



THE CLARION

The Newsletter for Retired Educators
Maine Education Association Retired
Vol.137 No.5

June 2026

Wrapping Up the 74th MEA-Retired Annual Meeting and Convention

by Rheba Michaud

From our President:



Molly Smith

Two Vessels, One Mission

At first glance, a cruise ship cutting through open water and a retired educators' labor organization seem to have nothing in common.

One moves across seas, the other across seasons of memory, experience and advocacy.

Yet when you look beneath the surface, both are complex vessels carefully structured, purpose-driven, and sustained by people who understand that coordination, trust, and shared responsibility are what keep any organization afloat.

A cruise ship begins its day before the sun rises. Deep in the engine room, specialists monitor systems most passengers never see, ensuring propulsion, power, and stability.

Above them, officers review routes and weather, making decisions that affect thousands of lives on board. Every role is defined, every chain of command clear.

From the captain to the newest crew member, structure is not optional. It is survival.

The Maine Education Association Retired operates in much the same way, though its waters are calmer and its dangers less visible.

Instead of engines, there are committees.

Instead of navigation charts, there are bylaws and pension statutes.

Leadership elected by the membership acts much like a bridge crew, balancing long-term direction with daily concerns.

They monitor legislative "weather," anticipate policy shifts, and adjust course to protect the well being of those who once worked in our public education institutions and now rely on collective strength in retirement.

On a cruise ship, operations are divided into departments: deck, engineering, hospitality, medical, and entertainment.

Each department has autonomy but must work in coordination with the rest. A delay in one area ripples outward. Dining cannot run without power; safety drills require coordination across all levels.

The ship succeeds not because everyone does the same job, but because everyone understands how their work connects to the larger whole.

Our association, from NEA, NEA-Retired to our state MEA and MEA-Retired, mirrors this operational logic.

There are advocacy teams at every level and elected delegates to Representative Assembly governance bodies that maintain focus on pensions and healthcare, communication groups that keep members informed, and social or service committees that preserve fellowship and purpose after retirement.

Alarms sound and tides threaten both associations and ship. The interdependence on both vessels is just as real. A

breakdown in communication can weaken engagement.

A lapse in advocacy can cost members benefits earned over decades. Here, too, is the engine of success.

Perhaps the most powerful parallel is in culture.

A cruise ship crew is famously international, diverse in background but united by shared standards and routines. Training instills skills, values, safety, service and professionalism.

Likewise, retired educators' organizations are built on a shared and unified professional identity and purpose.

Members are bound by a common belief in public education, mutual support, and fairness. That culture sustains participation long after the paychecks stop.

There is also a shared ethic of care. On a ship, the crew is responsible for the well-being of the passengers by anticipating needs, responding to emergencies, and creating an environment of comfort and dignity.

In a retired educators' labor organization, that care flows peer to peer. Members look out for one another, help navigate healthcare systems, and ensure no one faces aging or policy changes alone.

In the end, both the cruise ship and MEA-Retired exist to carry people safely through a journey. Both rely on structure and disciplined operations. They both remind us that the most successful vessels are those where everyone knows their role, trusts the crew, and believes the journey is worth making together.

Congratulations on another successful convention and annual meeting.

On April 30th about 200 people came to the Civic Center in Augusta to enjoy all that the convention had to offer.

There is always excitement in the room as old friends and colleagues reunite for the annual event. Their greetings can be heard all around the arena.

Soft music played in the background as a slide show of past conventions ran on a loop.

After visiting the refreshment table for coffee, tea, and a morning snack the attendees took time to visit the 19 vendors, 14 affiliate displays, the book exchange table, and the PAC raffle. Our affiliates did a great job of making sure that their displays matched the theme of 'The many hats of MEA-Retired'

See Convention, Page 3

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**Legislative Committee
Report
by Crrystal Ward
Chairperson**

The second session of the 132nd Maine Legislature closed on April 14, 2026.

Representative Jan Dodge of the Belfast area is our hero.

She has fought tooth and nail for retired educators.

The bills LD 1003 and LD 1872 were combined under LD 1003 to create a framework to receive funds from either the cascade or money that was previously targeted to pay off the (UAL)

Unfunded Actuarial Liability.

The only funding needed to create the **Retirement Benefit Improvement Fund** was \$500.

That measure was passed out of Appropriations by a vote of 11-2. That vote was better than many of their votes.

Unallocated law language was included to indicate intent to correct this situation.

Representative Jan Dodge-
“I felt way better that the description Unallocated Law would appear with research for future bills to pay off the 2011 LePage injustices. It is really only a **tiny step in the right direction**. I am pleased we got this but disappointed that we did not even get the \$3 million for the 5% bump in insurance.”

MEA Lobbyist Jan Kosinski-
“The Legislature is hearing the calls of retired teachers and the need to fix the pension cuts created by Paul LePage in 2011 when he drastically cut our pension benefits for current and future retirees, all to give tax breaks to the wealthy.”

“This year the Legislature passed LD 1003 which establishes a **Retirement Improvement Fund** and makes it clear that the state can and should finally fix our pension system.”

“The proposal makes clear the intent of the Legislature is to dedicate the funding from the (UAL) payoff in 2028 to lift the COLA cap.”

The wins for education as a result of this session are:

1. The State will fund 55% of the total cost of education.
2. The minimum teacher salary will increase to \$50,000 over three years going into effect in 2029.
3. The very successful Free Community College Program will continue.
4. Changes will be made to the Essential Programs and Services formula which calculates the amount of State money a district receives. They have included the number of students in the district receiving free or reduced lunch. This will help districts with low income students and high property valuations. It will also harm some districts. It changes the transportation, professional development, and Special Education calculation.
5. Because of the formula changes, state relief will be given to districts struggling the most, especially those facing educator layoffs, with some “bridge” funding of \$70 million.

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

August issue- submit by July 5

October issue- submit by September 5

December issue- submit by November 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.

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

Learn more about becoming a delegate by contacting MEA-Retired

MEA-Retired is here for you!

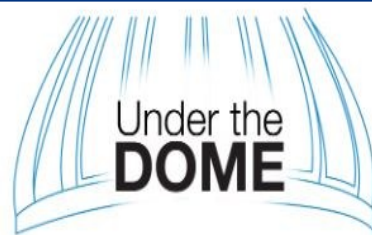
June 1, 2026
Board of Directors Meeting
Best Western Hotel, Waterville

August 3, 2026
Executive Committee
MEA Headquarters-Augusta

September 8, 2026
Board of Directors Meeting
Best Western Hotel, Waterville

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

Contact your affiliate leader with ideas and concerns.



MEA-Retired 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**

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Thank you to all of our contributors!

Convention , from Page 1

President Molly Smith opened the meeting with a welcome. It was followed by an invocation. A land acknowledgement was read and the National Anthem was sung by the attendees. Beth French, MEA Vice-President spoke briefly about some major topics MEA is addressing.

All of the breakout sessions received evaluations of very good to excellent. One participant pointed out that **Karen Cookson's** session-travels to Southeast Asia -was so wonderful that she attended it twice.

Great job, Karen!

One lady who came out of **Jan Kosinski's** session on the legislature remarked that he was great and very informative. Another attendee was heard saying,

"He should run for governor and get this done!" We are very fortunate to have Jan as our Government Relations Director and advocate for retirees.

Brian Harris presented a powerful power point on Medrhythms. It was fascinating to see the people he works with who have Parkinson's Disease.

When he introduces music into their therapy, their slow and awkward walking instantly becomes faster and sharper. It was an amazing transition.

Alissa Weatherbee provided us with a dynamic presentation on competitive axe throwing and log rolling. She and her team show that women can do anything. Alissa and her team are great role models for the young girls in our state.

A delicious buffet luncheon was served. Toward the end of the luncheon raffle winners

were announced so they could pick up their prizes.

After lunch we were treated to a comedy team, The Q-Tips, who performed 4 mini-acts. The ladies made us laugh with some very silly moments. Thank you, Q-Tips!

Molly Smith, president of MEA-Retired, gave a touching tribute to Phil Gonyar. Phil was a member who wore many hats in his long career with MEA and MEA-Retired. A plant was presented to Carl Daiker in remembrance of Phil.

Bob Jean, Immediate Past President, gave a Memorial Tribute recognizing the many educators who died this past year. White roses were presented to a designee from each of our affiliates to honor the lost members.

The Legacy Committee handed out grants earned by affili-

ates that will help improve the activities they pursue.

Community Participation awards were given out for members who had the most exercise and volunteer hours for their local.

The Membership Committee recognized affiliates who have shown membership growth.

Leadership Awards were presented to individuals who show outstanding leadership in their affiliate.

Bob Jean was presented with the Honorary Member Award. The President's Award went to a very surprised and deserving Kay Grindall.

Stay tuned for details about next year's 75th anniversary convention/annual meeting!

[Rhebal Michaud-Chairperson](#)
Committee members: [Kay Grindall](#),
[Susan Grondin](#), [Rena Kearny](#),
[Julie Gomez](#), [Molly Smith](#), and [Bob Jean](#).

2026-27 Pre-retirement Seminar Schedule

Please share this information with active educators who plan to retire in the next three years.

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"

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

Geri Kenneally, 1/29/1926



AARP Maine

MEA/MEA-Retired

AARP Liaison

Pamela J. Partridge

AARP Wrap Up in Augusta

While I do not make it to every Tuesday at the State House (TASH) gathering, I do get weekly updates that allow me to share highlights of our work this session.

At the beginning of the latest update is a reminder of AARP'S vision: "A society where everyone can live with dignity and purpose and pursue their goals and dreams."

We say that we advocate for policies that matter to people ages 50+. In doing so, we really benefit people of all ages by advocating for policies and legislation that support people as they enter the later half of their lives and into retirement. Our support for the Maine Retirement Investment Trust (MERIT), a retirement savings

program, and fighting to keep Social Security solvent are just two examples we support to achieve that vision.

The Maine State Legislature adjourned April 14. TASH volunteers and AARP staff advocated for the following with success:

Security to Age in Place

- Aging in Place– LD 814: The Older Mainers Act provided funding to the Area Agencies on Aging to support programs such as "Meals on Wheels", educational resources, adult day programs, and caregiver support.
- Affordable Housing/ Housing Options
- Maine Retirement Investment Trust (MERIT) received one-time funding to support the program so that Mainers without an employee-provided retirement program can save for their retirement years.
- COLAs for Maine's essential care workers– LD 1932, "An Act to Support

Essential Support Workers and Enhance Workforce Development."

Consumer Protections

- LD 1901 provides clearer rules and protections for consumers regarding shared appreciation mortgages.
- Medical debt-LD 2129 prevents liens from being placed on primary residences and wages from being garnished due to medical debt.
- Cryptocurrency– LD 1998 tightens restrictions on operators of cryptocurrency ATMs that are often used by scammers to steal money from unsuspecting individuals.

Affordability of Everyday Needs

- State budget funding to expand access to affordable prescription drugs through health centers serving rural communities across Maine.

Protections for Vulnerable Mainers

- Bill requires all Maine hospitals to develop a cybersecurity response plan to help protect patient safety during a cyber attack.
- Bill directs the Maine Department of Health and Human Services to create an online system that allows Mainers to more easily and securely report suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an older adult.
- \$7.5 million in the budget to bolster the Low Income Assistance Program (LIAP)

Many thanks were given by our TASH volunteers to our lawmakers for their hard work this session.

If you would like to become an AARP Maine volunteer, call **1.866.554.5380** or send an email to: **me@aarp.org.me**

Visit our website to learn more about AARP public events at **mearetired.org**

2026 NEA-Retired Convention

By Julie Gomez, MEA-Retired President-Elect

I need to give you all a BIG THANK YOU for supporting and sending me to the 2026 NEA-Retired Convention in Phoenix, Arizona.

The conference was held March 1 through March 3. It was worth the long flights to get there and back.

The theme of the conference was- **Resilience, Respect, Power; Saving Public Education and Our Democracy; NEA-Retired, A Lifetime Commitment.**

I experienced and learned a lot during my time in Phoenix.

I had the opportunity to meet and converse with members from Virginia, Kentucky, New Jersey, Idaho, Florida, Massachusetts, and many other states. I met many who are running for office at the 2026 NEA-RA this coming July. It was valuable to hear their platforms in person.

I attended eight different sessions covering a wide variety of topics.. The following is a list of seven of those topics:

-Using Google Apps to Plan and Run Association Meetings and Activities

-Staying Connected: Using Social Media—to empower retired educators to confidently and safely use social media to stay connected, share knowledge, and engage meaningfully with communities, family and professional networks.

-Fueling Focus and Energy -Rooted in Resilience: Cultivating Self-Awareness for Lifelong Power, Purpose, and Public Good

-Activism For All: Engaging Your Retired Members in Racial & Social Justice

-Seeing the Unseen: Understanding and Interrupting

Implicit Bias

-Are You Prepared to Run Your Meetings? All About Robert's Rules

The 2026 NEA-Retired Convention was the first convention I have attended as a member of MEA-Retired.

The conversations I shared with NEA members were informative, enlightening, and purposeful.

Thank you, again, for providing me with the opportunity. I look forward to using what I have learned to better serve MEA-Retired.

Respectfully submitted,
Julie Gomez

MEA-Retired President-Elect

News You Can Use

By Joyce Bucciantini

AARP Community Outreach Coordinator

The internet is awash with suggestions for letting go of our treasured items. The Marie Kondo method and the Swedish Death Cleaning are but two such suggestions.

The AARP webpage, *Downsizing and Decluttering Resources*, has some very practical recommendations.

Start small by selecting one space to declutter. Next, organize the items into a few categories: things to keep, sell, donate, or toss.

Starting small keeps the project manageable and the categories guide our decisions about what to keep.

Technology can be a space saver by scanning and digitizing old documents and

photos. This eliminates paper storage

Lastly, enlisting the help of family members can be useful when it comes to deciding what to do with sentimental items. Maybe someone does want Grandma's old china after all.

Decluttering or downsizing doesn't have to be such a traumatic experience. Breaking it down into small steps makes the process more manageable.

The benefits include: increased living space, budget savings, mental ease, and satisfaction that old items will be put to new use. I am not saying I would ever have a garage sale but I could feel less guilty when I drive by one. "Maybe I'll start with a closet!"

MEA-Retired Facebook Page

Roger Fuller,
Administrator

MEA-Retired hosts a Facebook page. The page is open to everyone, but only the site host can post articles. Those articles on our Facebook page, related to any number of interests, come from a variety of sources. Some of those sources include: Facebook itself, Voroni, Only in Your State, Visual Capitalist, BBC, American news outlets, and any number of other interesting outlets.

In addition to our main page, MEA-Retired also sponsors groups representing some of

our affiliates. A Facebook group is a good way to share information between members of all of our sixteen affiliates.

Currently, we have active groups from Androscoggin, Aroostook, and Kennebec counties who share information.

If you want more information or need help signing in, feel free to contact Roger Fuller at:

rfuller@mainenet.org

To Do List

*Check out our Facebook page today.

*If your local affiliate has a Facebook page of its own, please share it with Roger for other affiliates to see.

*Don't miss out on this opportunity to share with members statewide!

Free Coffee Socials

Sponsored by AARP Maine

Get out and meet other AARP members this summer. Join AARP Maine for free coffee and snacks while greeting neighbors and friends.

Bangor— Third Friday of the month, 8:30-10:00

Dysart's, 1110 Broadway

Lewiston/Auburn— Last Thursday of the month,

8:00-9:30, Auburn Senior Community Center,

48 Pettingill Park, Auburn

Yarmouth— First Friday of the month, 10-11:30,

Yarmouth Community Center, 20 Mill St.

Naples— Second Friday of the month, 10-11,
Singer Center (Grange), 18 Village Green Lane

Fort Kent— Second Wednesday of the month,

2:30-3:30, Fort Kent Public Library,

1 Monument Square

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.

2026 Affiliate Leadership Award Recipients

Androscoggin: **Gina Fuller** of Lewiston taught computer science and mathematics at Oak Hill High School and Sabattus for 25 years. She also taught in California for 9 years and Connecticut for 1 year. At Oak Hill Gina was chair of the Mathematics and Special Ed. Departments. She was Curriculum Coordinator and Honor Society advisor. Gina was on the Evaluation Reform Committee. She was also chair of the Union 44 Computer Curriculum Committee and author of its K-12 Computer Curriculum. She held many positions in the Central Maine Math League and was founder, president, and treasurer of the State Junior Varsity Math League. She taught Introductory Computer Information Systems at UMaine and also taught math at a private Jewish high school in Los Angeles. She chaperoned three student trips where they explored the Golan Heights and toured the West Bank. Gina is treasurer of the Androscoggin Retired Educators Association and membership chair of the Mu Chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma. She and her husband, Roger, have two children and six grandchildren.



Aroostook: **Fern Desjardins** of St. Agatha had a 43 year career in PreK-12 education as an elementary school teacher, principal, and superintendent in MSAD #33. She served as union president and on the negotiations team. As principal, she was Title One coordinator and director of special education. Fern taught graduate level courses for UMaine, served on UMFK's Board of Visitors, Northern Maine Medical Center's Board of Trustees, secretary-treasurer for the Aroostook County Superintendents Association, and she is secretary for the Maine Small Schools Coalition. After retiring she was appointed to the Maine State Board of Education and is a member of the National Association of State Boards of Education where she serves as secretary-treasurer, chair of the Finance and Audit Committee and chair-elect by the Delegate Assembly. Fern is a member of the Aroostook Retired Educators Association. She and her husband, Frank, have three children and four grandchildren.



Cumberland: **Gisele Bougie** of Portland taught French at Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School in Sudbury, Massachusetts. She was president of the Lincoln-Sudbury Teachers Association and chair of the First Parish Board of Trustees. Gisele volunteers at the Project Feed Pantry and at the Portland Adult Ed ESL program. She is a greeter in the Cumberland County Retired Educators Association. Gisele chairs the monthly Book Club meetings and helps out with the display table at the annual MEA-Retired Convention and Meeting. She has two children and four grandchildren.



Hancock: **Carol Duffy** of Lamoine taught various grades and subjects for 43 years at the Lamoine Consolidated School. She served on the Professional Development Committee, RSU 24/Union 92 Curriculum Committee, Recertification Committee, Peer Support Team, and Technology Committee. She also coordinated the Lamoine School Young Authors Day. Carol was secretary and negotiator for the Union Riviere Valley Teachers Association, a building rep in the Downeast Education Association, and president and grievance chair for the Hancock-Lamoine Teachers Association. She is now secretary of the Hancock County Retired Teachers Association. Carol lives in Lamoine and has three children.



Kennebec: **Marc Poulin** of Skowhegan taught Grade 4 at Canaan Elementary School for 35 years and substituted for an additional 10 years in MSAD#54. He was student council advisor and initiated a food drive for the Canaan community. Marc facilitated pre-retirement seminars for MEA-Retired and often assisted with registration at our Annual Meeting and Convention. He is a member of the Policy Committee and participates in the Kennebec Retired Educators Association's annual Day of Caring project. Marc has established scholarship funds at Christ the King Church in Skowhegan and at Skowhegan Area High School.

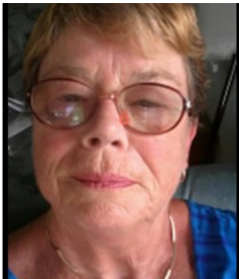


Our local affiliates recognize members who demonstrate exemplary service to others in schools and communities.

Active leadership on local, state, and national levels is encouraged. Unified membership in MEA-Retired is required.

A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way. —John Maxwell

Knox: Patricia Smith of Thomaston taught elementary grades in MSAD#50. She is co-founder and chair of MSAD#50 PTA, music and arts boosters. She was part of Project Graduation for ten years and chaired the Adapt Team and Sophomore Awareness programs. Patricia is a member of the Public Library Board and a docent for the Montpelier Museum. She coordinates the museums “Knox in a Box” presentations in local classrooms. She is co-chair of the



Knox County Retired Educators Association Programs and Nominating Committees. Patricia volunteers at the Maine Lobster Festival, Thomaston 4th of July celebrations, Watts Hall Players, Matthews Museum in Union, and the Thomaston Historical Society. She has three children, six grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren, and 1 great-great grandson.

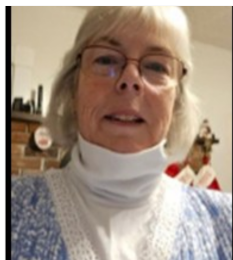
Mid-Coast: Karen Black of Brunswick taught Grade 3 at Bowdoinham Community School for 34 years. A longtime member of MEA she was a building rep, chair of the school Accreditation Team, and member of the Social Studies Committee. Since retiring in 2010, she participates in Mid-Coast Retired Educators Association, chairing the Scholarship Committee and serving on the board which sets the yearly calendar. The board members plan and moderate meetings and logistics



such as: venue, catering, programming, and attendance. Karen has been a member of St. Charles Church since 1969 and has served on various committees. She is involved with the Social, Peace & Justice Committee and helps out at Christmas fairs and haddock dinners. She continues to serve as a Eucharistic Minister at St. Charles Church. She currently serves on “Connections”, a newly formed ministry to reach out to new parishioners. In the past, Karen has been a volunteer at Mid-coast Hunger Prevention, Pejepsco Historical Society, and Mid-coast Hospital. Karen is active with her alma mater, Springfield College in Massachusetts. She is a member and co-president of the Springfield College Maine Alumni Association. Each year she writes personal letters to welcome freshmen and congratulate graduates. She is currently on the planning committee for her 60th Springfield College reunion in June. Karen and her late husband, Tom, have two children (step), two grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

Congratulations to all who received their well-deserved Leadership Awards !!!

Piscataquis: Karen Longevin of Dover-Foxcroft taught elementary education in RSU#68 for 32 years. Upon retirement she has become a substitute teacher for the RSU and she co-teaches a substitute teacher training workshop. Karen is also an active member of the Piscataquis Regional Retired Educators Association and is on the Planning Committee. Karen was a Sunday school teacher and a youth ministry leader in her church for many years. She has been secretary for her local Unit-



ed Bikers of Maine group for almost two decades. This group works to raise money to help children and adults in her community. Karen and her husband, Rick, have two sons and four grandchildren.

York: Janie Bradstreet of Kittery earned her teaching degree in New York where she began her career teaching Grade 3. She and her husband moved to Maine where she taught Grade 4 in South Berwick for 41 years. Janie was a representative and the treasurer of the Quamphegan Educators Association. She also served on the Superintendent’s Advisory Committee.



She was inducted into the Epsilon Chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma International and served as chapter president and treasurer. Janie is a volunteer at Mother’s Preschool Children’s Group and Activities at the Kittery Community Center. She is a ballot clerk at the local polls. Upon retirement Janie joined the York County Retired Educators Association and is the recording secretary. In her spare time she loves to read, garden, walk her dogs, travel, and visit with her friends. She and her husband, Mark, have one married son.

PAC Raffle at the Convention and Annual Meeting by Corley Byras

Even with the drizzly, rainy weather, it was a fantastic day at the Augusta Civic Center for the Convention and Annual Meeting of the MEA-Retired.

It was truly meaningful to reconnect with friends and colleagues we have worked with over the years. Celebrating the accomplishments of award recipients, visiting with vendors, exploring affiliate displays, enjoying wonderful food, and participating in the book swap all added to the sense of excitement and community. Most of all, it was simply uplifting to be together.

Hosting the raffle table is

especially rewarding for me. It provides an opportunity to connect with many attendees while also supporting an important cause— raising funds for children and public education through the Political Action Committee (PAC). I am deeply grateful to everyone who contributed raffle items and to those who purchased tickets.

I am pleased to share that we raised \$585 from the raffle. These funds will be distributed among our NEA-Retired delegates, who will contribute to the PAC while attending the NEA-Retired Conference this summer in Denver, Colorado.

Thank you to everyone who helped make the day such a success.

Maine Education Association Committees

Submitted by Kay Grindall

Looking for Educator

Advocates and Leaders

Maine Education Association committees are a gateway to state and local member leadership. Members develop their leadership capacity through member advocacy and engagement in association work. MEA Committee members are the first to receive or be informed of training opportunities. We work with policymakers and organize local members. Each Committee has one or two Board Liaisons, as well as a Staff liaison to ensure communication and to support the Committee in carrying out their charges.

YOU are the SOLUTION

MEA Committees are member led. Bring your voice from the classroom, hallways, research lab, school bus, and beyond.

We meet three or four times a year on Saturdays from 9:00-2:00 at MEA Headquarters, 35 Community Drive, Augusta.

Join us in the work of the organization, break bread, (gluten free if needed) with colleagues across the state and be part of

the solution,

Lunch is provided, mileage is reimbursed, and committee members who travel more than 90 miles may request hotel lodging the night before. Committees may opt to hold a meeting virtually.

Committee Descriptions

Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC):

Advocates for minority involvement and pathways to leadership, supports educators and students of color, promotes and supports anti-racist education, and identifies policies and practices that further support the MEA becoming an inclusive, equitable, and diverse organization.

Anticipated meeting dates (October 3, January 9, February 27, May 1)

Education Support

Professionals (ESP): Advocates for ESP involvement in the Association and educational training programs designed to advance ESP related issues.

Anticipated meeting dates (October 3, January 9, February 27, May 1)

Government Relations (GR):

Develops and advocates the legislative program of the Association. **Anticipated meeting dates (October 3, January 9, March 13, May 1)**

Human and Civil Rights and Social Justice (HCRSJ):

Advocates for educational and training programs designed to enhance human and civil rights and makes recommendations on ways for MEA to promote social justice. **Anticipated meeting dates (October 3, January 9, February 27, May 1)**

Instruction and Professional Development (IPD)

Recommends policies in the areas of instruction and professional development that involve the practitioner in the areas of classroom management, professional practices and standards, educational technology, early childhood education, and productive evaluation programs.

Anticipated meeting dates (October 3, January 9, February 27, May 1)

Resolutions: Reviews current resolutions (belief statements) for relevance. Receives proposed resolutions and new business items (action items) from members, committees, and other groups. Presents resolutions to the Representative Assembly after reviewing, editing, and organizing.

Anticipated meeting dates (October 3, January 9, and March 13)

Statewide Bargaining

(SWBC): Develops, reviews, and recommends statewide collective bargaining goals and organizing plans. Provides staff with member input on resources to support locals in their collective bargaining and organizing efforts.

Anticipated meeting dates (October 3, January 9, February 27, May 1)

Strategic Budget: Prepares the annual budget for presentation to the Representative Assembly for adoption.

Anticipated meeting dates (October 3, January 9, March 13)

Structure and Bylaws (S&B):

Studies the MEA Constitution, Bylaws and Standing Rules and makes recommendations to achieve the purposes of the Association and is responsible for the continuous maintenance of an efficient and workable election procedure. Supports local associations to ensure their Constitutions and Bylaws are following MEA requirements.

Anticipated meeting dates (October 3, January 9, March 13)

Interested members may contact MEA President Jesse Hargrave at **207.622.5866**

Interactions with MainePERS

Submitted by Domna Giatas

When you contact MainePERS by telephone or visit us in person, we will take several steps to confirm your identity prior to releasing any personal or financial information that is considered non-public under Maine law. This verification is part of our security processes to safeguard your information.

Another security process

MainePERS may take is to call and complete an identity verification if you have recently filed a form to change your direct deposit account, a refund application, or any other form that may lead to a new or redirected payment on your account.

Identity verification involves asking questions about you to

ensure that you are the one who initiated the requested action. If you receive a call from MainePERS after filing a form and are uncertain about who is calling, you may hang up and call us back at one of our published phone numbers to proceed with validating the form.

If you initiate an email request for assistance involving personal or financial information, we will send a secure email and request that you do the same. You may send us

secure emails using Mimecast, which is available on our website at:

www.maineopers.org/contact/

Secure email should always be used when sending us any personal or financial information.

Remember: If you are ever in doubt about any correspondence, email or telephone call you receive from MainePERS, please take the extra step of contacting us at one of our published numbers to confirm.

MEA Benefits Trust by Faith Campbell– Trustee

Community involvement is often cited as one of the strongest attributes of a healthy lifestyle.

The MEA-Retired Healthcare Committee recently surveyed members and found that its members have a high level of community involvement. High numbers are also cited within our Personify Health wellness program.

The MEA Benefits Trust and Personify Health have agreed to a renewed three year contract to begin on July 1, 2026. Please be on the lookout for notifications from both the MEABT and Personify Health relating to additional programming and an increased number of advanced challenges. MEABT Wellness Director Michael Booth has been working diligently with Personify Health to provide new and en-

hanced programming. The past month I had direct community involvement experiences with MEA-Retired members at two events.

The first was at an MEA sponsored candidates forum in Freeport. The medium-sized meeting room was at full capacity. A sizeable amount of attendees were MEA-Retired members. I was pleased by the MEA-Retired involvement as our experience, knowledge, and advice are invaluable.

The second event was the MEA-Retired Annual Meeting and Convention with an attendance of close to 200 members from all corners of the State of Maine.

One bonus of attending both events was reconnecting with former colleagues.

Just being with them again gave me tremendous joy. My

mind was full of all the happy times we had shared even through the “trials and tribulations” of a teaching day.

Another joyous occasion was being a judge at the National History Day student competition at the University of Maine in Orono.

It was wonderful to view and evaluate the student projects and interviews. I met three secondary history education students a week away from graduation. I was overwhelmed by their preparation, knowledge, and desires. It took me back to my own graduation from UMO almost 50 years ago.

These events gave me an often overlooked benefit. It meant I had to get back into my closet to find outfits, reacquaint myself with my makeup case, and use the curling iron. The greater world is not ready for my daily retirement ensemble of jeans, sweatshirt, scarf, and a naked face. Plus, I was able to do some closet cleaning and put

together a good size bag of donations.

Some of you may have attended a virtual question and answer forum hosted by Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield on May 5th and 7th. This was an opportunity for members to directly ask and discuss, with Anthem, personal questions and thoughts about their health insurance policy.

A sample of questions addressed included: receiving phone calls from Anthem partners, home visits, incentives, home test kits, and the over the counter (OTC) extra drug program procedure,

You don't have to wait for a forum to reach out to MEABT. **Summer hours are 8:00-4:00 Monday through Friday.**
Email contact: meabt.org
Phone # 207.622.4418
Address: 35 Community Dr. Augusta, ME 04330.

Wishing all of you an enjoyable summer. Grab sunscreen and load up on Vitamin D by getting out in the sunshine!

Order your MEA-Retired Merchandise Today!!

Maine Educator



Long-sleeved Denim Shirts @ \$47
Short-sleeved Denim Shirts @ \$42
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	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)

2026 MEA-Retired Honorary Member Bob Jean

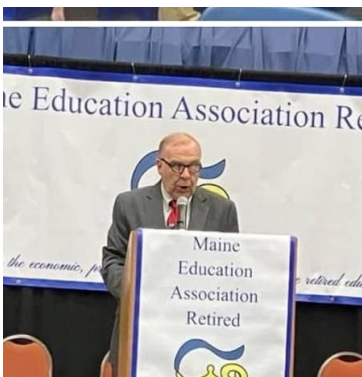
article by Kay Grindall

Raised the youngest of five children in Biddeford, Bob always loved school.

Of the various activities he joined, his favorite was band—especially when his high school band was honored to play in the Cherry Blossom Festival Parade in Washington, DC.

After graduating from Biddeford High School, he went on to graduate from the University of Maine at Farmington (UMF) with a degree in Special Education (Emotional Disturbance) and Elementary Education.

He remembers that UMF was highly rated for preparing teachers for the special education classroom. He remembers that the wonderful aspect of an education degree at UMF was placing freshman students in local schools two or three times a week as teacher aides. “We were able to gain classroom experience at the onset. That confirmed that I wanted to become a teacher,” he smiled.



President Bob Jean (2023-2025)

Education was extensive in the Jean family. His brother

Paul taught French in New Brunswick, Canada in a school where learning French was a requirement.

His sisters Priscille and Terry also taught school. Priscille taught physical education in the elementary grades in Saco. His sister Terry taught Grade 5 in the Westbrook School Department. Their brother Ray went into the military. It is interesting that all five siblings chose service-oriented careers.

Both parents worked in the mill in Biddeford and stressed the importance of education and “doing better than they.”

Bob taught special education in Owls Head/Bancroft North School for three years and then at the Lura Libby School in Thomaston for another 13 years.

Then, he chose to pursue a position in a regular classroom by teaching Grade 3 in St. George School in Tenants Harbor for another 25 years.

Beth Chamberlin of Thomaston taught with Bob in MSAD #50 for over 30 years and remembers the many ways Bob helped so many: “I saw firsthand his dedication to teachers and the field of education. He served as president of our retired educators association and as state president of MEA-Retired. He also serves on committees at the local, state and national levels. Bob’s influence went well beyond the classroom. It is with great respect and gratitude we affirm giving him this award.”

His parents were active union

members at the mill. Bob remembers the union stepping up and helping families with food and other provisions during a strike or difficult work situations. So, it is no wonder that their priorities and rationale prompted the four educators to do the same.

In fact, at one time Priscille and Bob were presidents of their local unions at the same time.

Bob began his union career when a building representative in his school was unable to attend a meeting and asked him to go as her designee--representing one out of five schools in the MSAD 50 district.

The meeting consisted of the officers, building reps, and negotiation team. He was hooked after that first meeting and continued to attend and learn more about advocacy to help fellow teachers.

“I liked what I saw and heard and their advocacy goals—primarily helping teachers in the classroom. I knew right then and there that I wanted to be involved in the union and help wherever I could,” he said.

He was recruited to be secretary of the MSAD #50 Education Association.

From that position he went on to become treasurer, vice president, and then president for 13 years.

Bob smiled, “I had a quick trip up the ladder! I enjoyed the work especially when we saw desired outcomes. I don’t regret putting in the long hours to provide better working conditions for my fellow educators which made positive impact on the students, our main focus.”

Interestingly, his sister Terry was a building representative in the Westbrook system.

His brother Paul was a representative for the teachers union in New Brunswick.

“We had some interesting discussions at family gatherings as we believed in fairness and equity for teachers at all levels,” remarked Bob.

Speaking of his beloved sister Terry, she says that her brother was “caring, dedicated, skilled and hard working! He put other peoples’ needs ahead of his own.”

Upon his retirement, Bob immediately joined the Knox County Retired Educators Association (KCREA) where he enjoyed the social gatherings with colleagues and met new retirees.

He soon began serving local communities and schools. The first project was collecting items for a local food pantry. Then, he participated in MEA-Retired’s annual initiative—the Day of Caring program and was impressed with how we give back to the schools we still love.

KCREA then nominated him as vice president with Beth Chamberlin serving as president. In two more years he moved up to president.

“In this position I became a member of the MEA-Retired Board of Directors attending meetings four times a year. As participation progressed, I also became a member of the Ad Hoc Healthcare Committee and Convention Committee.”

Bob Souther of Camden, also a KCREA member and treasurer, says of his friend, “Congratulations on your selection as an honorary member of MEA-Retired. You deserve this award for all you’ve done for MEA-Retired and for KCREA. Thank you for your tireless efforts on many fronts.”

Rheba Michaud of Dover-Foxcroft chairs the Convention Committee and finds Bob's suggestions invaluable "as we navigate the planning of our annual convention.

"Bob is very knowledgeable, helpful, and easy to work with. If I ask what I should do in a particular situation, he quietly gives sound advice.

As president of MEA-Retired, he was always organized and ran very efficient meetings and listened to everyone's comments."

Bob notes, "In 2021, I was approached by the Nominating Committee to serve as president-elect of MEA-Retired for two years—2021-2023. That led to my serving as president for the next biennium 2023-2025.

That is when connections were made on the national scene as well. I attended four NEA-Retired Annual Meetings (RAM), and interaction with other retirees from around the country was most interesting.

Attending NEA-Retired leadership summits in March every year was exciting, full of new learning, and provided some much needed confidence boosts.

A highlight from the many times on the NEA-Retired scene was being asked to serve on the NEA Jack Kinnaman Scholarship Committee—a national initiative that provides scholarship funds to aspiring educators."

Five \$3,500 scholarships were awarded to aspiring educators in 2025. Bob is advocating for Maine college students to apply for this scholarship if they are enrolled in a master's program. It is advertised in every October issue of *The Clarion* and on the NEA and MEA websites.

Interacting with Bob for just a few minutes, one can readily

see and feel his enthusiasm for the classroom, students, teaching, and volunteerism.

He says further, "It really bothers me when I hear people discouraging students from choosing teaching as a career. True, it's a difficult job that does not pay that well, but the fulfillment and joy of working with youngsters is unmatched. We experience great joy and fulfillment when a student finally grasps a concept. Or, when a student comes back years later with stories of success because of a teacher's life-long influence."

Bob recognizes that teaching school is not easy. Challenges come from many sources, but the feeling of satisfaction when helping students succeed surpasses any financial reward. "It is worth the effort to help make a difference in the lives of young people who will never forget you."

When asked about a teacher who was memorable in his own education, he recalls a high school Social Studies teacher who made him really think for the first time in his school career. "She was always asking us to dig deeper and question everything. My classmates and I knew that any essay we passed in would be returned to us with more questions and excellent ideas on how to enhance our work. We didn't mind, too much, because we understood her motives—she was trying to get the BEST work out of us."



Boardgame break for the siblings: (L to R) Bob, Ray, Terry and Paul.

Family First

The most important aspect of life to Bob is remaining connected with family and friends.

The family and a few cousins and close friends meet on Zoom every Thursday night, a practice that started when Covid kept them all away from each other.

The family often gets together to play boardgames. These get-togethers are usually filled with some spirited but friendly competition.

His sister Terry speaks fondly of her brother. "The skills that Bob picked up during his formative years in high school and at UMF were put to good use in his classrooms. For many years he was well liked as a dedicated and caring special needs teacher. He transferred to regular education and found time to serve on many programs. He cared deeply for the teaching profession, teachers, students, and the impact of education on society."

During those years Bob was busy encouraging his sister, Priscille as she fought her 15 year battle with cancer. He was a good listener. He also joined her in setting up the 'Jean Team' as part of the American Cancer Society's Relay For Life fight against cancer. After she passed, Bob and a great family friend, Bev, continued this labor of love for several more years.

The 'Jean Team' participated in the York County Relay For Life for 20 years. They raised over \$200,000 for the American Cancer Society over that span.

Terry continues, "Bob also drove from Thomaston to Biddeford every Friday after school to take his mother to her dialysis treatments. He always put other peoples' needs before his own. Our world needs more



Recent trip to Key West with an old college buddy.

people like my brother Bob."

Other than family time Bob now enjoys some of the perks of retirement like early morning walks by Rockland Harbor and the Rockland Breakwater. Both places are perfect for capturing the sunrise while getting in a little exercise .

He relishes his yearly trip to Las Vegas with a college friend and yearly trip to Florida with another friend from UMF. The destination of the trips don't matter all that much. The time with friends is the highlight.

The next Jean generation consists of five nieces and nephews—four of which are in education. What a legacy of educators and impact the Jean family has had on thousands of students!



MEA Board of Directors Report by Kay Grindall– Chairperson

Greetings from the 26 members of the MEA Board of Directors. I am privileged to have represented MEA-Retired in this position for the past three years. Now that the MEA budget passed at the May Representative Assembly, the following items will impact MEA-Retired:

MEA dues for MEA-Retired members will increase from \$31 to \$32 as of September 1, 2026. (Given that MEA-Retired dues are computed at two-thirds of the MEA dues and rounded to the nearest

dollar, our MEA-Retired dues (\$21) will not increase.)

The MEA Communications Committee is looking to save money and change the distribution of *The Maine Educator* as follows: Two issues will be mailed via portal service and two issues will be sent on email. All issues are posted on the MEA website. I did mention that MEA-Retired is nearly 5,400 in number, and a survey a few years ago indicated that roughly one-quarter to one-third of our members, at that time,

did not own a computer.

MEA’s “Join Now—Auto Pay” pilot program to transition from payroll deductions to private payment of dues was launched for “new” members as of February 1. Options for a member’s payment are by check, bank account Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), or a 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 membership (MEA, MEA-Retired, NEA-Retired) for affiliate presidents and vice-presidents, MEA-Retired officers and committee chairs; (5) delineate the MEA membership year as September 1 thru August 31; (6) conduct a due process hearing if a member is censured, suspended, or expelled.