



August 2026

THE CLARION

The Newsletter for Retired Educators
Maine Education Association Retired

Vol.137 No.6

From our President:



MEA-Retired Members,
I would like to share an inspiring message from NEA Retired President, Anita Gibson, delivered at the Retired Annual Meeting (RAM) in Denver, Colorado in honor of our nation's 250th Anniversary. I hope you find it as meaningful as the delegates did.

Molly A. Smith
MEA-Retired President

INSPIRATIONAL REFLECTION – by Anita Gibson President of National Education Association Retired.

Two hundred and fifty years ago, a bold idea took root on this continent – the idea that a nation could be built on liberty, opportunity, and the belief that every person has something valuable to contribute.

Today, as America marks its semi-quincentennial, we pause not only to celebrate the nation's history, but to honor the people who have shaped its future in the most profound and lasting way.

That means you – our retired educators. When we look back across the sweep of American history, we see inventions, movements, discoveries, and leaders who changed the course of the nation. But behind every one of those achievements stands an educator. Someone who encouraged curiosity. Someone who insist-

ed on effort. Someone who believed in a young person before that young person believed in themselves.

You carried forward one of the oldest and most essential American traditions: the commitment to educate the next generation. Not just to teach facts, but to cultivate character. Not just to prepare students for tests, but to prepare them for life.

Your classrooms – whether they were filled with chalkboards or smartboards, textbooks or tablets – were places where the American story continued to unfold. Every lesson you taught, every conversation you had, every moment you spent guiding a student through frustration or discovery, became part of the fabric of this country.

As we celebrate 250 years of America, we also celebrate the quiet, steady work that made those years possible.

You taught through changing times – through new technologies, shifting expectations, and generations of students who arrived with different needs and dreams. You adapted, you persevered, and you kept showing up.

That resilience is part of the American spirit itself. You rose early in the morning in the cold, rain and heat to ensure your bus was ready, and that meals were prepared. You were the first person to welcome each new generation while providing them safe passage to and from our nation's public schools. You prepared meals and handed out smiles

and encouragement daily, making sure each child had the nourishment they needed.

And now, in retirement, your influence hasn't ended. It has simply taken on a new form. Your legacy lives in the adults your students became – in the way they treat others, solve problems, raise their own children, and contribute to their communities.

You planted seeds that continue to grow in places you may never see, in lives you may never know, but they are growing all the same.

On this anniversary, we are reminded that America has always been a work in progress – striving, learning, improving. And so is education. You were part of that ongoing story. You helped shape citizens who will carry this nation into its next chapter.

So today, we honor your service. We honor your patience, your creativity, your compassion, and your belief in the potential of every child.

We honor the countless hours you spent preparing lessons, encouraging students, and giving more of yourselves than anyone ever saw.

As America celebrates 250 years, may you feel the weight of your contribution – not as a burden, but as a profound honor.

You helped write the American story in the most enduring way possible: through people.

Thank you for your dedication. Thank you for your legacy. And thank you for helping build a nation, one student at a time.

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

by Rheba Michaud

Our convention was a success but there are a few areas that the committee intends to address.

Several comments were made about difficulty hearing presentations, especially during the keynote portion of our program. We will continue to work with the Civic Center on this problem that arises every year.

Another area needing our attention is the distribution of raffle items to winners. We have a plan that may make this operation more fine-tuned.

Breakout sessions continue to be highly rated by participants. This year's sessions were exceptional.

I want to thank the many helpers who worked the day before, the morning of, and during the convention and beyond to make the convention a success.

Next year will be the 75th anniversary of MEA-Retired.

We will be planning something special for the occasion.

See Convention, Page 11

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Legislative Committee Report Submitted by Grace Leavitt

In the last edition of *The Clarion* you read about measures passed during the second session of the 132nd Legislature,

While MEA-Retired had hoped for much more, you saw that there were at least 'wins' for public education.

At the MEA Representative Assembly in May, your delegates proposed a New Business Item (NBI) which was adopted: **"The MEA will work with MEA-Retired to plan, organize, and support lobbying efforts specifically for MEA-Retired members in order to make significant progress in the next legislative session on our educators' ability to retire with dignity; such efforts may include, but are not limited to, organizing an MEA-Retired Lobby Day or Days, a 'Coffee with the Legislators' event or events for MEA-Retired members, specifically focused on**

retirees' issues, as well as any other effective activities that will be likely to result in real progress on our educators' ability to have security in their retirement."

MEA has always included among their legislative priorities measures to improve our pensions (after all, that is in the interest of all members since active members will some day retire as well).

Much more is needed in the next session to correct the devastating impacts of the 2011 cuts, hence the NBI we brought forth.

While MEA will do all they can to implement that NBI, it will take **all of us** to step up and show up and to ensure that each and every legislator hears from numerous voices of retirees.—that means you!

Even before the next session, there is work to be done that needs your involvement. MEA is holding Screening and Endorsement sessions for house and senate races.

Our MEA-Retired President, Board of Directors member, and your MEA RA delegates, as well as our MEA-Retired

member of the Government Relations Committee are all invited to these sessions, so you will be well-represented.

All candidates receive a questionnaire which includes questions about retirees' concerns, along with others about public education and member rights. The candidates who return the questionnaire on time may be considered for a recommendation from MEA.

What can you do now?

First, find out who the candidates are in your area. Get to know them. Encourage them to fill out and return the questionnaire. Then, pay attention to the recommendations of MEA when they are announced later this summer.

Consider helping to support those candidates in being elected in November. You might help drive a candidate as they 'knock on doors', or talk to your friends about how the candidates will be supportive of our issues, or write letters to the editor of your local newspaper. And, of course, continue to build a relationship with the candidates so that they understand our issues.

See Legislative, page 3

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

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Communications Committee:

Carl Daiker, Photographer/
Proofreader
Barbara Hammond,
Information Coordinator
Bob Jean, *Clarion* Editor
Jim Thornton and Pam Partridge
Web Administrators
Roger Fuller, Facebook Administrator

Molly Smith, President
Maine Education Assoc. Retired
16 Osborn St. Lisbon 04250
207-8378522
gpnd15@gmail.com
www.mearetired.org

Thank you to all of our contributors!

NEA-Retired Annual Meeting and NEA RA

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!

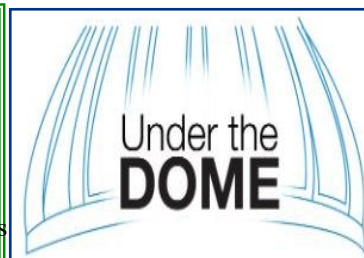
August 3, 2026
Executive Committee
MEA Headquarters-Augusta

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

October 5, 2026
Executive Committee
MEA Headquarters-Augusta

Meet/greet begins 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@maineaa.org

**Deadlines for
submitting articles for
future issues of *The
Clarion*:
October issue—
submit by September 5
December issue—
submit by November 5**

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

Legislative from Page 2

Let's not ignore the federal front, Whatever happens to federal funding for public education affects us all, whether directly to our grandchildren who are students or our family and friends who are still working in our public schools, or indirectly to the property taxes we pay to support our schools.

The cuts in President Trump's proposed budget mean a loss of \$22 million of federal funding for education in Maine. You can write to Congress to **oppose** these cuts.

There are also bills you can urge them to support:

S.343/H.R.– the Keep Our PACT Act;

S. 1277/H.R.– the IDEA Full Funding Act;

S.4297/H.R 9289– the Keep Public School Funds in Public Schools Act.

Remember, with supporters of education and of retired educators elected in November to serve in Augusta and in D.C., and with a multitude of retirees speaking up before and during the legislative session, we can make the progress that we all need.

We can do this!!

Legacy Committee Report
Charles Oehrtnann,
Chairperson

As I write this, we are poised to celebrate the 250th (!!) anniversary of the writing of one of our most cherished documents – the Declaration of Independence. I am always grateful and, in all honesty, humbled by the cherished words that our Founding Fathers, that august

body, set down on paper so long ago.

It is once again time for affiliates to apply for two grants – the Jane Ritter Grant and the Anne Sheehan Honor Grant.

Both applications can be found on the MEA-retired website. Both forms are current and up-to date despite what the dates indicate.

The Jane Ritter Grant was established to support activities from each affiliate designed to benefit the greatest number of affiliate members, as well as benefit the most elderly and vulnerable members. \$300.00 will be awarded to each affiliate based on the information in the application.

The Anne Sheehan Grant was established in 2009 in memory of Anne Sheehan, long-standing member of MEA Retired and a delegate to the

NEA Representative Assembly for many years.

She was committed to education and educational opportunities for advanced study for those in the profession. After suddenly passing away, her family desired that arrangements be made for donations to a memorial in honor of her long-term commitment to education and MEA Retired.

The grant totals \$1,500.00 and will be awarded in whole if only one applicant is approved, or split equally if there are more. **Applications are to be sent to: Charles Oehrtnann, 70 Ward Road, Windham, ME04062 or emailed to:**

orty1@earthlink.net

Applications must be post-marked no later than October 1, 2026.

Thank you for your continued involvement with MEA-Retired.

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 3– MEA-Retired, MEA Benefits Trust

November 4– 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

Elinor (Geri) Kenneally, 1/29/1926

Margaret Davis, 5/4/1926



MEA Benefits Trust Report

Faith Campbell– MEABT Trustee

The MEABT Board of Trustees met on May 19, 2026.

It was with regret that we bid adieu to two trustees. Sonya Verney had served on the Board for 10 years in various positions including two years as President.

Evelyn Atwood has served three years on the Board and provided many insights on the perceptions and needs of our younger educational professionals.

The MEA Board has selected two new trustees to fill these vacated positions. They are Monica Malcolmson and Nylesha Gradney DaLima.

Their three year terms will begin on August 1, 2026. We will welcome these new trustees at the MEABT annual meeting scheduled for August 18, 2026.

In addition, the Board held elections for executive officers. Hal Perry's steady hand will be guiding our helm as President.

Patty Scully will return as Vice President providing her experience and perspective.

Our Secretary is Lindsey Dos Santos whose energy and foresight will prove to be invaluable.

Our other trustees are Ken Williams, Maurice Langlois, Bobbie Thibodeau and Lynn Warren. All trustees are appointed by the MEA Board of Directors for three year terms with a three term limit.

The Center for Medicare and Medicaid services activated a pilot program called Medicare GLP-1 Bridge on July 1, 2026. The program is slated to run from July 1, 2026 to December 31, 2027.

Medicare recipients with Part D coverage may be eligible for

this program. This benefit does not come directly from your insurance provider. Eligible Medicare recipients will have a \$50.00 monthly co-pay. More information can be obtained at: www.Medicare.gov/glp1bridge 1-800-Medicare (1-800-633-4227) TTY users 1-877-486-2048.

The Personify Health Globe Trotting Soccer Challenge ran from May 11th to June 8th. MEABT Director Michael Booth and I formed a team as we followed the challenge. We completed the challenge with a total of 1,252,205 steps.

Fortunately, for me, it was the end of the school year museum field trip season. I assisted over 1,000 students in various activities on our 3 acre campus including crafts, tours, scavenger hunts and teaching a bit of handling the lines and working the capstan of a sailing vessel.

This helped me to achieve over 600,000 steps during the activity. Field trip season is over but I am still managing between 12-15,000 steps a day during the regular museum day.

I find the Personify Health app an easy, educational, effective and enjoyable way to manage myself and family members' daily healthy habits.

Personify Health representatives can be reached at: **855.689.6884**. You can also reach out to MEABT Wellness Director Michael Booth at: mbooth@meabt.org with any questions and/or concerns.

Recently, a MEABT member shared with me an incident which led to a denial of an eye-glass replacement benefit from Blue Vision. I am passing this

along as it might be helpful to other members. The denial was based upon the length of time since her last purchased pair. She was told that she had received the benefit for eye glasses which she had purchased six months prior.

It had been several years since she had purchased any glasses. She was able to ascertain that the "mystery" glasses were purchased from an in-network national chain.

Further investigation led to the findings that the glasses were purchased in another state and by an individual with a similar name. The member was able to obtain her reimbursement for her new glasses.

These situations happen. Fortunately, the Benefits Trust has a professional staff to help members navigate through many health care related issues. Please contact the Trust at: www.meabt.org or **207.622.4418** with any questions or concerns. The offices are open Monday through Friday.

Although we are beginning to notice the shortening of daylight hours, there are plenty of pleasant days ahead. Take the time to enjoy them.

Best Wishes to All of You.
Respectfully Submitted: Faith Campbell, MEABT Trustee

**AARP Maine
Summer Events
Pamela Partridge
AARP Maine Liaison**

AARP Maine sponsors statewide events throughout the year.

Near the bottom of our MEA-Retired homepage (mearetired.org) there is a link to the AARP Maine page that includes the "Maine Events

Hub," the "AARP Maine Volunteer Hub" and currently a link to a page called, "What's Motivating Older Voters in 2026?"

When you click on the Maine Events Hub picture, it takes you to a **free events calendar**. This summer they've sponsored Pride Events during June, Ice Cream Socials, Coffee Talks, On Tap gatherings, Virtual Wellness Classes, Fraud Watch programs, Bowling in Brewer, and Document Shred events.

Looking ahead to August there will be a special event Friday, August 14. AARP Maine and the Frances Perkins Center in Newcastle, will host an event with a historical talk honoring Perkins' legacy as the architect of the Social Security Act, while celebrating its 91st anniversary. With so much in the news lately about Social Security's solvency and the need for Congress to act, it would be interesting to take a look at its history and how it has become a lifeline for so many Americans.

The AARP Coffee Talks have been going on for some time in Fort Kent, Bangor, Lewiston/Auburn, Yarmouth and a new group in Naples. It is an opportunity to share conversation with friends and neighbors while hearing from local leaders. The Naples group is meeting the second Friday of the month at the Singer Center (Grange Hall), 18 Village Green Lane, 10 - 11 AM. In August they will welcome Maya Manseau who will give a talk regarding grief.

It is recommended you register to attend, but registration is not required. However, if you do register and the event is canceled, you will be notified. Registration links are found for all of the Coffee Talks through the Maine Events Hub page.

News You Can Use

By Joyce Bucciantini

AARP Community Outreach Coordinator

Surrounded by the crisp ocean air and the deep green woods, it is easy to understand why Maine is called “Vacation Land”.

From the early “rusticators” of the 1900’s to modern tourists, people come to bask in Maine’s natural beauty each summer.

Whether we are on vacation, staycation, or a day trip, summer is a great time to explore all that Maine has to offer.

Maine’s State Parks offer a slice of summer fun for everyone. Maine’s 48 State Parks can be found along our coast line, blue lake shores and mountain trails.

There is bound to be a Maine State Park near by. Even better, State Parks are free for Maine residents over 65.

What could be better than packing a picnic lunch and spending the day with friends and family at the beach or lake?

After all, fresh air and spending time with others is good for us. Right?

The Maine State Park website :
(<https://www.maine.gov/sos/kids/about/visit/state-parks>) is an easy way to locate and get all the details about a park near you.

The still warm summer days of August are a great time for festivals in Maine, featuring everything from seafood feasts and cultural celebrations to the numerous agricultural fairs.

The ever popular American Folk Festival in Bangor (a free outdoor event) takes place from August 21-23.

The Skowhegan State Fair starts in mid August and celebrates Maine’s agricultural roots.

Looking for something less outdoorsy? Try exploring some of Maine’s many museums.

From the Maine Maritime Museum in Bath to the Abbey Museum: Wabanaki Art and Culture in Bar Harbor, Maine’s museums create opportunities to share our history and cultures.

The Maine Museum of Innovation, Learning and Labor (Maine MILL) in Lewiston has recently reopened in their spacious new site and is well worth a visit.

Additionally, the Portland Museum of Art is continuing their free Third Thursday events through August.

No matter what type of vacation or day trip you are planning, there is no shortage of interesting things to see and do while it is summertime in Maine.

A quick web search can help you find parks, museums, or events all around Maine and to check for up to date information about fees or reservations.

The only hard part is deciding where to go and what to see this summer.

Happy summer exploring and check out the AARP website for AARP events near you.

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, Bangor

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., Yarmouth

Naples— Second Friday of the month, 10-11,

Singer Center (Grange), 18 Village Green Lane, Naples

Fort Kent— Second Wednesday of the month,

2:30- 3:30, Fort Kent Public Library,
1 Monument Square, Fort Kent

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.

MEA-Retired Annual Meeting and Convention

A Final Look

As we look back on another successful convention, we share some pictures that capture some of the activities of the day.

Vendors and Exhibitors

This year we had 17 vendors and exhibitors attend our convention. The very popular book swap table and PAC raffle table were also set up to welcome attendees.



Woodlands Senior Living - Rose Hale



Maine Senior College Network Reps



MainePERS Display with Whitney & Erin

President's Award Congratulations Kay Grindall



MEA-Retired President Molly Smith congratulating our President's Award recipient, Kay Grindall

A much anticipated moment at the convention is finding out who is the President's Award recipient for the year.

"I am very pleased to award this year's President's Award to an individual who, for a very long time, has worn many hats in this organization. She, amazingly, continues to step up and try new hats on when needed and wears them with grace and ongoing commitment. It is my honor to bestow the 2026 President's Award to Kay Grindall for her significant contributions to the Association. Kay, please come up to the stage to receive your well-deserved award."

Molly A. Smith
MEA-Retired President

Affiliate Displays

Many thanks to our local affiliates who created some wonderful displays in keeping with our theme of 'The Many Hats of MEA-Retired'.

Affiliates had baskets and other prizes to give away as participants browsed some of the unique work of these groups. Participating in this year's affiliate displays were the following locals: Androscoggin, Aroostook, Cumberland, Hancock, Higher Education, Kennebec, Knox, Mid-Coast, Somerset, Waldo, and York.

Thank you to all of these groups for creating wonderful displays to welcome our members.

A special thank you goes out to Carl Daiker, our MEA-Retired photographer. The pictures on these two pages are just a sampling of all the pictures he took covering the event.

To see many more pictures of the Annual Meeting and Convention go to our website at: mearetired.org

The pictures can be viewed there as a slide show.

Thank you, Carl!



The many hats of Cumberland County



Androscoggin County Display

April 30th, 2026

Leadership Awards

Leadership Awards from each participating affiliate are recognized during the afternoon session.

Each year affiliates are invited to choose a unified member in their group who has excelled in leadership roles in the affiliate and/or in the community they serve.

The following affiliates were represented by these winners as they appear (l. to r.) in the picture below.

York County

Janie Bradstreet of Kittery

Piscataquis County

Karen Longevin of

Dover-Foxcroft

Mid-Coast

Karen Black of Brunswick

Knox County

Patricia Smith of Thomaston

Kennebec County

Marc Poulin of Skowhegan

Hancock County

Carol Duffy of Lamoine

Cumberland County

Gisele Bougie of Portland

Aroostook County

Fern Desjardins of St. Agatha

Androscoggin County

Gina Fuller of Lewiston

Other Business

The remainder of the afternoon session was reserved for some very important business.

Attendees participated in a Memoriam in honor of Maine educators who passed away during the year.

Affiliates are responsible for passing this information along to the convention committee so we can complete our necrology report.

A designee from each of our 16 affiliates comes to the stage and is given a white rose to hold as we honor our fellow educators.

The names of those who have passed are listed in the convention booklet.

It is a solemn ceremony of respect for our colleagues, friends, and neighbors.

Our annual business meeting is held at the end of the day where unified members vote on various items dealing with our policies, bylaws, and other important business of the association.

Adjournment follows.



One member from each of our 16 affiliates holds a white rose as part of our memorial ceremony



After lunch skit from the Q-Tips comedy team



Save the Date
75th MEA-Retired
Annual Meeting and
Convention
April 29, 2027

Join us to help
celebrate 75 years!

Special Projects Committee

Debbie Killam, Chair

Special Projects Committee Becomes a Standing Committee and Seeks Input from Local Associations

The Special Projects Committee was initially an ad hoc committee. The committee's primary responsibility was to research funding opportunities that support MEA-Retired initiatives. The ad hoc committee was chaired by Susan Grondin.

Part way through the 2025-2026 year, Molly Smith, President of MEA-Retired, began filling committee and leadership vacancies.

As a result of this process, Susan Grondin was appointed to other positions and Debbie Killam and Lou Willey were appointed as members of the Special Projects Committee.

This spring, Judy Banionis was also appointed to committee membership.

In addition, Roger Roy (MEA-Retired Treasurer) and Molly Smith (MEA-Retired President) serve as ex officio members of the committee.

Around the same time, the MEA-Retired Executive Committee and MEA-Retired Board of Directors were considering making the Special Projects Committee into a Standing Committee. A MEA-Retired Bylaws change would be required to do this.

In January 2026, the Ad Hoc Bylaws Committee met. They proposed a bylaw change to establish the Special Projects Committee as a Standing Committee.

In addition, the Policy Committee met and drafted a job description for the Chairperson of the Special Projects Committee.

A proposed bylaws change related to the Special Projects Committee was recommended by the MEA-Retired Board of Directors.

The proposed change was presented by the MEA-Retired Ad Hoc Bylaws Committee, for a vote by unified members at MEA-Retired Annual Meeting on April 30, 2026.

The proposed bylaw change passed. This made the Special Projects Committee a Standing Committee.

The Special Projects Committee will consist of the chairperson and three members appointed by the president and confirmed by the Board of Directors. The Committee's responsibilities shall continue to be to research funding opportunities that support MEA-Retired initiatives.

Debbie Killam was appointed as Chairperson of the Special Projects Committee. A key responsibility of the chairperson is to prepare recommendations to the MEA-Retired Executive Committee and Board of Directors related to funding resources for projects and activities that support the economic, professional and social welfare of the retired educators of Maine.

A Special Projects Committee Zoom Meeting is scheduled. The committee will be brainstorming how to encourage local associations to define (write up) local projects that need funding to implement, generating a list of possible local funding sources, and identifying what types of formats/approaches MEA-Retired might use to draft funding requests.

As chairperson, Debbie hopes local associations will share information with her about current and possible local projects that they might need funding for to implement.

If you have interest in serving on the Special Projects Committee, please contact Molly Smith, President of MEA-Retired for more information.

~personify

HEALTH

Article submitted by
Mike Booth

There's nothing more thrilling than soccer culture around the world.

Participants took on the Goal Getters Challenge to experience this excitement and explore 15 soccer crazy locations across the globe!

Beachside games in Rio, team rivalries in Buenos Aires, an epic soccer stadium in Manchester and completing their journey in Vancouver, Canada.

The participants joined teams of up to 5 people and competed against other teams to get to the final destination.

The challenge ran from May 11- June 8. Participants would earn Personify Health points by reaching their destinations, posting positive chat comments on the platform, daily steps and wellbeing activities, and of course by reaching their final destination.

The names of all participants who reached the final destination were entered into a drawing for a chance to win 1 of 10 USA World Cup Scarves.

Fun Statistics!

- ◆ 1,108 Teams with 3,534 players participated
- ◆ • 50% of all teams reached the final destination and completed the challenge
- ◆ • Players averaged 297,198 steps
- ◆ • Total Steps for the challenge = 1,050,299,390
- ◆ • Total miles = 525,150 (rough conversion based on avg. step length)
- ◆ • Fun comparison - crossing the continental United

States at its farthest points is 3,662 miles.

- ◆ Fun comparison - from earth to the moon is 252,088 miles (Apogee, farthest point)

If you are an Anthem Medicare Advantage participant and would like to become a Personify Health member please see below for registration directions.

- 1) Register at: <https://join.personifyhealth.com/meabt>
- 2) Sign in with your name as it appears on your Anthem health plan ID Card.
- 3) If asked, enter pass-phrase: **wellness-4-you**

Questions or assistance? please call Personify Health Customer Service at 855-689-6884.

Day of Caring 2026-27

All affiliates are invited to apply for Day of Caring grants. A brief description of your project will be needed.

The Day of Caring program is meant to be completed around September 11.

Upon completion you are invited to send articles/pictures for publication in future *Clarions*.

For more information and to apply visit our website at:

mearetired.org

-or-

Contact us at:

Belinda Micucci
bmicucci80@gmail.com
Bob Jean
vegas04861@yahoo.com

The History of MEA-Retired Who was Clara Soule?

Submitted by
Susan Grondin

The Convention and Annual Meeting Committee is preparing for our 2027 convention when we will celebrate the 75th birthday of MEA-Retired, established June 2, 1952.

Historian chair Marshallynn Baker, MEA-Retired member Bonnie Nielsen, and Convention Committee member Susan Grondin met at the Maine State Library to check the inventory of MEA-Retired documents.

We followed up with a visit to the MEA office to see what is in the file cabinet.

A treasure trove in both places, of articles, pictures, and editions of *The Clarion*.

Future visits will add recent materials and review items that have been collected.

The Convention and Annual Meeting Committee will be including an article in each issue of the *Clarion* highlighting some aspect of MEA-Retired.

This issue the focus is on **Clara Soule**, the first MEA-Retired President, and the founding of our association.

Information is taken from our website, documents on file, newspaper articles, and a recounting of events from Ms. Soule's notes.

Posted on our website is the early accounting of the formation of our association.

The initial step in the formation of a Maine Retired Teachers Association was taken by Dr. E. Ward Ireland, the

Vice President of National Retired Teachers Association and Director of Region VII, when he communicated with Dr. Clyde Russell suggesting he come to Augusta and present a plan for creating a chapter in Maine.

Accordingly, on June 2, 1952, a meeting of retired teachers was held in the House of Representatives, State House, Augusta.

Twenty-five retired teachers attended this exploratory meeting.

Dr. Clyde Russell, Executive Secretary of Maine Teachers Association, called the meeting to order. After a few remarks as to the reason for calling the meeting, he turned the meeting over to Dr. Ireland who stated that 25 states already had a state association. (NRTA had been founded in 1945 by Ethel Percy Andrus.)

Ireland commented that the main purpose for organizing is to work as a unit for pensions which retired teachers should receive, but do not.

After much discussion he asked for a show of hands to ascertain the will of the group in regard to organizing a State Retired Teachers Association. It was a unanimous vote in favor and the Maine Retired Teachers Association was founded.

Clara L. Soule was elected president of the new organization. The first regular meeting of the MRTA was held October 30, 1952, in the Bangor Public Library at the time of the Maine Teachers Association Convention.

Ms. Soule presided at this first official meeting. Seventy-five members were present." (MEA-Retired website, 2026)

So who was Clara Soule? A September 2, 1978 obituary printed in the Portland Press Herald, original notes from

Clara Soule, a Maine history document, and the MEA-Retired website are the sources used for gathering information regarding the life of Ms. Soule.

Clara Lyon Soule was born in Portland, Maine, in 1882 and graduated from Portland High School.

She continued her education at the Portland Training School for Teachers, Columbia University Teachers College, Harvard, Boston College, Colby, Bates, and the University of Maine.

In 1902, she began as a model teacher at the Portland Training School and later became principal of the Woolson Elementary School.

Once elected as the Elementary Supervisor of the eastern district, she taught "immigrants newly arrived in Portland the basics of the English language." (Portland Press Herald)

This interest became a focus of her career and she received nationwide recognition.

She served as Portland's Director of Americanization for 21 years as well as the Director of Reading prior to retiring in 1950.

A member of the Portland Teachers Association, the Maine Teachers Association, and the National Teachers Association, in 1952 she became president of the newly formed Maine Teachers Retired Association.

Clara L. Soule of Portland was unanimously elected President—a fact of which she was not aware until told by a retired teacher who attended the meeting and called to announce the news.

When notified officially of her election as President she immediately declined to serve.

After receiving letters urging her to serve (from Dr. Russell and Dr. Ireland) and repeated appeals from many of the older

retired teachers for whom increase in pensions she had worked for many years, she reconsidered and consented feeling very inefficient and inadequate. (Soule, Clara L. History of Maine Retired Teachers' Association 1952 Organized, Annual Conventions 1953,54,55,56,57,58; pg.1).

She was President for two years. Miss Soule organized the Cumberland County Chapter of the National Retired Teachers Association and served as chair until age 86.

Other organizations she supported were Delta Kappa Gamma Alpha Psi State, National Society for Handicapped Children, and the Women's Literary Union to name a few.

In 1973, at the age of 93, while being interviewed she said, "There was never a child I did not love, and there was never a child I had that I could not see good in." [https://pressherald.newspapers.com/image/1308576803/PortlandPressHerald\(Portland,Maine\)](https://pressherald.newspapers.com/image/1308576803/PortlandPressHerald(Portland,Maine)MsSoulepassedawaySeptember21978attheageof96inPortlandMaine) · Ms. Soule passed away September 2, 1978 at the age of 96 in Portland, Maine.

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Soule, Clara L. History of Maine Retired Teachers' Association 1952 Organized, Annual Conventions (1953,54,55,56,57,58; pg.1).

Higher Education Association of Retirees By Debbie Killam

The Higher Education Association of Retirees (HEAR) held its annual meeting on Thursday, April 30, 2026.

Officers were elected for a two year term, serving from 2026 to 2028. The newly elected officers are Deborah (Debbie) Killam, President; Anne Hayes-Grillo, Vice President; and Gary McGrane, Treasurer.

The Secretary position remains vacant, but responsibilities will be rotated between other HEAR officers and leaders.

HEAR also appointed representatives to the active local associations. We hope these appointed leaders will be able to connect with active associations in a meaningful way over the coming year.

The HEAR Representative to the Associated Faculties of the Universities of Maine (AFUM) is Roger Roy of Caribou.

The HEAR Representative to the Universities of Maine Professional Staff Association (UMPSA) is Gary McGrane of Jay.

The HEAR Representative to the Associated C.O.L.T. (Clerical, Office, Laboratory and Technical) Staff of the University of Maine (ACSUM) is Deborah (Debbie) Killam of Detroit. Debbie will also serve as the HEAR Representative to the two Maine Community College System active associations; Community College Faculty Association (CCFA) and Community College Administrators Association (CCAA).

Membership for two of

HEAR's Standing Committees have been named. The HEAR Legislative Committee Members include: Roger Roy, representing the University of Maine Fort Kent (UMFK) Campus; Gary McGrane, representing the University of Maine (UM) Campus; Anne Hayes-Grillo, representing the University of Maine Augusta and Bangor (UMA) Campuses; Jerolyn Brokos, representing the University of Southern Maine (USM) Campus; and Deborah Killam, representing the University of Maine Cooperative Extension (CE).

The HEAR leaders identified above are also serving on the HEAR Social Committee.

These standing committees will be identifying committee chairs over the summer.

HEAR's Program Year runs from September 1 through the following August 31.

Planning for the 2026-2027 Program Year has begun. Officers and leaders will be meeting over the summer months to continue to refine the annual work plan that was approved at the HEAR Annual Meeting on April 30, 2026.

Details of the refined work plan will be shared at a future date.

A day trip to Little Wilson Falls By Beth Chamberlin

Little Wilson Falls

A year or so ago, in the Bangor Daily News, I read about different falls around the state. My husband and I have been to several falls here in Maine, however we had not seen Little Wilson Falls, so it was on my bucket list to do.

The first date we hoped to go,

was a rainy wet day so we decided to pick another. A nice cool Saturday came up a few weeks later, so off we went.

We left from our cottage on Embden Pond in the morning. We had heard it was not that easy to find, as it is tucked away in the Maine woods. It is also part of the Appalachian Trail as you near the top.

We looked it up in our Gazetteer



and put it into the GPS. We also stopped at the Irving gas station on Rt 6/15 which is also known, as the Greenville Road.

This is in Monson, before you make the right turn onto the Elliotsville Road.

This gas station is a perfect place to stop to pick up water, snacks and use the restroom before you start your hike.

Elliotsville Road takes you to the trail head of Borestone Mountain. After about a 7-mile drive, we came to the parking lot for Borestone Mountain, and our directions sent us a few miles farther.

Thankfully we met a local resident, who was parked on the side of the road and got directions to go back, and our turn would be before the parking lot.

We looked for landmarks and found the road. The trail to Little Wilson Falls is within the first few miles of the 100-mile wilderness section of the Appalachian Trail from Monson to Baxter State Park.

Since it is a dirt road that is rough, it is important to have a

vehicle that is not low to the ground.

We got the last parking spot at the trail head. There were a few picnic tables at the start of the trail, which were occupied by people enjoying their lunch and the stunning scenery.

We had decided to take a backpack with our lunch (peanut butter and jelly sandwiches) and water, on our hike.

The trail was well marked. It was rigorous, with a lot of exposed roots, slippery spots and uphill, so stepping carefully was important.

I would recommend hiking shoes and for the older hikers, walking sticks as well. I am 70 and wished I had thought to bring mine.



It is 1.2 miles in, so our hike round trip was about 3 hours. This included a stop on the trail for lunch and time at the top to enjoy the beauty. It was well worth the trip, as the falls were so eye catching and dramatic.

- Beth Chamberlin, Thomaston, ME-

Yearly Dues

MEA- \$32

MEA-Retired- \$21

NEA Retired- \$35

**Join all three to
become a unified
member.**

**(\$7.25 out of your
monthly paycheck)**

RE-NAME THE HEALTH CARE COMMITTEE AND WIN A \$25.00 GIFT CARD

The MEA-Retired Health Care Committee is looking for a new name. Our hope is that the new name will reflect the work we're doing beyond just the health insurance now adding support for wellness, safety, and healthy living for older adults. **PLEASE PARTICIPATE BY** writing your idea, name, and address in the space below, clipping the announcement and sending it to: MEA-Retired, 35 Community Drive, Augusta, ME 04330

SUGGESTED COMMITTEE NAME: _____

Name and address of person submitting form:

The winning idea to be chosen by consensus of the committee fall of 2026.

From the Health Care Committee

In an effort to become more active in supporting our MEA-Retired members, the Health Care Committee has a goal to increase communications and information focused on healthy aging.

In our first attempt to provide some information, the Committee decided to send along a list of potential resources that could provide helpful information for retirees.

Older adults are managing lots: health care, safety in the home, a healthy diet, prescription drug needs, mental health, transportation, housing, assisted living, and social needs to name some.

This is the first effort by the Committee to reach out to members.

Please look for additional

communications in future issues of *The Clarion* and look for an email regarding the executive summaries of the recent surveys sent out by the Committee.

Also, please find the Committee Renaming Gift Card cut-out (at the top of this page) and send in your idea(s). The following list of resources is a place to start for support:

AARP— especially the Senior Planet Portion of their on-line presence found at: <https://seniorplanet.org/>
MEA Benefits Trust for members on that health plan found at <https://meabt.org/>
The Tri-State Learning Collaborative on Aging at: <https://www.agefriendly.community/>

Maine Department of Health and Human Services Areas on Aging can be found at: <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/roads/get-support/older-adults-disabilities/area-agencies-on-aging>
Social Security Administration website or your local office found at: <https://www.ssa.gov/>
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services found at: <https://www.cms.gov/>
Local Insurance Agents Financial Advisors

All the best from your MEA-Retired Health Care Committee

Ken Williams
Faith Campbell
Anne Hayes-Grillo
Ben Paradis
Marilyn Hylan

Convention, from Page 1

The Convention Committee will share details as the plans evolve.

I want to thank the Committee again for all the help they provide. I could not do what I do without the help of this special group.

Several weeks ago, I fell and smashed my heel. I cannot put weight on it for 12 weeks.

I am with one daughter in MA. All three of my girls are sharing me at this time.

Due to the circumstances we have only been able to meet once (via Zoom) to begin our planning for next year.

We do know that next year's convention will be special!

**75th Annual Meeting and Convention
April 29th, 2027
Save the date!**



MainePERS 2026 Retiree Member Satisfaction Survey Submitted by Domna Giatas

Over the past five years, MainePERS has conducted annual random Active Member and Retiree Satisfaction Surveys as a key performance measure of its 5 Year Strategic Plan.

MainePERS' Strategic Plan and the key performance and risk measures may be found at www.mainebers.org/about/strategic-plan/.

Additionally, MainePERS uses these surveys to evaluate our member service satisfaction, to develop initiatives responsive to member needs, and to improve our communication efforts.

The Member Portal (www.mainebers.org/memberportal) and an expansion of our newsletter were the result of feedback received from these surveys.

This year's survey of active and retired members was conducted in April, and the following is a summary of the retiree portion.

From the approximately 52,000 State-Teacher, and Participating Local District Plans, 2,500 retired members were randomly identified to receive the survey.

Those selected had a mailing and email address on file and were service or disability retir

ees who had received a benefit payment within the last 60 days.

Of those who received an email invitation to take the survey, 607 retirees or 26% responded.

The confidence level of this survey is 98%, with a margin of error of 4.1%.

Of those responding, 95.70% rate their overall satisfaction with MainePERS as "satisfied" or "very satisfied," while 3.80% were "neutral" or had "no opinion," and 0.50% were "dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied."

Over ninety percent (92.89%) stated they "agree" or "strongly agree" that MainePERS acts with integrity, with 6.78% being "neutral" or having "no opinion," and with 0.33% who "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

In a question about our staff, 81.35% "agree" or "strongly

agree" that MainePERS staff are knowledgeable, with 18.15% being "neutral" or having "no opinion," and 0.50% "disagree" or "strongly disagree."

Responses to the survey suggest retired members are generally satisfied with the frequency of communication, clarity of information, and timeliness of responses from MainePERS.

Many retirees also expressed appreciation for the work of MainePERS and its staff. Nearly half (48.18%) of the respondents indicated accessing the MainePERS Member Portal.

Compared to the 2025 survey, participation among retired members was down slightly, with 607 respondents in 2026 versus 655 in 2025.

For those who received and responded to the survey, your participation is appreciated.