaries' prime responsibilities were to maximize investment dividends and not to consider these environmental, social and governance factors. This curtailment led to concerns on how investment decisions might be forced to run against an organization's stated mission and goals.

The Trustees will meet on February 27. Contact me at 207-567-3190 if you have questions or concerns.

AARP from Page 4

In-person coffee groups have resumed in some parts of the state. Portland is holding theirs the first Friday of the month. More information can be found on their Facebook page at [facebook.com/aarpmaine](https://www.facebook.com/aarpmaine) where a link is provided to pre-register. You will find announcements of other AARP sponsored events on the Facebook page as well.

On the Tuesdays that we do not meet at the State House, meetings are conducted on Zoom and we receive updates on priority issues. We hear from experts in various areas of interest and advocacy. We do enjoy the convenience of Zoom—especially during the cold winter days.

If you enjoy giving back to your community, consider volunteering. They provide excellent training and other opportunities for service. Are you interested in serving more of Maine residents? Call 1-866-554-5380; or email me@aarpmaine.org. You can stay connected by requesting email notifications and by visiting [facebook.com/aarpmaine](https://www.facebook.com/aarpmaine).

MainePERS Trustee, from Page 1

ment, usually about four hours.

Meeting materials are available via a MainePERS issued iPad and an electronic Board portal. Trustees are expected to review meeting materials in advance. Trustees receive a per diem of \$55 per meeting and reimbursement for mileage.

New Trustees will undergo an onboarding and orientation process with staff. Board education is provided periodically throughout the year usually as part of the regularly scheduled meetings. Additional educational opportunities are also available. MainePERS website: <https://www.maineopers.org/>

Board of Trustees Governance Manual: <https://www.maineopers.org/about/board-of-trustees/governance-manual/>

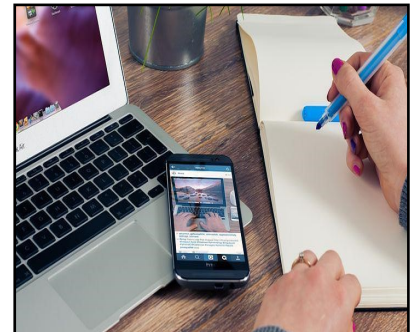
Article VIII, Section 2 of the MEA-Retired bylaws addresses this vacancy. The bylaws can be found online at mearetired.org. See Page 2 for contact information for submitting resumes to President Gary McGrane.

LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

We have more than 5,000 readers—feel free to write a story. Opinions? Ideas?

April Clarion deadline is March 5.

See Page 2 for submission of articles.



School vacations: Better than they used to be!

We all remember the sigh of relief in the afternoon of Friday before February or April vacation. For many who did not always travel to warmer climates, that week was often a time to grade papers, plan lessons, create classroom projects, and explore new learning styles and teaching techniques.

Well, school vacations are quite different now that we are retired. Grandchildren being out of school often means we have time to babysit.

Belinda Micucci of Sanford is chair of our Healthcare Committee:

As we begin 2023, I reminisce on the vacation days I have spent with my granddaughters this past year. I like to be outside with them as much as possible, so we go on adventures. We baked cookies and pizzas, rode bikes, hiked on trails, walked to the beach,



The warmer winter weather has been great for outdoor fun. Kylie and Kaelynn Saucier of New Gloucester enjoy their scooters!

and picnicked in the yard and had scavenger hunts.

Our latest one was a search for items to make fairy

Finding the “grand” in “grandparenting”

Jane Conroy of Dover-Foxcroft is chair of our Communications Committee:

“Grandparenting” is an opportunity to experience that “younger” sense of adventure, to play and maybe explore memories of the past with your grandchild.

Grandparents are often in a great position to give extra love, attention, and resources without having the pressure of the daily responsibilities of parenting.

Being a grandparent isn’t the same as being a parent. Although you should follow the expectations and parental rules, you have the benefit to interact in fun ways. You have many opportunities to explore the curious mind of a



Jane takes her graddaughters Kaydiense, Grade 5, and Kynsley Nelson, Pre-K, to the local candy shop.

houses. In preparation we got their scooters, helmets, and a bag in which to collect the items. We needed snacks and drinks because this was going to be hard work.

We brainstormed things to collect—rocks (sparkly ones), bushy twigs or branches, pine cones, flowers, special leaves (color or shape), seashells, tree bark, and any other items we could find. Even though the fairy houses are no longer (weather claimed them), we had a wonderful few days.

I also need to add that having sleepovers at Nana’s is always an adventure!

young child through music, cooking, outdoor play, reading or gardening.

Here are some ideas to try during February school vacation with your grand-



Retirement means lots of time to care for grandchildren.

children:

Make a “play date” with them. It makes them feel special. It gives the parents a break or opportunity to do something special for themselves while you enjoy time with your grandchild.

Take the time to get to know your grandchild. Listen to their ideas while sharing your experiences with them. Give them choices to make cupcakes or slime.

Play outside. Build a snowman or take a snowshoe

hike. Make a snow angel. Start when they are young toddlers and add to the adventures as they grow older.

Play cards or board games. Decide on who goes first, how to take turns and how to share. It is not about winning that matters but rather the interactive, relational time you share. These events also teach good sportsmanship skills.

Share your interests such as hunting, gardening, cooking, reading or playing musical instruments. All of these give them a sense of who you are and what you like to do.

Take a “road trip.” Going to the grocery store enables them to be a helper while you get your errands done. Go to the local candy store and explain what your favorite penny candy was in your day.

Create independent tasks—ask them to draw a picture for you to display. Offer puzzles to complete or read a story before nap time.

Show them how to treat your animals. Ask them to feed them at mealtime. Play ball with them. All these skills show compassion for others including our fur babies.

Grandparenting is a special bond, and we are thrilled and honored to spend time with grandchildren. I know I do!

Roger Fuller of Lewiston is our Facebook Administrator.

I am blessed to have two wonderful children who work in education and six grandchildren, ranging in age from 22 years to 4 months. They keep us busy.

While three of the grandchildren are mostly grown up, three are six years old and under.

And my daughter, who never shies away from a challenge, decided to become a single mother by choice. She decided after college to spend two years

fishing in the Bering Sea. So, single motherhood was only a gritty extension of strong character.

It turns out that my wife and I spend some considerable time in the “support” roles. This is not difficult as my daughter lives on the “family farm” in southern New Hampshire—taking over the house in which I grew up. It’s another blessing that I have been able to keep and maintain this farm for 60 years, hosting four generations of the family.

See Grandparenting, Page 9

I grew up in a village in Ohio, but I've lived in Maine for more than 30 years. My life has been a blend of family, friends, church, writing/editing, music, woodworking, teaching, intercultural experiences, and justice-related endeavors.

One day in the early 1990s, one of my children's friends left some socks at our house when he stayed overnight. I drove to the Adult Learning Center in Lewiston that is affiliated with Lewiston Public Schools and returned the socks to the young friend's mom who taught there.

When I walked into the Learning Center, I sensed something special in the air—

something like mutuality of respect and equality of status among the students and staff. When I visited a second time, I was even more convinced.

In 1996, our young friend's mom told me the Learning Center was looking to hire an additional teacher. I applied and was invited aboard. It has been a marvelous ride among good people from many backgrounds, countries, cultures, hardships, gifts, religions, and points of view.

In 2001, a large wave of immigrants from Somalia and ultimately from many other countries spiked the enrollment of students needing English classes. In fact, our student enrollment has now swelled to 1,200.

Our community, our lives and certainly, my family, were profoundly affected and enriched by our new neighbors.

The reception of these neighbors early on was a mix of much welcomed (and some sharply unwelcomed) to the point that some new residents, having fled civil war and lived for years in

refugee camps, soon questioned the viability of staying in Lewiston.

A program entitled the "Many & One Coalition" was formed to advocate for a community that weaves us all into the fabric that is still, at its best, the wonderful City of Lewiston.

We are a staff of 15 instructors and support personnel. I teach English language classes at a variety of levels. One level serves students who are beginners at English. They are, of course, quite fluent in their own native languages, but most of them did not have the opportunities to actually read and write those languages.

Then, I teach a class for mid-level English language learners and one for students at an upper level as well. My colleagues teach English at various levels, computer literacy, and other subjects. They also support students who want to continue working in the professions for which they prepared in their previous countries of residency.

We also have classrooms in Auburn, where I teach two levels of English to speakers of other languages. Over the years my classes have also been held in two factories, two public housing communities, and in other venues.

Retirees give back in many ways

By Mark Schlotterbeck
Retired Educator at Work

Why do I do this? I was inspired in the ninth grade by a French teacher who believed in us, held forth a kind of theatrical vein each day, and led us through the intricacies and benefits of learning a brand new language.

Now my teaching provides a great, great, thrilling, inspiring, challenging, joyful opportunity to share in the lives and journeys of my fellow residents.

How inspiring to see their smiling faces, discuss issues together, and experience the intertwining of our lives and cultures in many meaningful, purposeful ways.

Regardless of the age, experience, or backgrounds, learning is magical—for student and teacher alike. There is no greater joy than to hear a sigh of relief and accomplishment when a lesson is understood and implemented in one's own life.



A few of the instructors at the Learning Center in Lewiston Public Schools are Row 1, L to R: Kelley Rudd and Irina Petranek, formerly of Russia. Row 2, L to R: Laurie Champagne, Mark Schlotterbeck, Barbara McAllister, and Bashir Shaleh.

Christmas elves at it again!

China Town Manager Becky Hapgood tells me that every Christmas for the past 20 years, the town collects names and related information from local

families who need a help during the holiday season. This project continues because of the amazing businesses, members of our community, and our special "elves."



Retired educators wrapping gifts for the Town of China's annual Christmas gift project are Wayne Begnston. Back L to R: Linda Poulin and Gail Tilton. All are residents of China.

These elves are retired educators, staff members, former secretaries, and cooks from the China Middle and Primary Schools. They assist with the wrapping of hundreds of presents every year. From games to clothing to wrapping those pesky boots and sleds, they arrive bringing their Christmas spirit and creativity with them.

Carefully wrapped presents are then adorned with tags with

names like Santa, Mrs. Claus, Hermes, (the local dentist), Yukon, Cornelius, Rudolph, Blitzen, Dancer and the list goes on.

Even in retirement, the teachers continue to bring joy to the children of China. Linda Poulin organized the group and has continued to do so over the years. As time has passed, more retirees have joined the group to give back to our community.

I remember that the first year my thought was that I would go to help and if the gifts were not appropriate for the intended recipients, then I would not do it again. That day we wrapped blankets,

See Elves, Page 9

By Joann Tyler, Chairperson
KREA Community Participation

Retired Educators: Great resources

By Jayashree “Jay” Sonti
EMLI Co-Founder

Early Math and Language Initiative (EMLI) is a 501 (c) (3) charitable organization incorporated in the State of Maine with the mission to create and support evidence-based intervention programs in math and language skills. The developmental education program is for families of children in under-resourced communities.

EMLI believes that empowering families to support their children academically results in positive, long-term improvements on learning trajectories. Research shows that early exposure to rich learning experiences, especially in early math, directly correlates to later academic successes. EMLI’s current focus is improving proficiency in math for children entering kindergarten.

For decades, the United

States has focused on early family literacy campaigns. Far less time has been dedicated to math in early childhood classrooms and at home. Math anxiety and other biases—such as the false belief that math is “for boys”—have also plagued implementation of the subject with all students.

Some of these factors have contributed to an overall poor performance by U.S. children in mathematics compared to other developed nations. This has resulted in dire consequences for those children who are at a decided disadvantage in under-resourced communities.

Research indicates that children entering kindergarten from households experiencing poverty are nearly twice as likely to be unprepared for school entry as compared to those from families with higher incomes. Furthermore, they are more likely to fall behind and remain behind.

This is particularly evident in mathematics, where trends indicate a larger achievement gap between children from poverty situations and their more affluent peers upon school entry than evidenced in other disciplines.

According to the 2019 *Maine Children’s Alliance* eighth-grade math score differential between economically advantaged versus disadvantaged students was 25 points.

A fundamental part of EMLI is our intergenerational **Family Math** classes. These classes provide the support that enables families to help their young children succeed in math.

The program and materials are offered for free.

Adults participate in “math-play” activities with their child during evening sessions. Instructors model strategies, share information, and offer suggestions in an environment that may be less intimidating and without the peer pressure found in a traditional public school classroom.

Take-home activities, books, and math kits are provided to extend learning into the home in an engaging and enjoyable manner. These projects encourage the kind of positive parent/caregiver interactions that are central to the child’s relational and academic success.

Additionally, during these sessions, meals are provided to provide good nutrition and encourage social interactions.

During the academic year 2022-23, EMLI will donate 500 books and math activities for 30-40 children.

EMLI’s current Family Math program is offered in partnership with Promise Early Education Center at Connors Elementary school in Lewiston.

Classes are held twice a month during the academic year in the Lewiston Adult Education Center, on Wednesdays from 5 to 6 p.m.

EMLI is ahead of the curve in promoting Family Math classes to improve math scores and cultivate positive attitudes towards math. There has never been a greater need for an early math intervention program for youngsters as they embark on their educational journey.

A recent article in the *Portland Press Herald* dated October 24, 2022, highlight-

ed the critical need for intervention programs to help bring learning back on track with students who have decided disadvantages.

The EMLI focuses on early math learning as the starting point intervention journey. It is currently recruiting volunteers

interested in working with participating families and children.

Monica Redlevske is the director of the program. She says, “The family math classes are fabulous! They are designed to be culturally responsive and are built to provide caregivers the foundational math concepts and core vocabulary needed to support their child’s mathematical growth.

“Children and families eagerly engage with the hands on activities, books and materials during the sessions and then are excited to bring all those materials home to continue the math learning with their family.

“Teachers report that they enjoy working with both the parents and children during the math classes and that the two-generational approach used to develop a strong mathematical foundation is one of the most powerful ways to impact children’s school readiness.”

We welcomes retired educators from all backgrounds to help support our mission and improve academic prospects for children from under-resourced communities.

If you are interested in volunteering, please send an email to emli@emlius.org or call Jay Sonti or Mary Goodie at 207-200-4478.

For more information, visit our website: <https://www.emlius.org/>.



EMLI believes “math-play” and “math-talk” are essential to math learning. Children are learning the attributes of a circle and number recognition through parachute play.

Grandparenting, from Page 6

Her house at the farm has two wood stoves. So in these winter months when I am there, my job is keep the fires burning.

We play a little game of "beat the heat" whereby we set the thermostat to 64 and then try to use the wood stoves to raise the temperature. During these warmer than normal winter days and nights, we have had an extremely good "beat-the-heat" season.

So, like any family on the farm, we visit with Santa Claus at Christmas, lug and stack wood when needed, shovel the driveway, bake holiday goodies, and play games.



Grandpa Roger and Francesca "Frankie" Fuller, 2, enjoy an afternoon of sledding on the family farm in Kingston, NH.

Elves, from Page 7

sheets, boots, snowsuits, snugly pajamas, and lots of socks and mittens.

Of course, each child also received a toy or two. It's funny how magical you think when you are helping someone, and it just puts you in the holiday spirit.

As we were wrapping that first year, the JMG teacher and now China resident Hans

Bassett came to deliver the JMG contributions. Stepping inside the door, he looked around the room and said, "Oh my goodness! All of my old teachers!"

We asked him if what he thought happened to us after retiring! Did we just pass away?

No! Instead, we return year after year to be Santa's elves for our town.

Books for Swap



Once again tables will be set up at our MEA-Retired Convention and Annual Meeting at the Augusta Civic Center for our **FREE** book swap. We invite attendees to bring books you have read and return home in the afternoon with 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 book swap coordinator, Bob Jean, at 207-593-6597, or send an email to him at vegas04861@yahoo.com.

Pickleball (PB), a relatively new sport, is an amalgam of ping-pong, badminton, and serious fun. Who knew that hitting a wiffle ball with an oversized ping-pong paddle could have dozens of people laughing, joking, chatting, smiling and cheering each other on?

This game (so great as doubles) is played on a court 20 feet wide by 40 feet long. So each partner's "half" is 10 x 20. Easy peasy! No heavy duty running needed. And the plusses are ginormous.

PB lowers AIC, reduces inflammation, lowers resting heart rate, and causes many smiles. These are always good perks for us. Depending on how quickly one becomes addicted, you'll lose weight while gaining coordination and balance.

If played in a YMCA or fitness gym that is aligned with the Silver Sneakers program or at your Community Rec Center, it's FREE! When it's not free, the cost averages around \$5 per two- to three-

Pickleball: Gaining among seniors

By Susan Feiner, President
Higher Ed. Association Retired

hour sessions.

The only complicated part of the game is scoring. If, however, you are better at counting to 11 than 1, you'll have no problem. The other piece of the game that's challenging ... don't volley when your feet or foot is in "the kitchen." This area is also known as "the no volley zone"—the three feet on your side of the net.

I've played PB at the Y in Waterville and at several community rec centers in Southern Maine. Without fail folks are extraordinarily nice, easy to talk to, and our age!

Convention Booklet Deadlines

**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 names (only) to kay_grindall@yahoo.com.

Mail to 23 Hilltop Drive Oakland 04963.

PAC auction!

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**

Convention: Enjoy a special day with friends

By Rheba Michaud, Chairperson
Convention Committee

(See the December *Clarion* for Gary's biography.)

Registration opens at 8:30 a.m. with tea, coffee, fruit, and Danish. We will have affiliates displays on tables and many different types of vendors will have tables with their information. Most offer free items. A number of raffles are given out at lunch.

Fill out the registration form on Page 11 and send it right in. We are expecting a record turnout and don't want to leave anyone out. It would be so helpful if you would register early.

Following are descriptions of the four breakout sessions

that are offered.

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 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 Maine 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 light-houses 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

See Convention, Page 11

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.

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

71st MEA-Retired Convention & Annual Meeting

“Enjoy! Explore! Engage!”

Keynote Speaker: Maine Humorist Gary Crocker

May 4, 2023

Augusta Civic Center, 76 Community Drive, Augusta

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

Name _____

Tel. _____ Email _____

Address _____ City/Town _____

State _____ Zip _____ Age 90+ FREE _____

Registration: \$20—coffee/juice/food, vendors, affiliate displays, buffet lunch, & entertainment.
Write “1” and “2” on the lines to indicate your first and second choices for breakout sessions:

____ Line Dancing ____ Prison Advocacy ____ Planning for End-of-Life

____ The World of the Maine Wild

**This form may be duplicated—submit a separate registration form for each registrant.
Registration is to be postmarked by April 20, 2023**

*Make check payable to MEA-Retired. Send with registration form(s) to
Larry Given, Registrar, 84 Kenway Drive, Litchfield, ME 04350*

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

Convention, from Page 10

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

Membership, from Page 1

and the future of public education in America depends on us. We must continue to work diligently and continuously to advance public education and educators.

In closing I have to mention the financial cost of membership. My philosophy has always been, “I cannot afford to not be a member!”

The cost of annual dues for unified membership will be approximately **\$.22 per day or \$1.52 per week.**

MEA: \$29

MEA-Retired: \$15

NEA-Retired: \$35

The benefits are incalculable! We gain so much for

the few dollars we spend. Our very livelihood depends on this wise investment.

Please share this article with friends and spend a few minutes talking about your own experiences as informed, involved members.

As a followup to your conversation, I suggest you go to our MEA-Retired website and download the retired educator membership form. You will find forms for three different categories: K-12 educator, ESP, and Higher Ed at mearetired.org/joining. Take a stack to your spring affiliate meetings.

Please renew your efforts to build our membership in 2023. I am here to help anytime—207-768-1688.

Volunteer!



S M I L E
“Seniors Make It
Look Easy”



MainePERS needs YOU!
See Page 1.

Membership Matters: Let's grow our ranks!

*By Roger Roy, Chair
Membership Committee*

Membership growth is everyone's responsibility and privilege. This is the premiere time of the year to consider reaching out to new retirees who will be joining our ranks in June.

First, let's consider our current status of members to determine if some may not have renewed their membership. A friendly contact by a former colleague who knows the individual would make for meaningful connections.

Everyone likes to be remembered by a phone call or a note in the mail. Making connections is always a good gesture and yields results.

Next, we should make lists of former colleagues who are not members and consider how we could approach them. Let's convince them that they are missing out on staying informed on issues—pension,

health insurance, GPO/WEP, tax breaks, and more.

Again, a phone call is more effective than an email or a text. Our monthly efforts to contact newly retired educators should also be encouraged and continued.

Undoubtedly, some members in our local affiliates are not "unified" members of MEA, MEA-Retired, and NEA-Retired. Why not speak to them about joining. They will receive *The Clarion* and many, many other benefits of staying informed.

Truly, think about it. If we who are informed and enjoy the benefits do not speak out, who will? It is always good to do a self-assessment as to why we remain union members. Our enthusiasm will be evident, as we share our experiences with former colleagues who

are not members.

I believe we share a desire for advocacy and protection. We advocate for public schools, student rights, educator rights, student opportunities, as well as for retiree pensions, healthcare, and income tax benefits. We also want a civil society that respects personal freedoms and diversity.

We are active in the political arena at the local, state, and national levels as well. We advocate for equal rights for everyone, for equal opportunities for success, and for a fairer society in general.

Currently, public libraries, public schools, adequate and affordable healthcare, social security, adequate housing, and public employee retirement programs are

repeatedly under attack. We also must be reminded of the close call we had recently with an attempted coup d'état in Washington.

As we meet our former colleagues, we need to listen to what motivates them, and to point out how our union supports their views in those areas. Union political activity is neither Democratic nor Republican. It is American. It is about shared interests and which politicians agree with our views on specific issues. We support educators and their students, not specific political parties.

We need to be proud of who we are and what we believe. And we need to be willing to invite likeminded colleagues to join us.

In unity there is strength,

See Membership, Page 11