



THE CLARION

February 2024

The Newsletter for Retired Educators
Maine Education Association Retired Vol. 135, No. 3

From our President



Bob Jean

It is the first week of a new year, as I write this message. I have done the personal reflection back on 2023 that so many of us do when a new year commences.

My final scorecard shows that it was a good year. I am grateful and appreciative for all the positives in my life. This personal reflection prompted me to think more globally and pinpoint some of the positives I see in MEA-Retired.

Here is a sample of some of the things I am grateful for and appreciative of when I think about MEA-Retired.

Our Members

The generosity of our members is admirable. Affiliates across our state did not hesitate to support the retired teachers group of Hawaii fol-

lowing the horrible fires there.

The same was true when a fund was established for the victims' families after the mass shooting in Lewiston. This was above and beyond what MEA-Retired had already donated.

We see the generosity each year as local affiliates support their schools through our Day of Caring program. Affiliates often support their communities by volunteering and donating to food banks and other community organizations.

Many affiliates have scholarship programs to give local students a chance to further their education. All this and more...

Local Leaders

Our local leaders, who are the glue between the

See President, Page 5

Tally Time

Winter weather does not stop our members from volunteering and from participating in physical activities. Activities may change from season to season, but MEA-Retired members continue to be strong advocates in our communities and to strive to be healthy.

Whether singing in the choir, snow shoeing with friends, or doing groceries for a neighbor, remember to log the time spent completing your activities.

Logged hours should be reported to Affiliate Presidents by April 1. Presidents will tally hours and send the total to the Community Participation Chair with the

See Tallies, Page 3

72nd MEA-Retired
Annual Meeting
and
Convention

May 2, 2024

"We Shine for Everyone!"

Don't miss out!

By Rheba Michaud, Chairperson

Yes! We are excited!

MEA-Retired Convention and Annual Meeting is to be held on May 2, 2024, at the Augusta Civic Center.

If the days continue to speed by as they do now, May will be here before we know it. Our theme is "We Shine for Everyone."

The four breakout sessions will be presented twice, so be sure to register for two events instead of just one. Read the descriptions and think about which two you want to attend.

See 2024 Convention, Page 10

Did you know? Recertification renewal easier

L.D. 753 Reissuance: Retired Teacher. The commissioner may issue a professional teacher certificate to a person who is receiving a retirement benefit from the State Employee and Teacher Retirement Program established under Title 5, section 17602 and who was employed for at least 10 years by a public school, who has been receiving a retirement benefit for no more than 5 years and who, immediately prior to receiving that benefit, possessed an active professional teacher certificate in good standing that has subsequently lapsed.

The professional teacher certificate must be issued with the same grades and subject areas endorsements as were issued with the active professional teacher certificate that was held by the teacher at the time of the teacher's retirement.

A professional teacher certificate issued under this subsection is for the same period as specified in subsection 4 and subject to the same renewal standards as specified in subsection 5. State board rules may further

See Recertification, Page 5

Why contribute to Political Action Committees?

By Molly Smith, PAC Leader
MEA-Retired President-Elect

Why should the MEA and NEA Political Action Committee (PAC) be a top priority for donations?

As a young and uninformed—really misinformed—educator, I had yet to understand why I should become a member of the National Education Association and the Maine Education Association?

Also, why should I also join my local education association as well. It really has been an interesting journey considering

I grew up in a household

where both of my parents were educators and Ohio Education Association members in Akron, Ohio. My father as

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"promoting the economic, professional, and social welfare of retired educators"



By Crystal Ward, Chairperson
Legislative Committee

The second session of 131st State of Maine Legislature convened on January 3, 2024, and is scheduled to end on April 17, 2024. This is known as the "short session" and deals mostly with carry-over bills from last year's first session. It is much more difficult to introduce new legislation now.

Several bills dealing with education and some addressing retirement issues were carried forward. The bill we worked so hard to get passed was 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." This very critical bill was sponsored by Representative Janice Dodge of Belfast

A look back . . . and forward

and has been carried forward to be addressed in this "short session."

As I told you many times before, it is a very expensive initiative. However, it is very reassuring to learn that both Democrats and Republicans now understand the harm the changes made in 2011 to MainePERS have had on current and future retirees.

The Appropriations Committee needs to develop and implement an action plan to start the process of repairing this 2011 COLA mess. Working on increasing the base amount used to calculate our COLA would be the place to start.

As always, there are many competing issues in Augusta; so your voice is needed. If you wrote to representatives or committee members during the last session, please send the same message again. Everyone needs to be reminded that we are still here and will speak again.

MEA and MEA-Retired will continue to make the COLA issue a top priority and will look for all opportunities to help retirees in MainePERS.

Areas to watch are in-

creasing the amount the state pays for health insurance premiums, implementing the new laws dealing with Maine taxation of retirees' pensions, and offering resolutions to mend the 2011 COLA injustices.

I am sorry to report that there are no new movements on the GPO/WEP Social Security Offset legislation in Washington D.C. Little is being done to bring equality to the system.

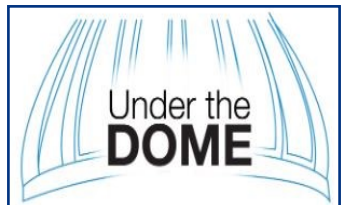
Those educators who have worked and paid in Social Security are entitled to the pension they have earned. This Congress, known as "The Do Nothing Congress," fails to see the inequities and injustices being inflicted on state retirees in 15 states.

I hope that many of you have contacted Governor Mills on this issue because her support is critical to any movement in 2024. Go to Governor Mills Website and you will see a very easy form to fill out. Then, please mail to Governor Janet Mills, One State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333.

I remind you that up-to-date legislative reports are available by contacting John Kosinski, MEA Government Relations Director. Send him an email message to jkosinski@maineea.org.

We look forward to hearing from you indicating that you are interested in sharing your stories when we need testimonies presented to committee members. We can help you write testimonies to share with our representatives in Augusta.

If you need help, do not hesitate to contact me at 786-7084 or send an email to cward10@roadrunner.com.



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 66 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!

March 11, 2024, 9 a.m.
Executive Committee
MEA Headquarters, Augusta

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

May 1, 2024, 5:30 p.m.
Executive Committee
The Senator, Augusta

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

MEA RA
South Portland, ME
May 18-19, 2024

**NEA-Retired
Annual Meeting
and NEA-RA**
Philadelphia, PA
July 1-7, 2024

The Maine Education Association Benefits Trust (MEABT) Trustees and Staff wish to extend their best wishes to you and yours during the year 2024.

We wish to remind members and their family to feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns at www.meabt.org and/or 1.888.622.4418. Please share this contact information with other members as well as those who you may know approaching retirement.

Also, please visit the above website to review and see updated benefit information. The Trust staff will be updating information throughout 2024—especially due to anticipated 2025 Medicare changes.

It is not only a matter of knowing the changes but learning how these changes are to be implemented in final form in the best interest of our members. The staff will be reaching out to the membership through the website, mailings, the annual conven-

tion and future *Clarion* issues.

In the December *Clarion*, I mentioned the MEABT's support to four school districts in response to the tragic loss of lives in Lewiston. This support included close to 200 counseling hours for employees within these districts.

The Trust was able to fund the approximately \$60,000 cost through our health insurance's Member Assistance Program (MAP). MAP services are available to school employees, retirees, and household members.

Many of the services do not require an Anthem insurance card. These services can be accessed using the website www.anthemEAP.com and using MEABT as the login password and/or company name.

There is also a 24-hour helpline. The telephone num-

ber is 855.686.5615 to access counseling and other services. You can find these links on the MEABT website under the "Resources" link.

In addition to direct health services, you can receive limited free and discounted rates with lawyers and financial consultants on issues such as bankruptcy, estate planning, mortgages, and related matters.

There is an identity theft program through Experian which provides benefits such as lost wallet protection and identity restoration services. An entire list of benefits can be obtained at the above referenced MEABT and Anthem websites.

Regrettably, MEABT trustees and staff have been informed that the Family Y Center in Bath has discontinued its association with the Silver Sneakers exercise program. This action affects 27

MEABT updates 'n connections

By Faith Campbell, Trustee
MEA Benefits Trust

members.

There are still several areas in which members can access the program. I encourage you to visit Maine Pines Racquet and Fitness in Brunswick, New England Fitness in Topsham, Cathance Fitness Center in Bowdoin, or the Lisbon Recreation Department. I hope you find joy in the lengthening daylight of winter and the anticipation of your favorite early spring activities and celebrations.

Tallies, from Page 1

names of individuals with the most physical activity hours and volunteer hours. The Convention and Annual Meeting in May will honor these individuals.

Affiliates should be planning for the 2024 Day of Caring and should be contacting school superintendents or principals before the end of the school year in June.

MEA Retired will continue to provide Affiliates with matching funds up to \$100 upon completion of the project and the submission of the form and pictures to the Community Participation Committee.

Forms are available on the MEA-Retired website or by contacting Susan C. Grondin at scgrondin@hotmail.com or 782-8850.

Partnership for Caring

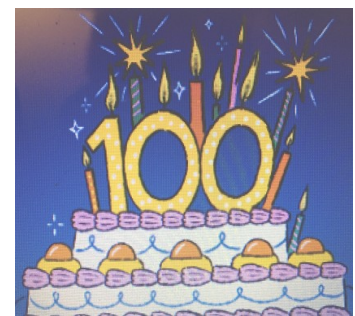
Retired educators remain eligible to participate in the "Partnership for Caring" financial assistance program. The criteria reads: "MEA will assist local affiliates to meet exigent expenses of an unpredictable nature incurred by members or their immediate families. Specifically, the MEA will match, dollar-for-dollar, 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 un-
fied 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.



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
Evelyn Davis, 5/10/1923

AARP special recognition

By Pam Partridge
MEA-Retired AARP Liaison

Outgoing AARP Maine Volunteer State President, Carl Bucciantini of Greene was recently honored during a dinner celebration at the beautiful Saltwater Grille in South Portland.

Volunteers, Executive Council members, office team, and Executive Director Noel Bonham shared words of appreciation for Carl's two years of service in the position of state president.

In that role Carl worked tirelessly with the state director on policy and served as a spokesperson for the organization. He worked with and

advocated for the many AARP Maine volunteers.

Carl has helped volunteers realize their potential and abilities and make the best of their skills while they advocated for policies that help the 50+ community, often helping Mainers of all ages.

Volunteering to serve in the position near the end of the COVID pandemic, Carl initiated a state-wide virtual listening tour on ZOOM to hear member needs and concerns.

While AARP was not conducting in-person events nationally, AARP Maine reached out to its members in order to stay in touch and provide support. There are over 200,000 AARP members in Maine—a significant percentage of our total population.

Carl had set a goal of empowering as many older Mainers as possible when he accepted the position. He

wanted to help them use their voices for the collective good. Listening to dinner attendees talk about Carl was evidence he achieved his goal—a definite benefit for all of us.

Carl and his wife Joyce are retired public school educators. Combined they have taught 62 years. They have four children and four grand-

children.

Together, they were awarded the AARP Maine Ethel Andrus Award in 2021. Named for Dr. Ethel Percy Andrus, founder of AARP, the award is given to volunteers who make a marked difference in the lives of others.

It is the most prestigious and visible award AARP presents each year.



Pictured (L to R) are AARP Executive Council members Victoria Chicon, Pious Ali, Carl Bucciantini, TASH volunteer Deb Alford, and Joyce Bucciantini..

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.

Get your taxes done FREE!

Since 1968, AARP Foundation Tax-Aide has provided FREE tax help to over 75 million taxpayers, with a focus on older adults with low to moderate income.

Tax-Aide volunteers are located throughout Maine, and are trained and IRS-certified every year to make sure they know about and understand the latest changes and additions to the tax code.

Tax-Aide Locator Tool will launch in mid-January and sites will open in early February. At this time you can just google "Map of AARP Tax Locations in Maine."

Get started and find out what documents you will need to help prepare your tax return with regards to income, payments, deductions, adjustments,

credits, health insurance, etc. before your appointment.

All you have to do is make an appointment before the April 17, 2024, deadline with one of the locations across the state of Maine.



Go to https://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp_taxaide/locations.html or https://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp_taxaide/ for more information and tax preparation links.

In addition to the AARP Foundation Tax-Aide Program, there is also the free "CASH Maine" program for households whose combined income is \$64,000 or less.

For more information on that FREE tax preparation service, go to <https://www.cashmaine.org/free-tax-prep/>.

Happy tax season!

President, from Page 1

state organization and the affiliates, are to be thanked for all the work they do.

I have been a guest at several affiliate meetings and have found them all to be welcoming and meaningful. Our local leaders strive to maintain member engagement with a variety of programming. They are willing to share ideas and concerns with other leaders as was witnessed at our Leadership Training in October. The room was buzzing with conversation which produced a steady flow of ideas. It's always a good thing to get fresh ideas and strategies.

We need more opportunities to share among our affiliates. Our leaders promoted the convention and the leadership awards. Both were successful. Fourteen of our sixteen affiliates had Leadership

PAC, from Page 1

a principal of a large high school, and my mother a teacher in an inner city elementary school.

I anticipate that I may have the opportunity to recall my personal journey that lead to my becoming a member sometime in the next few years, as I serve as president-elect and then as president of the Maine Education Association Retired. I will save that part of my story for later.

So, what does that have to do with why I am asking you to be an active and regular contributor to PAC? As I stated earlier, I was misinformed. I needed an education to dispel my incorrect understanding about membership dues money and how that money—my money—would be used if I were to become a member. The biggest error was thinking that dues money is used to finance NEA/MEA PACs.

WRONG!

Our dues money does not finance any part of any PACs! That misunderstanding was the rationale I used when resisting becoming a member as that young and misinformed educator.

I believed then, as I do now, the greatest personal power and that of any collective is at the ballot box, when exercising the responsibility and right to vote. Voting is one of the greatest democratic ideals.

Award winners in 2023. And, the convention attendance was one of the highest I have ever seen. Thank you, local leaders, for your efforts.

Statewide Executive Committee Board of Directors

There is much to be grateful for at the state level as well. Our committee chairs take their work seriously and do a fabulous job in their attempts to make MEA-Retired a top-notch organization.

There are only a few stipendiary positions in our organization. Most members of the Executive Committee and Board of Directors volunteer their time to fill these positions.

We thank them for their commitment, interest, and dedicated willingness

to step up and serve and make a difference!

Nationally

Finally, Maine receives national recognition for the good work it does. I often get email messages praising our *Clarion* and our website. Recently, interest has been expressed in our Pre-Retirement seminars.

The NEA-Retired secretary and president will be invited to be observers at one of our upcoming sessions. The “Maine” presence at national meetings—whether in-person or virtually—is always felt.

Even if only a handful of states show up for said meetings, you can be sure that Maine will always be one of them.

Remarkable! I am grateful, appreciative, and proud of MEA-Retired. I look forward to a productive 2024.

It is one to which I hold true and will go to lengths to defend and uphold. After 42 years of being an active educator and seven years now retired, I have come to understand the importance of supporting PACs.

Throughout countless elections—national, state and local—the outcomes of elections have provided confirmation that the act of voting is not enough. We must ensure that the individuals we are supporting at the ballot box have at heart and deed the right ideals.

We must elect individuals who will act in the best interest of public education, support essential and effective programs. We must support those who will be tireless advocates for adequate funding of our public schools, our students, educators, and communities.

Please consider making a one-time or monthly recurring donation to support this important work: The Maine Education Fund – In Support of Education, or NEA National Education Association Fund PAC, or \$5 Our Future – MEA Fund.

Scan the QR code and donate today.

Recertification, from Page 1

govern qualifications for a professional teacher certificate issued under this subsection.

Reissuance: Retired Educational Technician. The commissioner may issue an educational technician certificate to a person who has been receiving a retirement benefit from the State Employee and Teacher Retirement Program established under Title 5, section 17602 for no more than 5 years and who, immediately prior to receiving that benefit, possessed an active educational technician certificate in good standing that has subsequently lapsed. An educational technician certificate issued under this subsection is for the same period and subject to the same renewal standards as specified in subsection 3.

Go to Maine.Gov and read more about LD 753. Contact the Maine Certification Office in Augusta for answers to your questions.

MEA FUND
In Support of
Public Education

NEA FUND
In Support of
Public Education

PAC
GIVE.VOTE.WIN!

5 FOR OUR FUTURE
\$5 For Our Future
MEA Fund

Help Promote Public Education

Donate to the MEA Fund in Support of Public Education and to the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE

MEA FUND
Maine Education Association Fund
In Support of Public Education uses voluntary contributions from members to help push for education policies that support members, ensuring that our voice, values, and priorities are heard and respected both in the workplace and at the state house. The Fund also helps elect pro-public education candidates at the school board, state and national levels, as no dues dollars are ever used for this purpose.

NEA FUND
National Education Association Fund
The NEA PAC is fueled by educators like you, coming together to fight for real leaders at the federal and state level, regardless of political party. Make your voice heard.

PAC
GIVE.VOTE.WIN!
See MEA PAC for details on how to donate. PAC is a 501(c)(4) organization. All contributions are tax-deductible. For more information, visit www.mea-pac.org.

5 FOR OUR FUTURE
We need association representatives like you to sign up members to participate in the MEA Fund, with even the smallest donation of \$5 per month. A recurring donation will help sustain our advocacy efforts, now and in the future.

SCAN THE QR CODES TO DONATE TODAY

SCAN ME

SCAN ME

SCAN ME



By Paula Moore, Orono
Retired Educator

I don't remember when television came to Berlin, NH, where I grew up. My cousin, Joanie, thinks it was about 1951 when we were three years old. I am fairly sure I can remember listening to evening radio at that point.

In any case, I was not yet a teenager when my parents acquired our first TV. We got

one station—Channel 8 out of Lewiston, ME. My father controlled the television, and it never came on until after supper—

usually for the news. He did enjoy the 1950's comedy shows, though. My mother never missed Lawrence Welk.

There were no cartoons on Saturday mornings because weekends were for getting chores done. There was a sense that watching TV in the daytime was, well, indicative of low morals—like reading comic books.

Even today, at age 75, I don't watch TV during the day. There are too many things to do—housework, writing, gym classes, shopping, going to camp, reading, gardening.

However, I was glued to the TV during the day when President Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, at about 12:30 pm. I was almost 15 years old and in Grade 10 Algebra class when the word came from the office. School was cancelled. I re-



Paula Moore

member the shock of it. All the adults around me looked so serious. School was cancelled the next day, too.

This is the first time I ever watched TV in the middle of the day. My mother, a teacher at Berlin High School, and I sat watching the all-day news. We ate a lunch of sandwiches in front of the TV—also a truly novel event. My mother prepared a quick supper so my father could also tune in to the evolving news.

Even today I feel the heaviness of the situation. I think many people in my Baby Boomer generation mark the assassination of Kennedy as a focal event in their lives.

A second event that I watched during the day was on September 11, 2001, when the World Trade Center and other areas were attacked.

It was 7:30 a.m., a clear, crisp fall morning as I went off to my office at the University of Maine. It was a Tuesday, and I had no classes to teach, so I was going to catch up on grading papers and planning classes.

As usual, I turned on Maine Public Radio to provide ambient background noise while I worked. Suddenly, the classical music stopped. An announcer came on saying a plane had flown into the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City.

It was only 8:46 a.m. I listened in amazement and called my husband Don at home. "Go turn on the TV! Something is happening in NY City!"

As he tuned in, the second plane flew into the South Tower. Don saw it happen! I ran down the stairs to our Dean's Office. The secretaries were all talking excitedly. "We are all going home!" Phyllis, the Dean's secretary

said.

I locked my office and headed home. It was not even 10 am. Don had the TV on. We watched in horror, as over and over, the footage of the planes hitting the World Trade Center played.

Don's son, Carl, lived in NY City, and we tried to contact him. There was no cell service. His girlfriend Sophie worked in the Trade Center as a translator. Her frantic parents called from France. We commiserated, but could not tell them anything about the two kids in NY City. We returned to watching TV.

We kept calling Carl, and only reached him much later in the evening. Both Sophie and Carl were fine, but they were shell-shocked! Sophie had not gone into work at the Center that day, as there was no translating for her to do.

What if she had?

At Christmas time we visited Carl and Sophie and her parents flew from Paris to visit and meet us. We all went to see the World Trade Center site. It was a hole in the ground, and dust still blanketed sidewalks, roads, and buildings. The whole city was somber.

The third time I was glued to the television during the day was when the United States Capitol was attacked on January 6, 2021. Don and our contractor Ken were busy cleaning the chimneys to our three wood-burning stoves.

Soon my sister-in-law Ellen texted me, "Are you watching TV?"

I replied, "Of course not! Ken is here, and we are all working."

She told me disturbing events were happening at the U.S. Capitol. That night as we watched the news, we discovered the event to which Ellen had been referring. It was the breach of the

Capitol, and all the dreadful details.

In June 2022 I watched TV in the middle of the day for the fourth time in my life. I watched some of the daytime public hearings of the United States House Select Committee who were probing the details of the January 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol.

On Tuesday, June 28, 2022, I watched the unscheduled hearing in which Cassidy Hutchinson, an aide to Mark Meadows, the final chief of staff for President Donald Trump, delivered shocking and consequential revelations. Among many disturbing details, Hutchinson revealed that Trump was informed repeatedly that he had lost the election. He was also told it could be illegal to attack the election results, but he did so anyway.

Hutchinson also corroborated reports of Trump's animus toward his Vice President during the attack. In addition, Hutchinson reported that Trump grabbed his secret service escort by the throat when the escort refused to take Trump to the riot.

In December 2023 I feel unsettled and unsafe. Will democracy and our country survive? Will democracy around the world survive. The Ukraine war looks to be unending and Hamas has attacked Israel.

In retribution, Israel is pounding Gaza mercilessly and killing innocent civilians and thousands of children. My faith in humanity is seriously wavering.

Paula Moore taught in elementary and middle school and was a literary specialist for 39 years. She earned a doctorate and taught on the literacy faculty at the University of Maine and was Director for the Maine Reading Recovery Program. Her husband Donald taught high school in Orono for 30 years and directed Orono Adult Education. They have one son and two granddaughters.

Going Bohemian: From Berlin to Budapest

By Phil Gonyar & Carl Daiker
Kennebec Ret. Educ. Assoc.

The Overseas Adventure Travel trip, Jewels of Bohemia, had a pre-trip to Berlin and nearby parts of Germany. Since we had never been to Berlin, it presented an opportunity too good to pass up.

While a heavy emphasis on this part of the trip was on World War II and the Cold War, it also brought back strong memories for Phil as he remembered his college days.

As an undergraduate at UMO, Phil had an art history course with Vincent Hartgen, an enthusiastic teacher who believed that the 3,000 year old bust of Egyptian Queen Nefertiti was one of the wonders of the art world.

And he proclaimed it such from atop his desk. It left in Phil a great desire to see the work, a work housed, as luck would have it, in the Neues Museum in Berlin.

Throughout Berlin the reminders of the Cold War were evident. Cobblestones embedded in the streets marked the previous East/West division of Berlin. Parts

1945 Potsdam Conference, where the Allied leaders determined the fate of the defeated Germans. The palace was chosen for the meeting because it had three major entrances.

After all, no one of the three leaders, Truman, Stalin, and Churchill, could follow one of the others into the building. That would never do. Even the main conference table was round so no leader sat at the head of the table.

Another emotional experience was a visit to the Wannsee Villa in the Village of Wannsee, Germany.

This is the house where the pre-War Germans determined the fate of the Jews. Here was developed the plan for concentration camps, the gas chambers—the Final Solution.

The trip then moved on to Wittenberg to see the area where Martin Luther began the Protestant Reformation.

Schlosskirche is the church where Luther posted his 95 Theses in 1517 and where he is buried. The building where Luther, his wife, and children lived is now a museum.

The last stop in Germany was Dresden. This city, almost entirely destroyed in World War II, has been thoroughly rebuilt. One very interesting pre-war survivor and a “must see” for any visit to Dresden, is Der Ganze Fürstentz or The Procession of Princes.

This piece of art is 335 feet long and was created in 1873 by Wilhelm Walthers. It

depicts all of the 35 rulers of the House of Witten from the 12th to the 20th century. The original was created using the sgraffito technique. Sgraffito is a form of wall decoration made by “scratching through a surface to reveal a lower layer of contrasting color.” It is usually done on plaster or stucco walls.

Through the years the



This depicts part of the Procession of Princes in Dresden

weather took its toll on the wall. In 1906 and 1907, the artwork was recreated on 25,000 Meissen porcelain tiles. Meissen is world famous for its porcelain. What resulted was the world's largest porcelain mosaic.

Those who know their World War II history know that an intense firestorm resulted from the Allied bombing of Dresden. Yet, the Meissen porcelain tiles made it through the conflagration with little damage. The tiles were cleaned during the 1970s, but that's about it.

The attached photo shows a portion of the tile work. It is truly stunning.

The tour moved from Dresden to Prague and all the sites that the capital of the Czech Republic has to offer.

Chief among those is the famous Astronomical Clock on the Old Town Square. The clock is over 600 years old dating back to the days of Charles IV, the Bohemian king and Holy Roman Emperor. It was Charles who is credited with transforming

Prague into a center of culture and learning. The clock chimes every hour drawing large crowds to witness the display of animated figurines that are included in the clock face.

From Prague we traveled to Cesky Krumlov by way of the Vojna Memorial. This was a labor camp for political prisoners developed while the Czech Republic was ruled by the Communists during the Cold War. The prisoners were forced to work in the uranium mine adjacent to the camp.

Cesky Krumlov was an important trading center in the Middle Ages. This town was not damaged during World War II and many of the medieval buildings still remain, including the castle which overlooks to town. It is the second largest castle complex in the Czech Republic.

The Budweiser Budvar Brewery was a tour stop to learn a little brewing history and quench our collective thirsts. This is the original home of Budweiser Beer. We had an amazing tour of the brewery topped off with a large mug of freshly brewed beer.

Slavonice was our next overnight stop after Cesky Krumlov. It is a Czech farming village with a fantastic boutique hotel owned by a delightful wine connoisseur. We took a day trip to a nearby goat farm where we helped to milk the goats, made some



Carl is standing next to the Berlin Wall.

of the Wall still remain as evidenced by the attached picture.

Checkpoint Charlie is there. The Brandenburg Gate has been fully restored. The addition of the Holocaust Memorial keeps that part of history alive. And to bring thoughts to the present, in the park in front of the Russian Embassy was a makeshift memorial to the current war in Ukraine.

Our tour moved on to Potsdam and the Cecilienhof Palace—the site of the July,

See Bohemia, Page 9

I began my tenure as your representative on the MEA Board of Directors on July 17. Some issues that have been brought to the forefront are as follows:

Retired educators remain eligible to participate in the “Partnership for Caring” 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 website and Facebook page.

NEA resources/tool kits are available for our (1) retirees running for school board elections and (2) affiliates engaging in membership re-

cruitment activities. They are accessible online at nea.org.

MEA President Grace Leavitt conducts Virtual Office Hours on the second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. Group email messages to MEA members from Grace contain access details.

Two questions were raised at a recent MEA-Retired Executive Committee meeting:

(1) Is it possible for candidates to know the vote tallies of elections of delegates to the MEA Board of Directors or to serve as an RA delegate?

I asked MEA Executive Director Rachelle Bristol. She asked the Structure and Bylaws Committee and that information is available to candidates.

(2) May retired delegates be elected to the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA-RA for two- or three-year terms instead of just a one-year term?

Rationale: Delegates are reluctant to commit to serve on an NEA-Retired or NEA committee because they are

not sure of returning another year. Also, being a two- or three-year delegate fosters continuity and greater participation.

MEA bylaws and NEA-Retired bylaws do not address this issue. Page 10 of NEA bylaws, Article 3, Allocation of Delegates. 3-3 Term: Delegates shall be elected for a term not to exceed three (3) years. An individual elected to a multiyear term shall serve if the individual and the affiliate continue to qualify for the delegate position.

Response from MEA Executive Director Rachelle Bristol: *After some research to multiple individuals/entities, it appears that MEA-Retired could vote to change their term lengths.*

It is believed that MEA-Retired may have done this in the past to establish one-year terms... thus the belief that you could not change unilaterally. To change the current term lengths, a change in our bylaws would have to be put into effect.

Another issue that was discussed at our November 6

MEA Board of Directors report

By Kay Grindall, Retired Rep.
MEA Board of Directors

Board of Directors meeting asked if MEA could include retirees’ email addresses and telephone numbers in the monthly lists that are sent to affiliate leaders. I extended that request to Executive Director Rachelle Bristol.

She responded: *Beginning with our January list, they should be able to provide some email addresses and telephone numbers of retirees on those lists—depending on the availability of information.*

If there are retirement issues that you would like to have addressed, feel free to call 207-512-0027 or email kay_grindall@yahoo.com.

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 5

Tuesday, February 6

MEA Benefits Trust & WEP/GPO

Wednesday, February 7

MEA-Retired & MainePERS

Session 6

Tuesday, March 5

MEA Benefits Trust & WEP/GPO

Wednesday, March 6

MEA-Retired & MainePERS

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

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

Membership, from Page 12

Washington: 73

York: 164

I encourage membership chairpersons of each affiliate to remain diligent in reaching out to potential members. Encourage your members to contact their friends and colleagues inviting them to join.

Of course, a prime resource is contacting recent retirees who are included on the monthly lists that we get from MEA.

Reach out and introduce yourself and inform them of the benefits of joining your county affiliates. These win-

ter months are slower times. May I ask that you spend some time reaching out—send a card, make a phone call, send an email message, or meet a new retiree for lunch.

The personal contact is so effective. A gathering enables opportunities for dialogue, questions, answers, and sharing of retirement life.

If you have questions on this new process of determining the level of recognition at convention based on percentages, please feel free to contact me at 207-768-1688 or send an email message to soucyroy@maine.rr.com.

Bohemia, from Page 7

cheese from the milk, and helped to cook lunch.

Leaving the Czech Republic we crossed into Slovakia and then into the capital, Bratislava, home to our tour guide, Silvia.

One of Bratislava's claims to fame is the Most SNP or the Bridge of the Slovak National Uprising. It crosses the Danube River and has something in common with Maine.

There are only four bridges in the world with observatories on them. Bratislava has one of them and we have the Penobscot Narrows Bridge. Note the picture of Phil standing in sight of the bridge.

Also, while in Bratislava we learned about blueprinting, a Slovak folk art that involves printing intricate patterns on white fabric. We each had an opportunity to practice this art form, and we have the results to prove it.

From Bratislava we headed to Hungary by way of a slight detour through Austria. There we visited the Roman city of Carnuntum, once a thriving Roman army camp with a population of 50,000. Its ruins are now being excavated.

The last stop on the trip was the capital of Hungary, Budapest. On our tour of the city we were amazed that our local guide was not at all afraid to voice her less than glowing opinion of the current leader of Hungary –

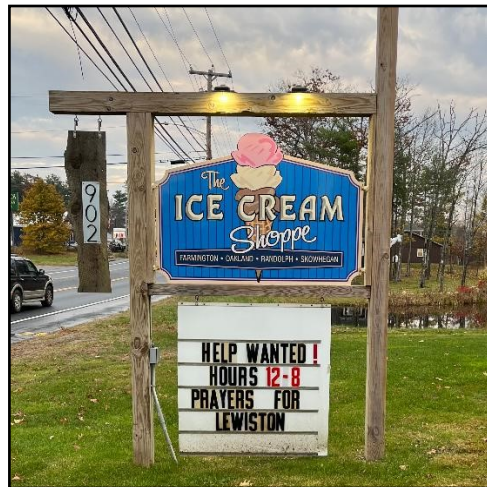
Victor Orban.

She has survived German army occupation and a Communist regime. She is very unhappy with Mr. Orban who seems to threaten her democratic values.



Phil stops for a photo on the Banks of the Danube River with the Bridge of the Slovak National Uprising in the background

We will always remember



Life in Maine as we knew it will never be the same as it was before October 25 when 18 people lost their lives and 13 others were injured at two strategic locations in Lewiston. One mass shooting was at the Just-in-Time Recreation Bowling Alley during a youth league event and the second occurred minutes later at the nearby Schemengees Bar & Grille Restaurant.

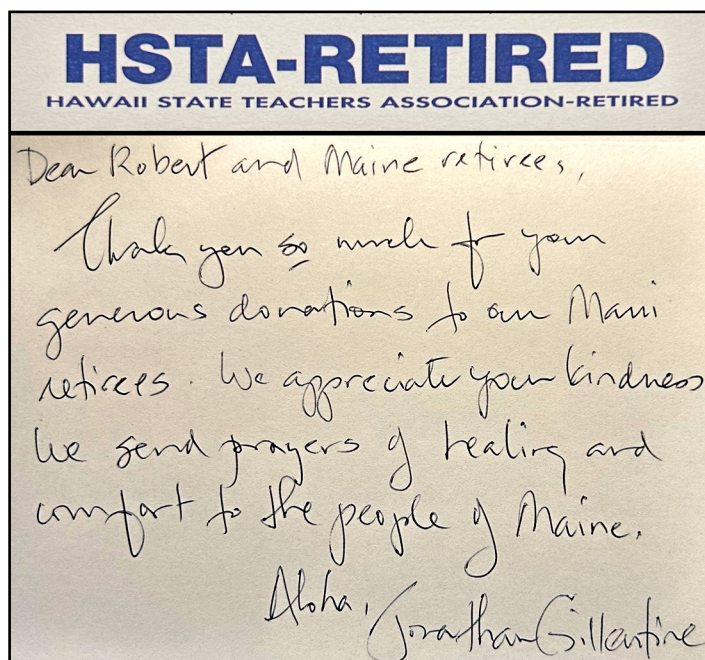
Businesses all across Maine shared the incomprehensible grief and loss by hosting signs of support and remembrances. This sign is outside the Ice Cream Shoppe in Oakland.

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 Assoc.



MEA-Retired members donated to the Hawaii State Teachers Association Retired in the wake of their recent devastating losses from the horrific fires. They sent a thank you note and also acknowledged the great losses in the recent shootings in Maine. We also donated to the Lewiston Foundation as well. Treasurer Bob Souther of Camden shared the note.

2024 Convention, from Page 1

Master gardener Lynn Lubas of Dover-Foxcroft will give us tips on creating better and more productive gardens.



Lynn Lubas

Rena Kearney of Mars Hill has traveled to many countries and enjoys sharing her many experiences—her most recent one being to Europe. You may want to take one of her trips because Rena brought the country alive for you.



Rena Kearney

For all you outdoors enthusiasts and avid hikers, we have the lady for you. Traci Halvorson of Easton hiked the Appalachian Trail alone. She had many fascinating adventures! You may decide to hike a small portion of the trail after you hear her stories!



Traci Halvorson

All of us want to maintain good health with confident balance and strength. MaineGeneral's Physical Therapy Director Matthew Cary will be giving exercises for you to do at home to help with your balance. As you watch TV or movies, you can exercise and become healthier and more balanced as you work around and outside your home.



Matt Cary

Our keynote speaker will be most extraordinary. Scarborough Police Chief Mark Holmquist will discuss his career as a sentry guarding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington, Virginia. All who have visited the renowned Tomb of the Unknown Soldier will be very interested in learning of the expectations and requirements of this very impressive position. This will be very interesting!



Mark Holmquist

(Note: Reread your December *Clarion* for more indepth information on our speakers.)

In addition to having two breakout sessions, we have a new **Attendance Award**. This Attendance Award will be given to the affiliate with the highest percentage of members in attendance—computed on the membership numbers from the 2023 booklet. It is important to be sure to write the name of your affiliate on the registration form. Invite friends and retired colleagues to attend. Plan to carpool and make it a fun day.

A delicious brunch awaits you as you arrive. A hot full menu lunch is always delicious. Many exhibitors and vendors

are available for you to peruse. The PAC silent auction will be available for your fun and surprises! The book exchange table will be featured as well. So, bring some good books to leave at the table and take some home with you.

Affiliates, we invite you to bring a poster to display and showcase what your affiliate members are doing and the programs in which they are involved. Presidents, please let me know that you are planning to bring a poster, so I will have a table waiting for you. If you only need one-half table, please let me know that too. Affiliates often share tables.

Our morning speakers keep us up to date on MEA-Retired affairs. We will have a solemn Memorial Tribute. Grants and scholarships will be presented. Membership and Community Participation Awards will be given. Please keep track of your

volunteer and exercise hours.

Of course, one of the most important awards given are Leadership Awards. They are presented to each affiliate's exceptional leader. We want each affiliate to send in their leader's name and resume.

We want to encourage members to come in May to our Convention and Annual Meeting which is a few months away. If you need to budget your money, put \$10 aside for three months to pay your \$30 registration fee.

For this nominal fee, you will enjoy great food, learn in the breakout sessions remain informed, enjoy entertainment, speak with many vendors and exhibitors and meet and renew old friendships.

Let's see which affiliate will receive our first Attendance Award. Encourage your friends to come with you. See you on May 2, 2024, in Augusta.

MAINE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION RETIRED 72nd Convention & Annual Meeting Augusta Civic Center, Augusta, ME May 2, 2024

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 8:30 | Registration, refreshments, exhibits/vendor/county displays, PAC raffle, book swap, music by harpist Isleen Halvorsen of Dover-Foxcroft |
| 9:30 | Welcome.....Bob Jean, President |
| | Land Acknowledgement.....Bob Jean, President |
| | InvocationRev. Angela Rotherham, Pastor
Kennebec River United Methodist Churches |
| | Pledge of Allegiance.....Molly Smith, President-Elect |
| | National Anthem.....Isleen Halvorsen |
| | Maine Education Association...Jesse Hargrove, Vice President |
| | MainePERS.....Dr. Rebecca Wyke, Executive Director |
| | MEA Benefits Trust.....Jennifer Kent, Executive Director |
| | Introductions: Vendors, Exhibitors, DisplaysBob Jean, President |
| 9:50 | Dismissal to Session 1 and PAC Raffle |
| 10:00 | Breakout Session 1 (See Page 5 for information.) |
| 10:45 | Dismissal to Session 2 and PAC Raffle |
| 10:55 | Breakout Session 2 (See Page 5 for information.) |
| 11:40 | View Exhibits and Affiliate Displays and PAC raffle tickets |
| 12:00 | Buffet Lunch—Main floor (ticket needed) Raffle prizes awarded |
| 12:40 | Keynote Address.....Mark Holmquist, Chief, Saco Police Department |
| 1:25 | Business Meeting—Main floor..... Bob Jean, President |
| | MEA Government Relations..... John Kosinski, Director |
| | Minutes of 2023 Annual Meeting.....Marilyn Hylan, 2022 Secretary |
| | Action on Resolutions..... Gary McGrane, Chairperson |
| | Action on Bylaws Changes.....Phil Gonyar, Parliamentarian |
| | In Memoriam Tributes.....Gary McGrane, Past President |
| | Legacy Committee.....Jan Collins, Chairperson |
| | Membership Committee Awards.....Roger Roy, Chairperson |
| | Community Participation Awards.....Susan Grondin, Chairperson |
| | Affiliate Leadership Awards.....Molly Smith, President-Elect |
| | President's Award.....Bob Jean, President |
| 3:00 | Adjournment.....Bob Jean, President |

Book table at convention

Once again this year tables will be set up at our MEA-Retired convention and annual meeting for our **FREE** book swap.

We encourage attendees to bring books you have read and share with others. Then, feel free to take books donated by others. It is a great way to expand your reading repertoire 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.

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.



72nd MEA-Retired Convention & Annual Meeting “We Shine for Everyone!”

May 2, 2024

Augusta Civic Center, 76 Community Drive, Augusta

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

Name _____ Affiliate _____

Address _____ Age 90+ FREE _____

City/Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Tel: _____ Email _____

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



Vendors, non-profits, and affiliates always prepare interesting displays, and many provide giveaway items for convention attendees.

Convention Booklet Deadlines

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



Maine Education Association Retired
35 Community Drive
Augusta, ME 04330

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04901



Membership Matters: Growth abounds!

*By Roger Roy, Chair
Membership Committee*

The MEA-Retired Board of Directors recently approved a change to the calculations for membership retention and recruitment grants that are typically awarded at the convention and annual meeting every May.

We used to recognize the affiliates with the highest **number** of increased membership. Well, people die, move to warmer climates or near family members or closer to medical resources. So, retirees' memberships often change from one affiliate to another from one year to the next.

We have found that to be true in Aroostook County where people often move for various reasons. County population is decreasing. Student

enrollment in our schools is down and that means fewer education personnel. This translates into fewer potential members in our retired educator group.

Now, we will recognize the affiliates with the highest **percentage** of increase. The method of calculating the "percentage of membership growth" is as follows:

Look at your 2023-2024 membership lists and subtract the number of members who have died, withdrawn, or have lapsed membership. Now, subtract that number from your new membership tally

as of February 20, 2024. Divide the difference by the last year's adjusted number.

For example, if Knox County had 55 members in 2023 and 6 members have died, moved, or withdrawn memberships. Their tally is now 49.

So, if their March 31, 2024, tally is 62 members, the "13 would be divided by 49" and yield a percentage increase of 26.5 percent.

The results from the 16 affiliates are then ordered by size and the largest growth number earns a \$100 grant for that affiliate. The next four affiliates

with the largest positive growth earn a \$50 grant. Checks will be presented at the May convention and annual meeting.

Following are the 2023 affiliate membership tallies reported at our convention and annual meeting:

Androscoggin: 93
Aroostook: 348
Cumberland: 51
Franklin: 55
Hancock: 23
Higher Ed: 69
Kennebec: 77
Knox: 55
Mid-Coast: 101
Oxford: 39
Penobscot: 169
Piscataquis: 28
Somerset: 51
Waldo: 56



See Membership, Page 7