



THE CLARION

The Newsletter for Retired Educators
Maine Education Association Retired
Vol.137 No.4

April 2026

74th MEA-Retired
Annual Meeting
and
Convention
April 30th, 2026
“The Many Hats of
MEA-Retired”

From our President:



Molly Smith

At the time of this writing, I have just returned from the annual NEA-Retired Conference in Phoenix, Arizona.

Both President Elect, Julie Gomez, and I had the privilege of attending the Conference that for the most part was financed by NEA-Retired dues dollars and in small part by dues dollars from MEA-Retired. I am grateful to both organizations.

I spent one day of the Conference working with our current NEA-Retired President Anita Gibson of Alabama who led a meeting inclusive of other state Presidents.

I have come to know President Gibson as an engaging, open and progressive leader who always has her eyes set on organizational development and improvement for its members.

This is similar to the efforts and focus of the governance of the Maine Education Association Retired, through our own internal Association Review Initiative.

The greater balance of the time was spent on attending productive Professional Learning sessions focusing on a variety of topics.

One session I found most helpful was, **Stronger Together: Uniting Aspiring, Active, and Retired**

Members for Collective Power, presented by Connecticut Retired - President, Kate Dias.

I was able to share a meal with Kate and other CT folks to talk informally about their efforts.

Here in Maine, the leadership of MEA and MEA-Retired, with the participation of a few MEA-Retired local affiliates, are currently working to launch a pilot program, initiated by the adoption of New Business Item 10 (NBI #10) at the MEA Representative Assembly-May 2025, that would move us in a similar direction.

A sample of other offerings included **Best Practices in Retiree Organizing; How to Develop and Apply for Year-Round Organizing Grants; Fueling Focus and Energy: How Educators Can Support Peak Performance with Nutrition, Sleep and Mental Clarity; Beyond the Classroom: Reframing Your Skills for New Pathways and Pension Power.**

Many of the sessions supported work that our own governance bodies and committees are actively undertaking here locally.

This was the second NEA-Retired Conference that I have attended.

Wherever it is, be it this Conference, the NEA Retired Annual Meeting, or at the NEA Representative Assembly, I never fail to benefit from the opportunity to network and learn from other state leaders.

I have once again returned to Maine with a renewed

realization that we are doing great work to maintain and improve the lives of our members.

In many states there are struggles and hardships that are daunting.

Many struggles that we face in Maine have been navigated through and overcome.

Many of our own challenges remain. I am left with a renewed affirmation that there are not many places in this country, that I would rather live and work.

I am proud to call the State of Maine my home.

With your continued support and the commitment of your elected and volunteer leaders of the Maine Education Association Retired we will continue to make Maine a GREAT place to live, work and retire.

An Invitation to Consider Volunteer Opportunities from President Smith and Sarah Ferguson

MEA-Retired Members, please take time to read and consider your possible volunteer involvement in this very important program.

There are many of the state’s students that need you, your experience, advocacy and caring.

The following is a letter from the State of Maine Government Relations Director, Sarah Ferguson, sarah.ferguson@maine.gov

See Volunteer, Page 5

Time is running out. Don’t forget to register today!

The deadline to register for the 2026 Annual Meeting and Convention is drawing near. The committee is looking forward to seeing many retirees attending.

Registration begins at 8:30 in the front lobby of the Augusta Civic Center.

Once inside you will find many vendors, a book swap table, PAC Raffle table, and displays from some of our affiliates. Feel free to start browsing, but there will be a little more time for that later, too.

The meeting will begin at 9:30 with some introductory items such as the Pledge of Allegiance, National Anthem, Invocation, and remarks by our MEA Vice President.

Attendees will then break out into the sessions they have chosen.

See Convention, Page 9

Inside this issue

From Our President.....	1
Convention	1,9
Legislative.....	2
Pre-retirement.....	3
MEA Board.....	4
AARP.....	4,5
MainePERS.....	6,7
Communications.....	8
MEA Benefits Trust.....	10
Convention Registration.....	11
Membership.....	12

**Legislative Committee
Report
by Crystal Ward-
Chairperson**

The Legislature has until the end of April to finish its work.

For this second session, called the short session of the 132nd Maine Legislature, we tried a different plan this year.

Many of the bills we worked on last session were carried over to the short session.

The good news is that we have already completed the public hearings, the work sessions and votes in the House and Senate, and the trip to the Appropriations Committee.

Due to the high cost of some bills we focused our efforts on only ONE bill. The cost of the bill is \$3,000,000 and will be an ongoing expense for the State. The bill is on the Appropriations Table waiting for funding.

The bill is: **LD111
An Act to Increase the
State's Share of Retired
Teacher Health Insurance**

Summary: This bill requires the State to pay 65% of a retired teacher's share of the premium for group accident and sickness or health insurance from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026. (This would be a 5% increase.)

There are many bills passed and waiting for funding.

Governor Mills did not include funding for LD111 in her proposed Supplemental Budget. There will be some money that the Appropriation Committee has to fund these bills. Your emails, letters, and calls will help keep the bill in front of them when they start making decisions.

People have asked me about fixing the 2011 mess that affected the MainePERS pension system. The good news is that we have been able to get bills passed that will start fixing the mess in a few different methods. The issue is the very high cost, from \$750 million to over \$1 billion.

The light at the end of the tunnel is that the money the State owes the system from the 1990s Unfunded Actuarial Liability (UAL) will be paid off in 2028. That's about \$300 million a year that needs to go toward repairing the damage done in 2011.

We have been working to convince the Legislature to use the money to put

MainePERS back to its pre-2011 status.

Before 2011, we received a COLA based on the CPI and applied to the entire amount of our pensions. The COLA was capped at 4%.

The penalty for early retirement was 2% per year.

Many legislators now understand the harm that was done and the fact that pensions are not keeping up with inflation. Work on this issue will be ongoing.

The elections in 2026 will be **very important** as we work to put people in office who support all the MEA and MEA-Retired issues!

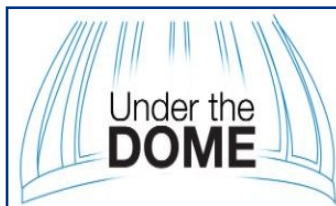
Current legislators who run again will have their voting records reviewed to see how they voted on our issues.

There will be a screening and recommendation process. Information on the candidates will be sent out for you to consider.

In order to have success in the Maine Legislature we must have friends from any party elected.

Electing an education friendly Governor is critical to the success of MEA-Retired. Your **vote** holds lots of power!!

**The latest legislative news
in only a click away.
Sign up today!**



Members are invited to sign up for all the latest legislative news and updates from MEA Government Relations Director Jan Kosinski by emailing him at: jkosinski@maineea.org

**Deadlines for
submitting articles for
future issues of *The
Clarion*:**

**June issue— submit by
May 5**

**August issue—submit
by July 5**

**October issue— submit
by September 5**

**Send articles/photos
to:
vegas04861@yahoo.com**

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. Send articles to vegas04861@yahoo.com Questions? Call Bob Jean at 207-593-6597

We pay 70 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, 2026
Denver, Co

June 29—July 5, 2027
Indianapolis, IN

June 29—July 5, 2028
Washington, D.C.

June 29—July 5, 2029
Kansas City, MO



**MEA-Retired is
here for you!**

**April 6, 9:00 AM
Board of Directors Meeting
Best Western Hotel, Waterville**

**April 29, 9:00 AM
Executive Committee
MEA Headquarters, Augusta**

**June 1, 9:00 AM
Board of Directors Meeting
Best Western Hotel, Waterville**

Meet/greet begin at 9 a.m.
Meetings begin at 9:30 a.m.
Contact affiliate leaders
with ideas and concerns.

Pre-Retirement Committee Report By Bo Zabierek– Chairperson

Our committee members and presenters will all be invited to our final survey review, including our Uniserv Assistant Lisa Collins who will present the feedback from our winter seminars.

This practice helps inform and tailor future presentations to meet our member's needs. We also discuss the best ways to continue recruiting future MEA-Retired members.

Sharon Beaulieu presents the Anthem Medicare Advantage plan for K-12 educators. She is hosted by Jim Thornton of Westbrook who facilitates the Q & A on the zoom chat at intervals throughout the presentation.

Patty Wheeler of the Anthem

South Portland office backs up Sharon, presenting our seminars when Sharon has a scheduling conflict.

Kim Bumford from MainePERS presents on the following Wednesday evenings hosted by facilitator Julie Gomez from Lewiston.

Karla Bracey from Oxford Hills fills in for Jim and Julie as she did for Julie during our final presentation of the school year,

These six seminar sessions are presented in the fall and winter months for our member's convenience.

In reflecting back on the school year, I am grateful for having a great team on our committee and for the excellent

support received from our MEA Uniserv Assistant, Lisa Collins.

A special note of thanks is due for our immediate Past President, Bob Jean, for supplying our Zoom links and kicking off each evening as President Molly Smith promotes MEA-Retired unified membership to all of our active educators.

Bob agreed to support the committee in that role as Molly transitioned into her position as MEA-Retired President.

We look forward to continuing to provide the most current information available to active and retired members who are considering their retirement options and hope to continue to serve and recruit them to stay active into their retirement years.

We are excited to pilot a presentation from the Social Security Administration to of-

fer advice to our members who may not be in the Maine Public Employees Retirement System (MainePERS) and depend on Social Security for their retirement benefits.

The committee and our most recent seminar participants will attend just after the committee's survey review on March 11th. We hope to host these sessions with Social Security's Boston Regional Retirement Specialist, Marilenin Vasquez.

We plan to present these 75 minute power point presentations and Q&A at least once each season earlier in the day to accommodate the Social Security Administration's normal business hours.

MEA's 2026-2027 Pre-Retirement seminars will be held virtually by Zoom over the course of two consecutive nights from 5:00-6:15 P.M. Members should be prepared to attend BOTH nights.

2026-27 Pre-retirement Seminar Schedule

Fall sessions

October 6– MEA-Retired, MEA Benefits Trust
October 7– MEA-Retired local, MainePERS

October 20– MEA-Retired, MEA Benefits Trust
October 21– MEA-Retired local, MainePERS

November 4– MEA-Retired, MEA Benefits Trust
November 5– MEA-Retired local, MainePERS

***Sessions begin at 5:00 p.m. each night**

***Attendees must be MEA members**

***Early registration is recommended**

**To register contact Lisa Collins at :
lcollins@maineea.org**

CONGRATULATIONS "Century+ Club"

Benita Russo, 1/1/1919
Josephine McAlary, 1/1/1923
Frances Bryson, 1/1/1923
Theresa Thibeault, 1/1/1925
Gladys Stokinger, 1/1/1925
Ruth McInnis, 3/14/1925
Elwyn Walkier, 6/17/1925
Marian Downing, 12/20/1925
Lorraine Bowdoin, 1/1/1926
Lucy Deroche, 1/1/1926
E Kenneally, 1/29/1926



AARP MEA/MEA-Retired Liaison Pamela J. Partridge

Information for this article was gathered from AARP Maine testimonies submitted to the 132nd Maine State Legislature, Second Regular Session.

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age.

While AARP Maine is busy all year with programs and activities benefiting the 50+ community, they are particularly busy when the legislature is in session by advocating for good legislation.

The AARP Tuesdays at the Statehouse (TASH) volunteers get an update every Friday containing information about bills being tracked. They show up each Tuesday

morning for a briefing before setting out into the halls to speak with legislators or just be visually present in their AARP Maine shirts and sweaters.

One area that AARP is heavily weighing in on this session is affordable housing.

Testimony was presented in support of **LD 2127 "An Act to Increase the Cap on Bonds Issued by the Maine State Housing Authority to Reflect Current Housing Production Needs in the State"**

Affordable housing continues to be challenging due to high borrowing rates, inflation on materials, and labor shortages.

If enacted, this bill will raise the cap on bonds issued by Maine State Housing Authority by one billion dollars, making more money available for housing projects.

Testimony in support of **LD 2057 "An Act to Support Rehabilitation and Development of Affordable Manufactured Housing Communities"** was also given this session.

A majority of 45+ Main-

ers say they want to age in their homes, but worry about whether or not they will be able to as they grow older.

Their preference is that they, or family members, receive care and assistance at home.

Manufactured housing offers the right size at the right price for our older citizens. Unfortunately, many of our mobile home parks have aging infrastructure which is costly to fix.

You may have read articles in the newspaper lately about mobile home park residents' concerns that their park will be sold because the current owners cannot afford the maintenance and repair costs.

This bill amends the current laws that govern the Maine State Housing Authority.

If enacted Maine State Housing Authority loans will be available to privately owned or cooperative-owned manufactured housing communities and mobile home parks for rehabilitation or construction.

It will also make for

more favorable loan terms under certain conditions.

On a related topic, testimony was given in support of **LD 2129 "An Act to Prohibit Liens on Principal Residences and Wage Garnishments for Medical Debt"**

Medical debt is more likely to happen to those who are 50-64 at a time when they are trying to build some economic stability to prepare for retirement.

This includes individuals who have health insurance for a variety of reasons.

Liens on a principal residence and wage garnishment make it difficult to build that stability.

AARP supports protection of the principal residence and of wages for reasonable essential expenses.

AARP Maine continues to weigh in on other bills relating to aging in place, the cost of utilities, health care, fraud, and more this session.

If you are interested in volunteering with AARP at any level, please reach out to me.

pampartridge1@gmail.com
207.431.3470

MEA Board of Directors Report By Kay Grindall Our Representative to the Board

-Meeting Notes-

MEA-Retired Membership has a net increase of 33 members as of this date.

MEA-Retired has the highest number of members contributing to PAC through automatic payments—41 to date.

MEA's "Join Now--Auto Pay" pilot program to transition from payroll deduction to private payment of dues was

launched for "new" members as of February 1.

Options include a member's payment by check, bank account Electronic Funds Transfer, or credit card transaction.

Time was spent on processing the basic language and guidelines that need to be included in all constitutions/bylaws in active locals, retired affiliates, and MEA-Retired constitutions/bylaws.

We are to (1) implement the voting policy of "one person, one vote;" (2) take steps as are legally permissible to ensure the documents contain language about provisions for ethnic-minority representation; (3) conduct elections of officers with open nominations and

secret ballots; (4) require unified (MEA, MEA-Retired, and NEA-Retired) membership status for affiliate presidents and vice presidents, MEA-Retired officers and committee chairpersons; (5) delineate the membership year as MEA—September 1 thru August 31. (6) conduct a due process hearing if a member is censured, suspended, or expelled.

Quite a bit of time was spent in discussion, and a group activity was conducted around mentorship—in the classroom, on committees, on the Board, active locals, and retired affiliates.

My mind went to our own MEA-Retired. How many new retirees are not stepping up to

leadership because they don't know what is required? They do not know the requirements of attending meetings, engaging in committee work, accessing resources, responding to members, communicating reports of representation on different entities, maintaining accountability to leadership and the broader community of all members.

"May Day" is International Labor Day. A May Day toolkit is available on the NEA website.

Jesse would like three locals from 9 Board regions to commit to May Day activities.

For more information about May Day visit the NEA website.

News You Can Use-Driver Safety

By Joyce Bucciantini

AARP Community Outreach Coordinator

When I was a teenager, on the rare occasions that I was allowed to drive my parents' car, my mother would always say, "drive carefully", as I left the house. I would nod in agreement. I mean, what else could I do?

Years later, when my own kids were teenagers driving my car, I found myself saying those same words, "drive carefully".

Time passes quickly and those teenagers have all grown up. Yet, after every time they visit us I still think "drive carefully" as they drive away, even though I don't say the words out loud.

My first car had a four-speed transmission. Even better, both the heater and radio worked.

Compared to my first car, modern cars are like driving a

computer with wheels. Learning how to navigate all of their modern features can take a bit of time, but not to worry.

AARP offers a Smart Driver TEK Online Workshop that explains many auto tech features like crash mitigation, voice controls, and parking assistance systems.

The videos explain not only how these features work, but how they can help us be safer drivers. These workshops are free and can be found by searching AARP Smart Driver TEK Online Workshops.

AARP also offers the Smart Driver Course for drivers of all ages.

These courses, offered online and in person, review safe driving strategies, ways to reduce driver distractions and techniques for tackling roundabouts.

occupational therapists, school psychologists, as well as other community members on the current list.

We also have a waiting list of students in need of an SESP.

There is additional information available at:

<http://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/special/initiatives/surrogate>

Thank you for your consideration.

Interested individuals are welcome to contact Sarah or Molly for more informations. sarah.ferguson@maine.gov
gpond15@gmail.com

The Smart Driver Course also includes information about how taking certain medications can impact driving, and state-specific rules for using child safety seats and cell phones.

The Course does have a fee (\$20 for AARP members and \$25 for non-members). Graduates may qualify for a multi-year auto insurance discount.

Visit: aarp.org/driving36 to sign up for a class that suits your schedule.

Part of being a safe driver is being ready for what might happen on the road. AARP's Smart Driver TEK and Smart Driver Course are two easy ways to benefit from our tech-smart cars and refresh our driving skills for modern driving situations.

Another part of being a safe driver is having the proper fit

inside your vehicle. With Car-Fit, an educational program developed by AARP and the American Occupational Therapy Association, you'll get information and resources on how to enhance your safety and physical comfort in the driver's seat. Head over to car-fit.org to learn more about this insightful program.

Finally, consider downloading the AARP SafeTrip app for more tips and great resources.

As always, I hope to see you at our local social, educational and fun events here in Maine.

Happy travels!



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 combinations 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 can be found on our MEA-Retired website and Facebook page.

MainePERS Trustee Report

By John Kimball

Finances: The preliminary balance of the fund was **\$21.9 Billion (EOM, Dec 31, 2025)**.

The financial markets continue to be volatile.

The Federal Reserve interest rates are an additional 25 BPS in spite of inflation actually increasing.

Those previous rate cuts did not lower the cost of home mortgages or the cost of U.S. government borrowing.

Over 1.1 million Americans have lost their jobs in the last year either in a desire to increase corporate profits or anticipating increased productivity due to AI.

As a result, unemployment has increased, inflation will remain higher longer. Middle and lower income workers will continue to struggle financially.

Tariffs remain a cause for uncertainty. Trade deals continue to evolve, but major trading partners, other than China, Brazil, India, Switzerland, and Argentina are not seeing reduced tariffs.

Energy prices have eased as world production continues to outstrip demand; you may have missed the

decrease as oil companies have raised heating oil prices.

The market now realizes the meaning of “Drill, Baby, Drill”.

Recently the financial markets have shown signs that there may well be a bubble forming in the AI and, more importantly, the cryptocurrency markets.

The rate cut will delay the growth of the bubble until the end of the first quarter of 2026.

The State of Maine funds your retirement benefits with employee contributions, employer contributions, and investment earnings of the ~\$21⁺ Billion of assets in the fund.

For Fiscal 2026, financial markets are expected to contribute ~\$1.4 Billion.

There continues to be a monthly cash inflow from investments despite a \$480 Million deficit due to benefit payments and the systems investment program.

At the January Board of Trustees meeting, the trailing 12-month period inflow was **\$18 Million**.

This inflow is projected to continue in the next 12 months as investment **distributions** should outpace

benefit and investment **outflows** by nearly **\$260 Million**.

Benefit payments for the next 12 months are projected to be **\$480 Million** below funding sources.

The Alternative Investment Program has an Unfunded Commitment of \$3.2 Billion which will be a drag on return for at least 2 years as fees normally are paid to managers for an indeterminate period before the actual investment realizes any actual return from those investments.

In 2028, after the 1995 Unfunded Actuarial Liability (UAL) has been paid off, the system anticipates the unfunded liability accrued since 2012 to be approximately **\$1 Billion**.

The value of those 2012 benefit cuts now exceeds **\$3 Billion** which has resulted in an improvement of the Funding Ratio.

There will be further policy discussions involving **actuarial assumptions** as projections for State mandatory contributions have resulted in the Normal Cost for state contributions have used the 2012 benefit cuts as a funding source.

Benefit restorations in the next biennium will continue to be challenging because the impending increased payments for the 1995 UAL may fluctuate

significantly with the approaching deadline.

This is a typical effect at the end of a liability funding scheme. The 3-Year Annualized Rate of Return of **9.0%** remains **above** the expected return of **6.5%**.

Asset allocation is driving over-all return. The system’s asset allocation has resulted in reduced overall volatility as most of the public market volatility affects only one third of total assets.

Because the values reported in the illiquid 2/3 of the portfolio are reported on a 3-month delayed basis, volatility and risk could be understated.

I have found that IRR (Internal Rate of Return) for Private Investments make it difficult to know exactly how the total investment program is performing.

That lag has greatly affected the investment returns of the portfolio, which has affected the ability of MainePERS to fund improvements to retiree benefits. Liquidity is **not** a concern. (**\$10.1 Billion**)

New Disability Program: Public Law 2021, c. 277, reformed the process of applying for a disability benefit and improved both the experience of and outcomes for our members.

See Trustee, Page 7

Trustee, From Page 6

In the most recent annual experience study of program applicants, 96% of respondents indicated they were “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” and that they were treated with respect and that the process was fairly conducted.

Other recent improvements include: guidance on the definition of “earnings”; streamlining the annual process for applying earnings limitations, introducing a formal waiver process for the annual statement of compensation, relaxing the time period in which overpayment of benefits must be recovered, removing the continuous service requirement from the standard for pre-existing conditions, and removing the offset for Social Security.

Other improvements are in “the works” through rule making.

Most of the proposed changes should make it easier for members to navigate the system and lessen the amount of paperwork and time required to get a decision.

Visit the MainePERS website for more information.

In December of 2025, there were 49,003 recipients receiving \$112.8 million.

The 2025 Annual Report is available on the MainePERS website.

Respectfully submitted,
John H. Kimball
MainePERS Trustee
(Retired Educator)

Legacy Committee Report Charles Oehrtmann, Chairperson

The Jane Ritter Grant focuses on the most frail, isolated and vulnerable members of the Association.

Affiliates must establish a plan to provide services for members who are restricted in their physical activity because of physical challenges or lack of transportation.

The following affiliates were awarded \$300 each for their projects:

Higher Ed.-Improve connection and communication with members.

Androscoggin-AREA’s Super Seniors Celebration

Aroostook-Honoring lifetime members

Cumberland-Correspondence

Franklin-Lifting Spirits

Hancock-Reaching Out and

Staying Connected

Kennebec-Creating a More Inclusive Membership Environment

Knox-Knowledge, Caring, Reaching out, Education, Appreciation

Mid-Coast- Retired Educators Connection Project

Penobscot-Seasons Greetings

Piscataquis-PREA Outreach

Waldo-Driving Retired Members to Attend Meetings

York-Reaching Out to Our Own

Legacy Committee Members:
Charles Oehrtmann (Chair),
Linda Hussey, Roger Roy,
Marie Solak, Adrienne Tucker



MainePERS

PUBLIC EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM

Help us keep in touch with you

MainePERS is seeking your assistance to ensure your contact information is up to date. Have you moved since retiring? Has your email or cell phone number changed? Did you give up your land line? Having accurate information assists us in the verification process when you contact MainePERS and helps maintain the security of your account. It also ensures you receive critical information in a timely manner.

The quickest way to update your contact information is through the **MainePERS Member Portal**. If you have already registered, please login and double check your information. Want to register for the Member Portal? Instructions are available at www.mainebers.org/memberportal.

Prefer to submit your information via mail? Complete the **Member/Benefit Recipient Data Update** form available at www.mainebers.org/forms-resources/forms/. A quick link to this form is available on that webpage. Just complete and mail back to MainePERS at P.O. Box 349, Augusta, ME 04332-0349.

**Retired Educators
Group
Gives Out Grants**

**A guest column by
Marina Singer**

What happens to local educators when they retire? Many join the Mid Coast Retired Educators Association.

This group meets monthly to participate in educational programs.

It raises funds that support community projects, including a backpack program in September, scholarships for graduating high school seniors in the spring and classroom grants directly to educators in late autumn.

For the past five years, the Mid-Coast Maine Retired Educators Association has awarded classroom grants to deserving local educators.

This year, so many amazing grant proposals were submitted that the organization decided to award five classroom grants, rather than the usual three.

These grants were presented to the following teachers during December, to be used this school year:

*Colby Gail, of Bowdoin Central School, will use \$300 to create a "Maine Ninja Warrior" obstacle challenge for pre-K and kindergarten students.

• Ryan Weed and Brandon Dudley, of Brunswick High School, plan to teach students various applications for sound design.

• Ashley Hoskins, of Woolwich Central School, will foster "Innovators in Action" by providing and guiding her students in the use of a ChompSaw for creative construction projects.

• Leah Heyman, of Bath Middle School, plans an interdisciplinary program called "Backstage Beauty and Lighting Lab: Cosmetology and Theater Technology."

On Dec. 3, 2025, Peg Newburg presented a check for \$300 to Maggie York of Harpswell Community School, for "Little Scientists in Action." York will use her grant to purchase scientific tools "to foster early STEM learning through discovery and play."

Mid-Coast Retired Educators Association welcomes all retired Educators living in the area. The group meets on the second Tuesday of each month, September through June.

For more information contact: midcoastretired@gmail.com.

**Communications Committee Report
By Bob Jean— Chairperson**

This has been a year of many changes for the MEA-Retired Communications Committee.

The first notable change was the transition to a new editor for *The Clarion*.

I decided to take on this role after consulting with former editor, Kay Grindall. My goal is to make the publication something that will continue to bring pride to our organization.

Kay has provided me with lots of guidance and support as I plug along in this new role.

I am grateful for her patience and willingness to support my efforts.

Our MEA-Retired website will also undergo changes. We have been searching for a new administrator to join the team.

Once again, we are fortunate to have our current website administrator, Deb Killam, fully willing to help ensure a smooth transition.

Both Deb, and assistant Pam Partridge, have been valuable assets with their genuine input and vast knowledge.

We greatly appreciate all of the

time and effort Deb and Pam have spent helping us to make this change.

The Committee has only met, formally, one time on a Zoom meeting. However, we do spend a lot of time communicating when we feel the need.

A spring Zoom meeting will be set up for the committee to review progress and address needs.

We are focused on remaining sensitive to the needs of our membership. We will continue to find ways to provide the most important information without overloading you with information that is repetitive.

I want to thank our valued committee members: Information Coordinator, Barbara Hammond of Rumford; Webpage Administrator, Deb Killam of Detroit; Webpage Assistant, Pam Partridge of North Anson; Facebook Administrator, Roger Fuller of Lewiston, and Photographer/*Clarion* proofreader, Carl Daiker of Waterville.

2027 Convention Booklet Necrology

Please keep track throughout the next 12 months . . . Names of all deceased personnel who contribute to the *education* of students—bus drivers, custodians, cooks, secretaries, coaches, ed techs, teachers, principals, crossing guards, superintendents, etc. Many of these education personnel do not belong to an affiliate nor to MEA-Retired, but their names are included in our convention booklet.

**Dates of deceased for our 2027 booklet:
March 1, 2026, thru March 1, 2027**

**Please send names throughout the year to kay_grindall@yahoo.com
Mail to 23 Hilltop Drive Oakland 04963**

-AARP Maine-

Join Us for Free Coffee Socials

**Bangor— 3rd Friday of the month
Dysart's, 1110 Broadway-Bangor
8:30-10 a.m.**

Lewiston/Auburn

**Last Thursday of the month
Auburn Senior Community Center
48 Pettingill Park Rd. -Auburn
8:00-9:30 a.m.**

**Yarmouth— 1st Friday of the month
Yarmouth Community Center
20 Mill St.— Yarmouth
10:00-11:30 a.m.**

**Fort Kent Public Library
2nd Wednesday of the month
2:30-3:30 p.m.**

Convention , from Page 1

Meet the presenters

One of the lady axe throwers is **Alissa Wetherbee**. Alissa and her group attend competitions as a team.

Alissa is also a competitive logger who has logrolled across the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. She is a 3 time World Champion.

When not competing she spends her time coaching, teaching, and supporting girls and women in sports.

She has been working closely with Adult Ed., offering women chainsaw workshops for many years.

Many of you have enjoyed listening to **John Kosinski** report on legislative issues in the past.

This time John will be featured in a breakout session. This will give him lots of time to touch upon the various issues that affect teachers and education in general.

John has 16 years of experience as a lobbyist. He is known as a relentless advocate and organizer. You will learn what you can do to help influence your legislators.

Brian Harris is the founder of **Medrhythms**, inventor of the world's first prescription music platform, who is pioneering work at the intersection of music, neuroscience, and technology.

He is a Board-Certified music therapist and 1 of only 350 Neurologic Music Therapist Fellows worldwide.

Brian began his clinical career at the Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital where he created and implemented the hospital's first full-time Inpatient Neurologic Music Therapy (NMT) program.

Specializing in traumatic brain injury, stroke, and other neurological diseases, he built the program into the most comprehensive NMT program in the country.

Finally, we have a traveler, **Karen Cookson**. She and her husband traveled to Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

You will travel with her by tuk tuk, jumbo, lambo, high speed train, water buffalo cart, and longboats.

She will share how people make their livings in affluent and meager situations.

We'll visit numerous temples, Buddhas, a floating village, the killing fields of Cambodia, the tunnels used by the Vietcong during the war, and more.

Karen will also bring artifacts purchased in each country.

Following our breakout sessions, a buffet lunch will be served. There is help available for those who need assistance carrying their tray. Don't be shy about asking.

The afternoon session will open with a performance by a comedy troupe from Dover-Foxcroft, the Q-Tips. This group often performs at charity fundraisers and are sure to

make you laugh.

A flurry of activities is planned for the afternoon. PAC Raffle and Affiliate Raffle winners will be announced and directed to pick up their treasures.

A memorial ceremony will honor our colleagues from around the state who were involved in the education of our children.

Several awards for affiliates, individuals, and leadership will be given out in a show of appreciation to members and affiliates who contribute to our successful association.

The last part of the program is set aside for our brief business meeting. Everyone is welcome to stay and observe this public meeting, however, only Unified Members have the right to vote on items put forward.

The Convention and Annual Meeting is scheduled to end by 3:00 p.m.

We hope to see many members in attendance on April 30th!

Order your MEA-Retired Merchandise Today!!

Maine Educator



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

Prices include tax and postage/handling

Name _____ Email _____

Mailing Address _____ City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Tel. _____ Affiliate _____

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

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

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

MEABT Trustee Report By Faith Campbell

It is around these early April days that many reflect upon spiritual/mindful renewal. The natural world provides numerous reminders of new growth, potential and opportunity.

Yet, we are sometimes faced with difficulties even during the most hopeful times of the year.

The MEABT has resources which can help you.

Sometimes, we need a little encouragement to get up off the couch and get going.

You might try our 'Silver Sneakers' and 'Personify Health' programs.

Other times, our needs are more complicated.

MEABT member resources can be found under the Member Assistance (MAP) links within the MEABT and Anthem websites.

The MAP phone number is 855.686.5616. Call this number to speak directly to a representative.

Member Assistance also offers help and guidance in financial counseling and legal assistance.

Please visit our website www.meabt.org or give us a call at 207.622.4418. Our offices are open Monday through Friday from 8:00a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

This information can also be obtained by visiting the Anthem website at

www.anthemep.com

Overall wellness is seen as vitally important at the Trust. Last fall, the Trustees authorized a Request for Proposal (RFP) in order to research benefits provided by various wellness program vendors, many of which are considered industry leaders.

A subcommittee of Trustees aided by Executive Director, Jennifer Kent, and mem-

bers of the Verrill Law Firm interviewed the top four finalists.

A subcommittee report was issued to the full Board of Trustees. The Board voted to authorize Ms. Kent to work with the chosen vendor in finalizing all necessary documents to put a three year contract in place.

The vendor's name will be forwarded to members once the documentation is completed. The new contract period is scheduled to begin on July 1, 2026.

I am facing the challenges of losing several close friends and colleagues this winter including one many of you know- Phil Gonyar.

Phil taught for decades and had a monumental impact on Maine education.

I have a number of friends who had Phil as a teacher, especially when he taught in Bucksport.

Fifty years may have passed, but he is still in their hearts.

Most of you remember him for his leadership within the MTA, MEA, and MEA-Retired. Phil was the president of both MTA and MEA-Retired.

I remember him for his kindness and encouragement.

The last time I saw him was in early December at an MEA-Retired Executive Committee meeting.

Our last conversation was at the end of the meeting. In typical Phil fashion his last words were of praise, kindness, and support.

My heartfelt condolences to Phil's family and to those of you who also feel his loss.

Faith Campbell
MEABT Trustee

Some Special Programs: Scholarships and Grants

MEA, MEA-Retired and NEA-Retired have some wonderful programs that you may have already heard about but it bears repeating.

Ritter Grant

Local affiliates have the opportunity to apply for our Ritter Grant on a yearly basis.

The Legacy Committee is charged with overseeing grant applications and manages the funds given by members or in memory of deceased members.

The grant awards are used in many ways. You can see some examples of the various projects affiliates undertake using the grant money in a report on Page 7 in this issue of *The Clarion*.

Monies from the Ritter Grant provide up to \$500 each year to enhance the MEA-Retired Annual Meeting by finding speakers and/or programs.

The Ritter Grant also provides funding for the Leadership Awards given out at the Annual Meeting.

Affiliates who apply for a grant can be awarded up to \$300 a year for their special project.

It is a great resource that we hope affiliates will take advantage of each year.

Anne Sheehan Memorial

The Anne Sheehan Memorial is the result of a request from the family of Anne Sheehan who was an active member of MEA-Retired and a long-time active member and leader of MEA.

She was committed to education and educational

opportunities for advanced study for those in the profession and for political activity.

The Legacy Committee has established the Anne Sheehan Honor Grant of \$1500 in memory of Anne to be awarded to a full time educator and member of MEA and who is enrolled in a graduate program in education.

Jack Kinnaman Scholarship

The NEA-Retired Jack Kinnaman Scholarship was established in honor of Jack Kinnaman who passed away while serving as NEA-Retired Vice President.

It is a scholarship awarded to aspiring educators who meet all the requirements of the application process and are selected by the Jack Kinnaman Scholarship Committee. Winners are announced and celebrated at the NEA-Retired Annual Meeting.

In 2002, the first year of the program, a scholarship of \$1000 was awarded to one student.

The program has grown due to support and donations of retired members.

This past year, scholarships of \$3500 each were awarded to 5 students.

For more information on the application process visit our website: mearetired.org

Happy Spring
From
MEA-Retired

74th MEA-Retired Convention & Annual Meeting

“The Many Hats of MEA-Retired”

Keynote Speaker

The Q-Tips (comedy group)

April 30th, 2026

Augusta Civic Center, 76 Community Drive, Augusta

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

Name _____ Tel. _____ Affiliate _____
Address _____ City/Town _____
State _____ Zip _____ Email _____ Age 90+ FREE _____

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

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

- (1) Axe Throwers (2) Travelling to South Asia (Karen Cookson)
(3) Legislative Updates (John Kosinski) (4) Medrhythms (Healing with Music)- Brian Harris

Session 1- 10:35-11:10 _____ 1st choice _____ 2nd choice
Session 2- 11:20-11:55 _____ 1st choice _____ 2nd choice

**This form may be duplicated-submit a separate registration form for each registrant.
Registration is to be postmarked by April 14, 2026**

**Make checks payable to MEA-Retired. Send with registration form(s) to:
Carl Bucciantini, Registrar, PO Box352, Greene,ME 04236-0352**

Book table at convention

Tables will be set up for our FREE book swap. Bring books you have read and take books donated by others. You do not have to bring books to participate.

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.

So much to see

Don't forget to stop by and visit the PAC Raffle table, affiliate display tables, many vendors, and the popular book swap table. Grab a light snack and beverage and feel free to browse before the meeting begins.



Membership Committee Report By Kay Grindall– Chairperson

Special appreciation to members of the MEA-Retired Membership Committee for faithful attendance at our monthly Zoom meetings at 10:00 a.m. on the first Wednesday.

Members include: Paul Bouchard, Linda Prescott, Mike Smart, and Rosie Smith.

President-Elect Julie Gomez is an ex-officio member.

Each one of these four members is responsible for three different affiliates to whom they send the monthly lists of MEA

retirees. Following are the affiliates with whom members liaise:

Paul Bouchard—Aroostook, Franklin, and Knox.

Michael Smart—Higher Ed, Penobscot, and Piscataquis.

Linda Prescott—Waldo, Androscoggin, and Mid-Coast.

Rosie Smith—Cumberland, Oxford, and York.

Kay Grindall—Hancock, Kennebec, Washington, and Somerset.

They check in periodically with their affiliates’ membership chairpersons to see how things are going and are a conduit with MEA-Retired.

They do great work. “Thank you!”

All affiliate membership chairpersons and presidents should be receiving monthly lists of new retirees.

We ask that they contact each retiree and invite them to attend meetings, join the local affiliate, and become unified members by joining MEA, MEA-Retired, and NEA-Retired.

Invite a retiree to join MEA-Retired!
Direct them to our Website @ mearetired.org

Yearly Dues
MEA- \$31
MEA-Retired- \$21
NEA-Retired- \$35
(\$7.25 out of your monthly paycheck)