



THE CLARION

The Newsletter for Retired Educators
Maine Education Association Retired Vol. 136 No. 5

June 2025

From our President



Molly Smith

The following are taken from the President's Remarks made by Molly A. Smith at the MEA-Retired Annual Meeting and Convention on May 1, 2025.

I'd like to focus on three key topics. First, to introduce myself by sharing a bit of my background with you. Secondly, to talk about YOU. Thirdly, to talk about US as an Association.

I am a child of educators. My father served as a junior and senior high school administrator. My mother taught elementary education—both in the Akron Ohio Public School System. Both were active members of the Ohio Education Association.

I resided in Ohio for the first 18 years of my life and have lived in Maine for 51 years—although I remain a Buckeye at heart. When asked, what is a Buckeye? The answer is often “a worthless nut.” Those who know me well, know of my fervor for Ohio State University Football as well as being a fan of the Cleveland Guardians baseball team.

I attended college in Massachusetts for one year before

transferring to George Peabody College, the college of education for Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. I graduated with a degree in Special Education.

I then moved to Maine to begin a teaching career of 43 years working with students having behavioral, intellectual, and physical disabilities. Having spent five years in a private state funded program for severely disaffected children and youth, many were able to return to Maine after having been placed in programs in Florida and Texas at great taxpayer expense.

The goal was to reunite families and to provide appropriate educational support for these students in Maine. Thirty-six of my years were in public schools in Wiscasset and in MSAD #75.

I am blessed to have a wonderful, supportive husband of 40 years, Andrew Poulin. Our son, Benjamin Poulin, lives in Bath, North Carolina, with his wife Nicole, two sons, and daughter. Ben is the Director of UAS Unmanned Aeronautics Systems (UAS) and Industry Training. Nicole is the Allied

Health Admissions Coordinator at Beaufort County Community College in Washington, North Carolina.

Our daughter, Allison Lytton, lives in Lewiston with her two boys and is an MEA Unserv Director. A former elementary educator in North Carolina and Lewiston, she has been a local and state Association leader in both states.

Attendees at the May 1 meeting were asked to participate in an exercise that confirmed what I always believed about members of MEA-Retired. As you read, keep track of how many times you say, “I have done or I am doing that!”

Are you or have been a member of a service, fraternal, or sisterhood organization—Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, Elks, Odd Fellows, (BPW) Business and Professional Women, orders of Knights of Columbus, Eastern Star, Freemasonry?

Have you been or are you currently a volunteer at a hospital, shelters for the unhoused or domestic violence, animal shelters, transportation driver, sports

See President, Page 3

74th MEA-Retired
Convention and
Annual Meeting

April 30, 2026

Plan early to
join us on a fun day!

A great day!

By Rheba Michaud, Chairperson
Convention Committee

More than 200 retired educators, guests, vendors, and exhibitors traveled from all over Maine to attend our 73rd MEA-Retired Convention and Annual Meeting at the Augusta Civic Center.

Many left home very early in the morning to arrive before 8:30 to enjoy a brunch, visit the exhibitors' tables, view county affiliate displays, and participate in the PAC raffle. Fourteen affiliates had posters with information about their activities and raffle items.

I heard many positive comments about the pictures of members involved in their affiliate activities. People visited the popular Book Swap throughout the day.

Many enjoyed having fewer morning speakers in order to provide more time to visit with each other, to see all the exhibitors, participate in the PAC raffle, read the convention booklet, and visit with

See 2025 Convention, Page 4

Help us keep in touch with you

By Domna Giatas, MainePERS
Director of Communications

MainePERS is seeking your assistance to ensure your contact information is up to date. Have you moved since retiring? Has your email address 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 that you always receive critical information in a timely manner.

The quickest way to update contact information is by through the **MainePERS Member Portal**.

If you have already registered, please login and double check your information. Need to register? Instructions are available at

www.mainePers.org/memberportal.

Prefer to submit your information via mail? Complete the **Member/Benefit Recipient Data Update** form available at www.mainePers.org/forms-resources/forms/.

A quick link to this form is available on that webpage. Just complete and mail to MainePERS at P.O. Box 349, Augusta, ME 04332-0349.

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By Crystal Ward, Chairperson
Legislative Committee

Hello, MEA Retired.

The results of the passage of the Social Security Fairness Act have been wonderful for many retirees in 15 states. Of the over 3.2 million people whose Social Security amounts were impacted, about 2.7 million receive their due payments as of May 1.

The remaining people are being done by hand or are waiting for information from a person to complete the new changes. The new amount should be in your April deposits or check. Social Security may stop sending out checks in the mail; you will need to have an account at a bank or credit union where it can be sent electronically. You will

Recap of recent legislative action

need to get the routing information from your bank and give it to the Social Security Administration.

If you were told at one time by Social Security that you did not qualify to receive a payment. You may now be wrong!! When the law changed. The new answer may be YES, you do qualify.

The only way to find out is to make an appointment with your **local** Social Security office—NOT the national number. If you were married at least 10 years and divorced, you may qualify for Social Security from you ex-spouse if they paid into Social Security.

Please do not leave money on the table by not checking things out with Social Security. Please get the word out, an elderly person family may need to know this information.

Social Security will not hunt for people who qualify!! We have to speak up!

MEA President Jesse Hargrove says, *"We are facing unprecedented efforts to erode public institutions and collective labor. We have learned from the struggle to repeal GPO/WEP that perseverance and persistence is the key to victory."*

News from Augusta is not very good. The budget is very tight and new programs

or increases in existing programs are going to be very difficult. Two bills—L.D. 111 and L.D. 1003 may have the best chance.

L.D.111 passed the House and Senate. This increases the amount the state pays for health insurance by 5 percent to 65 percent next year.

L.D. 1003 sets up a fund in MainePERS where some money from the end of the year cascade—all money left in accounts when they close the books—would go. When this fund has enough money, it would raise the capped amount on which we receive a COLA by \$500.

We continue to remind everyone that the UAL will be paid off in 2028. The resulting saving to the state should be used to fix the mess made to MainePERS in 2011.

A bill to raise beginning teacher salaries to \$50,000 has support . . . but money? The Paid Family Leave bill is facing a big fight; one bill wants to disallow it for educators.

Several bills on student behavior and removing restrictions on use of restraint were heard. Increasing pay for mentor teachers with student teachers and pay for student teachers who cannot work during student teaching were considered.

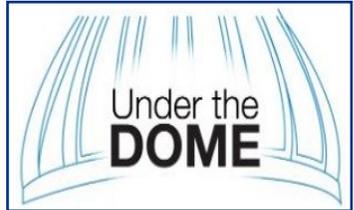
Several bills on banning cell phones were heard and

increased funding for the UMaine system and Community Colleges.

News from Washington is not good. The Trump Administration's plan to cut millions and billions from Medicaid would be unbearable for Maine and many retirees.

In Maine, **Medicaid** = **MaineCare** which many peo-

See Legislative Report, Page 3



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

The Clarion is published bimonthly by Maine Education Association Retired. Readers are encouraged to submit feature stories, news articles, notices of events and activities, and opinions of statewide interest by the fifth day of the month preceding publication. Please send articles to kay_grindall@yahoo.com or mail to Kay at 23 Hilltop Drive, Oakland 04963. Questions? Call Kay at 207-512-0027.

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@maineaa.org.

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NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA RA

June 30—July 6, 2025
Portland, OR

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!

June 2, 2025, 9 a.m.
Board of Directors Meeting
Best Western Hotel, Waterville

August 4, 2025, 9 a.m.
Executive Committee
MEA Headquarters, Augusta

September 2, 2025, 9 a.m.
Board of Directors Meeting
Best Western Hotel, Waterville

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

Contact affiliate leaders with ideas and concerns.

MEA-Retired Delegates

MEA-RA
May 16-17, 2026

NEA-Retired Delegates

NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA-RA
July 1—July 7, 2026

President, from Page 1

coach, at a church activity or mission, Meals on Wheels, literacy volunteer, immigration, settlement volunteer or host family, Boy or Girl Scouts, 4-H, town recreation dept, Boys or Girls club, Big Sisters and Brothers, volunteer firefighter, at community clean-ups, Toys for Tots, local food pantries or food drives, a local library, Habitat for Humanity, reached out to a neighbor in need, played in a community band or orchestra, registered people to vote, been a local election official, volunteered in an election campaign?

Have you served or are you now serving on a local school board, been a PTA or PTO member, read to children, taught finances, acted as mentor to another educator or to students, tutored adults, youth and children, supervised after-school programs, been a school volunteer, assisted in a school clean-up/maintenance effort, committee member or a chair on school initiatives.

Have you been an association member as an active educator, held a leadership role or office in that local affiliate?

Are you currently an officer or committee chair in your retired local affiliate?

Are you currently an officer, a committee chair or a committee member of MEA-Retired? MEA? NEA?

You have confirmed my beliefs. MEA-Retired members are giving, loving and compassion people with whom I am very proud to be associated.

Remember that I said there were three parts to my remarks. The last part is about US as a collective, an association, a union.

I am asking you for your willingness over the next year to fully engage in and embrace the **Association Review Initiative (ARI)**. This initiative was born from an activity that four of our members—Bob Jean, Susan Grondin, Debbie Killam, and I—undertook entitled *Six Weeks to Power*. We learned more about organizing to enrich our Association by making com-

munity connections. An effort is made to build a network of like-minded folks who improve the lives of retired public employees and educators and to improve and protect public education.

The team learned many techniques of training and organizing work. Following the completion of (ARI) in the next year, there is a plan to access *Six Weeks to Power* grant money and coaching support to develop a campaign of outreach making community connections.

The vision is to improve the lives of retired educators by enhancing opportunities and promoting positive outcomes in communication, economic well-being, and physical, psychological, and emotional health. As the goal is to strengthen the MEA-Retired, our team had the task to create and initiate a plan, develop a process to revitalize the organization, and increase member engagement consistent with its stated mission.

The (ARI) team sees this as an organic process. The journey and member engagement in this process will lead us and determine its outcomes. The Board of Directors has approved ad hoc committee status. A chair will be named at the June 2 Board of Directors meeting. Two more members will join our original team. If you are interested in serving on this committee, please contact President Smith.

A member survey was developed and has been completed by our Executive Committee and the Board of Directors. Solicited suggestions of improvement have been incorporated. After a period of information and promotion the survey will be distributed to ALL members to gain your input. Expect this to be coming your way most likely in September.

We need all of you to share your voices, perspectives, insights and ideas to make this initiative a success. We look forward to your participation to ensure a resilient and responsive organization.

The Community Participation Committee thanks all retirees who volunteered this year 42,976 hours. As of April, 2025, each volunteer hour is worth \$34.79. This year-long endeavor represents a total monetary value of \$1,495,208.99 that our retirees contributed to schools, organizations, churches etc.

Individuals with the highest number of volunteer hours are as follows: Androscoggin, Jean Roy; Aroostook, Rena Kerney; Cumberland, Bernadette Gratto; Franklin, Vicci Hamel; Hancock, Judith Bragg; Kennebec, Marshalyne Baker; Knox, Carl Woodman; Mid-Coast, Peg Newberg; Oxford, Beth Jones; Penobscot, Judith Frost-Gillis; Piscataquis, Jane Conroy; Somerset, Debra Tuttle; Waldo, Greg Coleman; and York, Joe Yucas.

Physical activities for the last year totaled 33,231 hours. The affiliate individuals with the highest number of physical activity hours are as follows: Androscoggin, Jean Roy; Aroostook, Paul Bouchard; Cumberland, Martha Violet; Franklin, Arlene Amos; Hancock, Jan Varnum; Kennebec, George Davis; Knox, Beth Chamberlin; Mid-Coast, Juanita Dyer; Oxford, Janice Guilford; Penobscot, Herb Hopkins;

Legislative Report, from Page 2

ple use for medical care, nursing home, assisted living, many home care needs, low income healthcare and schools.

Attacks on public education funding from Washington (our federal tax money) could cause property/state income taxes to increase.

Returning many things paid for by the Federal government to state government, results in the state passing to the towns or eliminating programs that help communities.

Many things going on in D.C. are being done to lower federal income taxes. Over 50 percent would go to the very richest people. Do not

Keep track of your hours of physical activities and volunteerism

By Susan Grondin, Chair
Community Participation Com.

Piscataquis, Rheba Michaud; Waldo, Greg Coleman; Somerset, Mary Turbyne; and York, Joy St. Pierre.

Affiliates are encouraged to schedule 2025 Day of Caring projects early—this spring before school offices close and personnel leave for the summer. It is very difficult to reach schools. MEA-Retired provides \$100 in matching funds to each affiliate that completes a form and submits an article to *The Clarion* with pictures. Members are encouraged to continue to keep track of physical activity and volunteer hours for recognition at next year's Convention and Annual Meeting.

It has been my honor to serve as chair of the Community Participation Committee and work with committee members Debbie Killam and Terry Given. Thank you for your support the last four years.

be fooled.

This tax cut is for the very richest to get more money. The richest do not need a tax cut—they need a tax increase!! This very old sneaky scam of giving 90 percent of the tax payers a small tax cut and giving the 10 percent richest millions and billions needs to STOP!

Two percent tax cut on \$50,000 = \$1,000, a 2 percent tax cut on \$500,000,000 is \$1,000,000. TAX THE RICH!

You can help by emailing, writing, and phoning your state and federal representatives and senators.

Stand up! Speak out! Fight back! Just like the DKG founders taught us!

2025 Convention, from Page 1

retired colleagues.

I met members leaving both breakout sessions with smiles and very positive comments.

Maine Author David Melville discussed his book entitled *The 5 Things to Improve Your Everyday Experiences*. Janet Woods of Caribou said, "This was an excellent presentation. He explained the five things with very meaningful examples."

Rena Kearney of Mars Hill agreed that it was a "very informative session. I learned about the five things I can do to improve everyday experiences. Some things you already do, but now I have information how I can improve."

The Mission Dogs session led by Christy Gardner was also very well received. Rena said, "This was an amazing session. She is doing so much for people who are disabled or who have needs for a service/therapy dog!"

Karen Longevin echoed Rena's sentiments: "Christie was an absolute inspiration. Her positive outlook on life after the tragedies that she endured is remarkable. Her mission is essential and needs to be shared and supported. Health is crucial."

Phyllis Moore of Dover-Foxcroft had very positive experiences with both of her sessions. She said, "Healthy Foot Care with Lisa Nelson was a wonderful presentation about helpful shoes, products, and information on how to protect and best serve our feet."

Nancy Grant agreed that there are "so many things to learn about proper footcare. Great introduction to a needed topic. Excellent presenters for this topic."

Phyllis's experience attending Ed Mathieu's Hiking in Maine was equally enjoyable and informative as she said, "Wonderful presentation of pictures and information of easy to moderate trails from Sebec Lake to Acadia National Park."

Nancy Grant said, "Ed is a

treasure—his slide show featured views, wild life and plants with hikes for any age, but focused on families with limited abilities or experience."

Judy Dow of Dover-Foxcroft agreed with equally positive comments: "Ed was very interesting! He was informative with beautiful photos and great ideas for hiking this summer."

Our keynote speaker was equally interesting. Serving as the first helicopter pilot was challenging. However, she persevered; and the team was very supportive. I found that very encouraging.

The one problem was that as she was speaking, the

roofers chose to resume work and sometimes it was hard to hear. So sorry that Cap. Colleen Nevius had to experience that distraction.

Our business meeting was short but many awards were given to affiliates and to individuals. I always find that very enjoyable to hear these positive comments.

Two Sheehan grants of \$750 were given out. Lisa Kelley of Hampden and Hope French of Pittsfield. Ritter Grants were given to many affiliates. Pages 16-17 of our convention booklet have all the grants and what they are doing with their money. A touching white-rose memoriam tribute com-

memorated those who passed during the past year. Membership awards were given to affiliates who increased their membership. Community Participation Awards were given out for volunteer hours and exercise hours. The Piscataquis affiliate won both awards—Jane Conroy for volunteer hours and Rheba Michaud for number of exercise hours.

Two very important awards are given by the president each year. Corley Anne Byras received the prestigious Honorary Membership Award and Bo Zabierek was honored with the President's Award.

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(1) A big attraction is always the delicious luncheon. (2) Christie Gardner presents her session on "Mission Dogs" that are trained to help handicapped people and used in a variety of situations. (3) Gathering with friends and former colleagues are Hancock County retirees (L to R): Faith Campbell, Priscilla King, Michael Lawson, Becky Vachon, Bonnie Maguire, and Debra Jo Middleswart. (4) Bo Zabierek of Sherman Mills is the 2025 President's Award recipient. (5) MEA Vice President Beth



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French brought greetings to our convention. (6) Newly elected MEA-Retired officers for 2025-27 are (L to R): Molly Smith, president; Julie Gomez, president-elect; Roger Roy, treasurer; Marilyn Burton, secretary and Barbara Hammond, information coordinator. (7) Attendees were welcomed by registrars (L to R) Rheba Michaud, convention chair, Dover-Foxcroft; Tiare Messing, Rockland—blue jacket on left; Beth Chamberlin, Thomaston.

Photos by Photographer Carl Daiker

2025 Convention, from Page 4

Congratulations to both—very well deserved.

Susan Grondin, chair of the Nominating Committee, presented the 2025-2027 slate of officers. Parliamentarian Phil Gonyar of Waterville facilitated the installation of officers.

Our new President Molly Smith of Lisbon gave interesting, inspiring remarks highlighting the “Leadership” theme of the Convention. She talked about “me, you, and us,” espousing her appreciation for all members and plans as to how we can move forward together.

Many voiced how pleased they were with the convention and enjoyed the breakout sessions, the, keynote speaker, food—brunch and lunch were

delicious, as always.

Ruth Chaffey of Dennysville has attended many of our conventions: “Once again, our amazing officers and chairperson presented us with an outstanding program for our 73rd annual convention.

“The ‘people in charge’ took note of the suggestions provided last year. The result was a dynamic keynote speaker who readily engaged the audience as well as a wide variety of breakout sessions providing something for everyone.”

One of my favorite comments came from several attendees who assured us: “We will see you next year, my friend. Convention is always fun. Plus it ended a bit early—more daylight to drive home.”

NEA Leadership Summit

By Molly Smith
NEA PAC Captain

MEA-Retired President Bob Jean, President-Elect Molly Smith, and Cumberland County REA member Grace Leavitt attended the recent Annual NEA-Retired Conference in Detroit, Michigan.

There were numerous opportunities to attend scheduled state leaders meetings, breakout sessions on interesting and useful topics to both state associations and to individual members. We heard messages from NEA President Becky Pringle, NEA Vice President Princess Moss, NEA Secretary-Treasurer Noel Candelaria, and the always informative and entertaining Mary Kusler, Senior Director of the Center for Advocacy and Political Action, NEA.

Each shared views on the status and challenges of the status of the national organization. They offered prescriptive measures to navigate the social and political challenges for public education and educators during the last six months and for the days ahead.

Each was also auctioneer in the high stakes NEA-Retired Political Action Com-

mittee (PAC) auction. There seems to be a bit of internal competition amongst the four of them each year, as to who will bring in the highest bids. The winner gets bragging rights and the honor of the retaining the jeweled crown for the coming year.

Noel had the bragging



Former MEA-Retired President Bob Jean and former MEA President Grace Leavitt attended the recent NEA-Retired Summit in Detroit, Michigan.

rights for the past year. This crew is always capable of achieving bids of thousands of dollars for the items they auction. The Live Auction made \$4,200; the Silent

The 2025 MEA-Retired Convention and Annual Meeting included year-end reports from all the committees. Most of our committee members were present. It was great to see MEA Benefits Trust Sharon Beaulieu, who presents the Anthem Medicare Advantage plan for K-12 educators. She was at the Anthem information booth with Patty Wheeler who backs up Sharon when she has a scheduling conflict.

I am grateful to work with such a professional team. We appreciate the excellent support received from our MEA Uniserv15 Assistant Lisa Collins in Caribou.

A special note of thanks is due for our current Past President Bob Jean for supplying our Zoom links and kicking off each evening promoting MEA-Retired unified membership to all of our active educators. He has agreed to support the committee in that role for our recently installed President

Time to prepare for retirement

By Bo Zabierek, Chairperson
Pre-Retirement Committee

Molly Smith as she transitions into her new position.

I was humbled and honored to receive Bob Jean’s President’s Award at the annual convention. He recognized me for my work as this committee’s chair and as an MEA-RA and NEA-RA delegate. I want to thank him for his service and support!

We look forward to continuing to provide the most current information available to active and retired members who are considering their retirement options. We will continue serving them well into their retirement years.

Pre-Retirement seminars slated

MEA-Retired pre-retirement seminars will be held virtually by Zoom on two consecutive nights from 5:00-6:15 P.M. Members should attend BOTH nights. You will receive an email message in advance to register for the sessions.

FALL 2025 SEMINARS

Session 1 –	
Tuesday, October 7	MEA Benefits Trust
Wednesday, October 8	MEA-Retired & MainePERS
Session 2 –	
Tuesday, October 21	MEA Benefits Trust
Wednesday, October 22	MEA-Retired & MainePERS
Session 3 –	
Tuesday, November 4	MEA Benefits Trust
Wednesday, November 5	MEA-Retired & MainePERS

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

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

See NEA, Page 11

Serve on a statewide committee

By Kay Grindall, Member
MEA Board of Directors

MEA committees meet three or four times a year. (Budget Committee meets twice.) on Saturdays from 10 a.m.—3 p.m. at the MEA building, 35 Community Drive, Augusta. Lunch and mileage are provided. Please consider how you can be more involved on the state level.

Committees give input to the MEA Board of Directors, staff, and the MEA Repre-

sentative Assembly.

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.

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

Government Relations (GR): Develops and advocates the legislative program of the Association.

Human and Civil Rights and Social Justice (HCRSJ): Advocates for educational and training pro-

grams designed to enhance human and civil rights and makes recommendations on ways for MEA to promote social justice.

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.

Resolutions: Receives proposed resolutions (belief statements) and new business items (action items) from members, committees and other groups. After editing and reviewing resolutions and new business items, presents them to the Representative Assembly.

Statewide Bargaining

(SWBC): Develops, reviews and recommends policies relating to the promotion of collective bargaining and goals; advises the staff regarding the development of resources to satisfy local affiliate needs related to collective bargaining.

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

Structure and Bylaws (S&B): Studies the MEA Constitution, Bylaws and Standing Rules and makes recommendations to achieve the purposes of the Association; is responsible for the continuous maintenance of an efficient and workable election procedure.

Interested members may contact MEA President Jesse Hargrove at 207-622-5866 or jhargrove@maineaa.org.

Beware of Crypto Kiosks and Crypto ATM Scams

By Pamela Partridge
AARP Maine Liaison

Fraud Awareness month may be over, but fraud isn't. Last week I heard a story of an older Mainer losing more than \$30,000 in a cryptocurrency scam involving what is known as a "crypto kiosk" or "crypto ATM." How can this be? How can one lose that much cash to a machine in one or two days?

According to the *Federal Bureau of Investigation Elder Abuse Report, 2023*, the IC3 received over 15,000 complaints from people over the age of 60 involving cryptocurrency with reported losses totaling \$1.1 Billion.

Losses from cryptocurrency investment scams account for 64 percent of those losses. "Tech and Customer Support" scams, Government Impersonation and Romance scams accounted for 16 percent, the second highest category of losses involving virtual money. This means criminals get

payments from their victims using the cryptocurrency ATMs and kiosks in grocery stores around the state. Scammers direct their victims to withdraw large sums of cash from their accounts and direct them to a nearby machine's location. They guide them very skillfully, step-by-step on a cell phone, telling them how and where to deposit the cash into the machine.

The cash gets converted to cryptocurrency and the scammer then has it directed to their account. Once the money is deposited, it is gone and nearly impossible to retrieve even after the fraud is reported.

So back to the question—how can this happen? First, a person has to be convinced of the need to make a payment with a large sum of cash which they have to obtain, and second, the money has to be deposited into the

machine.

What can be done to protect consumers, especially older adults who are most often targeted in these scams? Many states are drafting and passing protective legislation.

In Maine, two bills are being considered. LD 1445 "An Act to Prevent Financial Exploitation of Maine Residents 62 Years of Age or Older" also known as the "Stop and Hold" bill. LD 1339, "An Act to Regulate Virtual Currency Kiosks." Both have had hearings and have come out of committee with "Ought to Pass" recommendations.

LD 1445 will allow financial institutions to delay, for a period of time, a disbursement of funds from an account and for the reporting of the request for the disbursement to the AG's office for investigation when there is reasonable suspicion of

financial exploitation.

LD 1339 requires the licensing of virtual currency kiosks operators, caps fees, and establishes a \$1000 per day transaction per customer limit, and provides other customer protections like disclosure requirements. Together the bills provide important keys to preventing fraud and financial exploitation. AARP Maine is supporting both of these bills.

For more information, go to <https://states.aarp.org/maine/mefraud>. If you would like to schedule a speaker for your group, fill out a request at <https://www.aarp.org/forms/me-speakers-bureau-request-form/>. Join one of our monthly Fraud Watch scam awareness programs, register at <https://states.aarp.org/maine/monthly-fraud-watch>. For other events and programs sponsored by AARP, go to <https://local.aarp.org/me/> and click on your town's name.

I remember being a child and wondering why the days became shorter just as we were beginning summer vacation. Shorter or not, I do enjoy the warmer summer days, the abundance of the flower and vegetable gardens, and afternoons at the beach. I wish all MEA-Retired members and their families a happy, healthy summer. The MEA Benefit Trust staff is available to you throughout the summer. Our offices are open Monday to Friday from 8 AM through 4 PM. Our staff directory, FAQ responses, resource list and general contact information can be directly accessed on our revised website at www.meabt.org. Our phone number is 207-622-4418.

I hope that you take the opportunity to review this redesigned website if only to re-familiarize yourselves with your available benefits. Executive Director Jennifer Kent has been quite busy testifying and advising on some of the 66 healthcare related bills tracked by the Healthcare Alliance at the Maine Legislature. There were several bills on access to GLP-1 drugs and prescription

rebates which were of particular interest to the Trust and its members. The Trust staff routinely monitor state and federal legislative actions in order to take a proactive role for our nearly 70,000 members.

The trustees voted last November to send out a Request for Proposals (RFP) for an investment advisor. I was selected to join three other trustees on the Search Committee—President Sonya Verney, Patty Scully, and Hal Perry. Executive Director Jennifer Kent and Verrill Law attorney Karen Kimball Harford also served. Initially seven investment firms indicate an interest and were willing to complete our exploratory inquiry document. Five firms were selected to complete a more extensive questionnaire. (The collating of these five questionnaires yielded 75 pages of comparison charts! A huge thanks to Verrill Law staff for putting this document together.) From these five, three firms were invited to interview in person at the Augusta MEA Headquarters on April

9,2025. The search committee unanimously decided to continue to use HM Payson as our Investment Counselors. This decision was unanimously affirmed by the full Board of Trustees on April 29,2025. Even though the process required significant time and effort, I was honored to be selected for this search committee. It afforded me the opportunity to better understand the financial components required of a Trustee to better serve our members. I hope that you were able to attend the MEA-R Annual Convention on May 1, 2025. The Convention Committee members did their usual stellar job in its organization, finding interesting speakers, giving awards, arranging displays, signing up vendors and planning meals. I do not know how they do it. There were just under 200 attendees. This led me to wonder about how many combined years of teaching was represented in the convention hall. I did some rounding of numbers and estimated that each teacher probably had at least

MEA Benefits Trust serves many

By Faith Campbell, Member MEA Benefits Trust

25 years of service. I did the calculation for 200 attendees x 25 years= 5000 years of teaching experience. If we went back 5000 years then, we might be witnessing the early Bronze Age! Amazing, any way you look at it. How fortunate Maine is with its continuing history of intelligent, caring and dedicated educators. Truly, humbling to be one of your numbers. Best Wishes for a Happy and Healthy Summer Faith Campbell, MEABT Trustee Once again, I had the honor and pleasure of attending the MEA-R Annual Convention

Partnership for Caring

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

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



FREE Coffee Socials

Spring is here! It is time to get out and meet others and make new friends!

Join AARP Maine for free coffee and snacks while greeting neighbors, friends, staff, and volunteers. You will hear from community leaders.

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

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

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

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

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

CONGRATULATIONS



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

- Frances Bryson, 1/1/1923
- Josephine McAlary, 1/1/1923
- Theresa Thibeault, 1/1/1925
- Benita Russo, 1/1/1919
- Gladys Stokinger, 1/1/1925
- Elwyn Walker, 6/17/1925

2025 Affiliate Leadership Awards

Androscoggin: Carl Bucciantini of



Greene began his education career teaching Grades 3 and 4 before becoming a school counselor. He later moved to serve as technology integrator when the first laptop initiative was implemented in Maine's K thru 12 classrooms. Carl

has been president of the Auburn Education Association where he also served on the negotiations team. He was a member of the Hebron Academy Board of Trustees and served on the Board for Maine Odyssey of the Mind. Carl has served as the AARP liaison to the MEA-Retired Board of Directors and was the recipient of the AARP Andrus Award for Community Service. He also is a member of the Androscoggin Retired Educators Association and has served on the Board of Directors of MEA-Retired. He and his wife Joyce have four children.

Aroostook: Lou Willey of Caribou



taught elementary education in Aroostook County for 33 years. She earned a masters in Ed Leadership from USM and directed the after-school program in RSU 39. She also

served as a Uniserv Director for ten years. She was president and chief negotiator for the Caribou Schools union for 13 years. She was Religious Education Coordinator for Holy Rosary Parish, served on the Caribou City Council, and is a member of the RSU 39 School Board of Education. She is president of Aroostook Retired Educators Association and a member of the Board of Directors of MEA-Retired. She and her husband Ron have four children and six grandchildren.

Cumberland: Martha LaViolet of



Westbrook taught home economics in Kennebunk, Westbrook, and Gorham for 37 years. She was the Allied Arts Team Leader while teaching at the Gorham Middle School. She also served

on the District Recertification Committee and was Maine's 1986 Home Economics Teacher of the Year. She is an active member of Cumberland County Retired Educators Association, serving as membership chair. She is an active member of the Westbrook-Warren Congregational

Church—Board of Deacons, Teaching Parish Committee, facilities coordinator, member of the Honduras Mission team, She and her husband Gary have three children and four grandchildren.

Franklin: Karen Mitchell of Fayette



taught chemistry and physical science at Jay High School for 38 years. Karen is a literacy volunteer for Franklin County and an ombudsman for the Winthrop Nursing Home. She is president of Franklin County Retired Educa-

tors and is a member of the Grant Committee. She is on the leadership team of the Readfield United Methodist Church—Memorial Fund administrator, Hospitality Team, and Leaders Council. She is a member of the District Committee on Superintendent. She initiated a Christmas Day tradition in the Jay-Livermore Falls area where they help to provide a meal and good fellowship for those who are alone during the holidays. She and her husband Walter have three children and nine grandchildren.

Hancock: Barbara Bricker of



Gouldsboro taught elementary education for 37 years and was a Title I Reading Interventionist for five years. She chaired Professional and Curriculum Development for Union 96 and

RSU 24. She served on School Improvement Committees and was a member of the Evaluation Team—developing and implementing Teacher Evaluation Tools for RSU 24. She has been active in the union—building rep., delegate to MEA and NEA RA, chief negotiator, grievance person, and member of the Board of Directors of MEA-Retired. She and her husband Jay have two children.

Kennebec: Marshalyn Baker of Bel-



grade taught for 39 years—between upper elementary and middle school mathematics in the Messalonskee School system in Oakland. She coached the math team—one of her students

reached the national level of MathCounts. She worked on several NASA

initiatives, serving as president for ATO-MIM and was elected to the Board of NCTM—National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. A member of KREA, Marshalyn is chair of the KREActive Grants Committee and serves as memorial secretary and compassion leader at her church. She organizes a church team to walk for hunger to help raise money to support a Compassion Child in El Salvador. She enjoys her family, sports, travel, reading, walking, and puzzles. She and her husband Richard have two sons and four grandchildren.

Knox: Tiare Messing of Rockland



taught special education in MSAD 40—Medomak Middle School, Friendship Village School, Union Elementary School, A.D. Gray Middle School, and Miller Elementary

School. Tiare is very active in her community—volunteering at the Maine Lobster Festival, Coastal Children's Museum, Rockland Shakespeare Society, Watts Hall Community Players, and Camden Civic Theatre Board of Directors. She participates in the Downeast Singers, Harborside Harmony women's Barber-shop, and Nativity Lutheran Church Sunday School. She was active in her union as a building rep. and member of the negotiations team and a member of the MSAD 5 Board of Education. She is co-president of Knox County Retired Educators Association and a member of the Board of Directors of MEA-Retired. She and her husband Brian have two children.

Mid-Coast: Ed Nunery of Cumberland



Forside taught high school social studies and driver's ed for three years. He then moved to a position of guidance counselor at Mt. Ararat Middle and High Schools for 20 years. He

also served in the guidance department at Lisbon High School for 13 years. Upon his retirement, Ed was very active in the statewide pre-retirement program of MEA-Retired helping to inform active educators of the policies and procedures of implementing one's own retirement program. He has been a member of the Board of Directors of MEA-Retired. He is also very active in Mid-Coast Retired

See Leadership Awards, Page 9

Leadership Awards, from Page 8

Educators Association having served in various leadership positions. He and his wife Ann Marie have three children and four grandchildren.

Oxford: **Beth Jones** of Fryeburg taught mathematics for 20 years and business education subjects and computer applications at Fryeburg Academy. She also served as technology consultant. She coached field hockey



and softball—taking field hockey students to regional championships. She was president of her local active union and served on the negotiations team. She is still involved in the Fryeburg Academy's Alumni Association Hall of Excellence Charter—having received the distinction of “Distinguished Alumnus of Fryeburg Academy.” She is an active member of Oxford County United Parish and is a member of the Daughters of the Union of Veterans of the Civil War—the oldest lineage society. Beth is an active member of the local grange and drives people to appointments and shopping. She is vice president of Oxford County Retired Educators Association. Beth has one son and a granddaughter.

Penobscot: **Lynne Carlisle** of Brewer taught family and consumer science at Hermon High School for two years and at Hampden Academy for 28 years. She was department chair and advisor for the National Honor Society. As an active member of Pe-



nobscot County Retired Educators Association, Lynne is in charge of writing the Ritter Grants and carrying out the plans sending birthday and Christmas cards to members. She is also the coordinator for Road to Recovery—finding drivers for cancer patients and driving them herself for 13 years. She was a Literacy Volunteer for many students and a volunteer for Eastern Area Agency on Aging. Lynne enjoys crafting and design. She and her late husband have two children and one grandchild.

Piscataquis: **Donna Caruso** of Dover-Foxcroft was a Chapter 1 Teacher in MSAD #4 in Cambridge and then became a Chapter 1 Reading teacher in MSAD #68 in Dover-Foxcroft. After teaching Grade 3 for many years, she



became a Reading Recovery teacher for several years before ending her education career teaching Grade 1. She was very active in her MSAD #68 union where she served as treasurer and then president. She was also on the negotiations team for many years. She was a delegate to the MEA RA for five years. She is an active member of the Piscataquis Region Retired Educators Association. She and her husband Peter have two sons, six grandchildren, and one great granddaughter.

York: **Suellen Doggett** of Waterboro taught business education courses for more than 25 years in Massabesic High School and RSU #57 as well as in adult education programs. She was instrumental in creating the



school “York-to-Work” program and worked with the York County Community College on internship programs for students. She was awarded the Distinguished Service Award for Adult Education at the MAME Conference. She helped students obtain their GED and Hi-Set Diploma. She assisted in professional development committees, became a member of the “Who’s who Historical Society” and served on the Southern Maine Advisory Council on Transition. She is co-treasurer of York County Retired Educators Association and is involved in the York County Shelter Program. She has been a member of the Adult ed Advisory Committee and serves on St. Matthews Parish Council as a Eucharistic minister and volunteers in the annual church fairs and many public suppers. She and her husband Edward have two children and two grandchildren.

Anne Sheehan Grants recipients

The Anne M. Sheehan Honor Grant was developed from donations from friends and family of Anne Sheehan. Anne was an active member of MEA and MEA-Retired and demonstrated a great devotion to furthering education for active teachers.

The annual Honor Grant of \$1,500 in her name is available to all teachers in Maine who have enrolled in an advanced degree program. This degree can be in the arts, science or education. Applications are sent to the Legacy Committee which meets and selects the person to receive the award.

This year’s Sheehan Honor Grant is divided in half, and \$750 was awarded to two aspiring education leaders:

Hope French teaches Special Education at Corinth Community Elementary School. She has goals of becoming a Board Certified Behavior Analyst and a Director of Special Services. She earned her undergraduate degree in applied science and minored in business management at the University of Maine at Augusta. She is enrolled in the last semester of a graduate degree program at the University of Maine at Farmington in Grades K-12 special education. She has been busy in extra-curricular activities—advisor for Best Buddies program (promoting inclusivity among students identified and general education). She



enjoys the outdoors—hunting, fishing, ATVing, motorcycling). She and her family enjoy traveling and spending time with friends and family. She and her husband Matthew have a son Logan and live in Pittsfield.

Lisa Kelley has taught in Maine for 26 years. She taught math at the middle and high school levels in Brewer and more recently English at Brewer High School. She has read for the College Board and serves as curriculum leader for the English Department. She hosts various student clubs and is advisor for the Se Beowulf Club—the oldest student extra-curricular group (91 years old). Lisa has taken groups of students to Greece and plans to take a group to Iceland this summer. She is enrolled in a graduate degree program in middle level education at the University of Maine at Orono. She lives in Hampden and has three grown children and one granddaughter.



National Ice Cream Day

July 20



By Rheba Michaud
Piscataquis Region Retired
Educators Association

Corley Anne Byras of Augusta has been named 2025 MEA-Retired Honorary member. MEA-Retired Past President and chair of the Policy Committee, Corley retired from her education career at Mt. Ararat High School after 17 years there.

She also taught Grade 8 for three years at Rosemarie Junior High School in Whitehall, Ohio. While her husband was stationed in several military bases, she also was a substitute teacher.

She graduated from Muskingum College with a BS degree in education and a major in Bible and religion. She says, "Education runs deep in my family, with generations on both sides having educators. My father began his career teaching all eight grades in a one-room schoolhouse. He later became a rural letter carrier because it of-



Corley loves helping at the thrift shop where she gets to meet people and provide items to meet their needs.

A leader in many venues

fered better pay. Still, his passion for teaching never faded. During World War II, he spent his afternoons teaching math."

Corley says, "I remember a favorite teacher who truly made a difference. He taught typing and journalism, among other subjects, but more importantly, he cared deeply about his students. As the yearbook advisor, he was an inspiration, guiding us in creating a book filled with wonderful memories. His dedication and encouragement left a lasting impact on me."

Corley loved spending time with students—in class and after school. As the yearbook advisor for several years, she helped them to preserve their education memories.

She says, "I actually enjoyed extra-curricular activities the most because students had more freedom and were there by choice. It was easier to truly listen to them, understand their interests, and help guide them in a way that felt natural. I could connect with them on a different level and support their passions in a more meaningful way."

When talking with an aspiring young educator, Corley says that she readily admits how different things are now compared to when she started her teaching career. "The landscape of education and career opportunities has evolved in ways I never could have imagined," she noted.

For the past three years, volunteering at the Andwell Hospice Thrift Store in Augusta has been a true passion of hers. She

finds it very rewarding to help people find bargains and essential items—while supporting a meaningful cause. The volunteers create a warm and welcoming environment for each other and the customers they serve.

Linda Williams is director of the Andwell Hospice Thrift Store and is delighted to have Corley Anne on staff: "Corley's epitaph might very well be 'Volunteer Extraordinaire.' In the last three and one-half years, she has worked tirelessly to ensure the success of the store.

"Whether it be working in donations, recruiting and training new volunteers, or ringing up sales, Corley has devoted her time and energy to the endeavor. She often takes fabric home to measure and price. The store is now well established, and Corley deserves much of the credit."

Her service in the Order of the Eastern Star has also been a significant part of her life. She had the honor of serving as Worthy Grand Matron, and projects initiated during her tenure continue to benefit others.

She is in her 35th year as secretary of Electa Chapter #2 in Bowdoinham. Additionally, she recently completed a nine-year term with the International Grand Secretaries Association.

She has become quite adept at computers and maintains an email listserv for about 500 Eastern Star members—keeping them informed about meetings, sharing important updates, and fostering a sense of

community.

Corley has been very active in the Mid-Coast Retired Educators Association where she has initiated many fun fundraising projects that also help to encourage fellow retirees to join. She recently coordinated a sightseeing trip for retirees to Lancaster, PA, where they took in all the tourist attractions—including a play at Sight and Sound Theatre.

She added, "A new initiative with our Mid-Coast affiliate is organizing short



Corley served as president of MEA-Retired from 2017-2019.

field trips. We recently took a mystery ride that led to a fascinating tour of the Maine State House.

In December, we visited the beautifully decorated Blaine House for a special Christmas tour. It's been a joy to help create these opportunities for learning and camaraderie.

Corley also served as president of MEA-Retired for two years. It was under her leadership that the Association grew and several innovative projects were implemented. She is currently in charge of the PAC table at our annual convention.

See Corley, Page 11

Corley, from Page 10

President-Elect Molly Smith says, “I first worked with Corley at Mt Ararat High School and Middle School where she was a key organizer and support in the library and computer center. Corley Anne Byras has long worked tirelessly, in many positions and capacities benefitting MEA-Retired and other initiatives.”

Corley is also chair of the MEA-Retired Policy Committee. Molly is a member of that committee. She says “Corley’s leadership of the group has taken on the daunting task of reviewing all existing policies, making additions and deletions when needed, writing and proposing new policies to address the evolving changes that have occurred within the organization.

“Her ability to organize and edit material, setting goals, holding the committee members on task and completing the clerical and communication tasks required have been admirable and very productive.”

Corley’s husband George was from Bowdoin and had a distinguished 23-year career in the Air Force. Throughout his service, they lived in various places. In addition to substitute teaching, she was involved in Family Services, an organization dedicated to assisting servicemen and their families.

While stationed at Carswell Air Force Base in Fort Worth, Texas, she created a newsletter for Family Services that was recognized by the *Air*

Force Times, earning second place in their competition.

Later, while at Pease Air Force Base in Portsmouth, NH, she was honored to be selected as “Military Wife of the Year” for the enlisted as



Corley enjoys spending time with her family during her free time.

well as Family Services Volunteer of the year.

In 1979, they retired to Bowdoin with their four children: Stephen, Stephanie, Grant, and Treon. “Our children and four grandchildren—Mallory, Margaux, and Annie—bring us great joy and carry on the family’s strong sense of dedication and achievement.”

Corley shared, “My husband George passed away in 2007, but his legacy continues through our family. In 2017, I purchased a condo in Augusta and downsized from my large home. I joined Cox Memorial United Methodist Church in Hallowell, where I serve as a lay servant and

outreach chair.

One of the most rewarding projects we do is delivering individually wrapped treats to the staff at the three Hall-Dale schools, as well as the post office, library, and police department—a small gesture of appreciation that makes a big impact.

Her family is greatly inspired by their Mom’s servant’s heart and tendencies toward teaching. Stephanie Turgeon is the Student Services Coordinator for the Capitol Area Technical Center in Augusta. She says of her Mom: “Throughout her life, my mom has embodied an unwavering commitment to service. Whether it was volunteering for my siblings’ and my activities when we were growing up or dedicating her time to organizations she believes in today, she has always given generously of herself.

“Her deep belief in the power of public education not only shaped her career but also inspired me to follow in her footsteps. She has always understood that strong schools are the foundation of strong communities, and has been dedicated to that ideal. To her, giving back isn’t just an obligation—it’s a way to build a better world. Her example is a constant reminder of the power of kindness, and her influence continues to guide me every day.”

Youngest daughter Treon Dupuis works as a consultant, teaching financial computer programs to financial institutions and banks.

NEA, from Page 5

Auction made \$6,029; and individual contributions were \$2,180 at the March Conference for a total of \$12,409.

Add in the Winter Virtual Auction of \$10,366 for a total of \$22,775 that NEA-Retired members have raised so far this year to contribute to NEA PAC. Our next Auction will be at the NEA Retired Annual Meeting (RAM) in Portland, Oregon. MEA-Retired is funding delegates to the NEA RAM and the NEA-RA as follows: Bo Zabierek, Gary McGrane, James Ford, Linda Prescott, Julie Gomez, and myself.

Each delegate will be contributing at least \$200 as well as items for the virtual live auction. It should be noted the raffle at the MEA Annual Meeting in May also raises funds for the delegates contributions. This year’s raffle raised nearly

\$900. Additional PAC donations come from members throughout the year by recurring and single donations.

PAC funds support the elections of friends of public education to public office. These candidates are willing to stand up to



those who are eager to abolish public education and will not defend the needs of our students and fellow educators. PLEASE consider contributing either recurring or a one-time donation to either or both, NEA or MEA PACs. Please give what you are able, every dollar can make a difference!

I was allowed to attend the group presidents meetings with President Anita Gibson the first day representing MEA-Retired until President Bob Jean arrived on a later flight. It was valuable to get to know other state presidents and listen to the discussion of challenges and successes and lots of collective problem solving. Knowing that many of these people were to become my peers in May 2025 was beneficial to have the opportunity to develop relationships and network discussing mutual concerns.



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Membership Matters: 'Tis the season

By Roger Roy, Chair
Membership Committee

It's a great time to invite newly retired educators to our MEA-Retired family.

As the school year ends every year, an influx of new retirees joins our retiree ranks. They are new to this retired life. We need to reach out to them to help them acclimate to the benefits of retired membership in our county, state, and national retiree organizations. There is no better way to remain informed of all the benefits of membership.

This is the time of year when many affiliates hold barbecues, backyard parties, potluck luncheons, picnics, auction luncheons that benefit scholarships, and many other social gatherings. A great time to invite new retirees to join and learn of the advantages of belonging,

Create opportunities for

members and potential members to socialize and have fun while thinking about our vital work of protecting retirees, active educators, students and local schools.

Remember that these affiliates welcome all retired school personnel—not just educators. Reach out to bus drivers, ed techs, custodians, cooks, secretaries, crossing guards, study hall monitors, and more.

If you know one of these new retirees, reach out and warmly invite them to join you at an affiliate summer meeting. If you are having fun, others will want to join you. And remember to invite other fun seekers to join us as we protect public education into the future.

Enjoy your summer; you earned it.

Wanted *The Clarion* Editor

Solicit and edit news and feature articles
Utilize graphic page design
Create sense of community among members

Published bimonthly

Mailed by printer to 5,400 members

**Stipend: \$750 . . . plus
\$30/Page . . . editing and page design**

Effective date: August 15, 2025

Interested folk should contact
MEA-Retired President Molly Smith

207-837-8522

gpond15@gmail.com