

"Day of Caring" gives back to schools, communities



Jan Cerabona

August and September are typically the months when affiliates around the state participate in the annual, statewide "Day of Caring" activities in schools and communities. We encourage retired educators everywhere to become involved. There is plenty of work to be done, and everyone is needed.

Retirees descend on local schools to do whatever they can to help. Some groups work in August to help teachers prepare for the first day of school. They mount bulletin

boards, photocopy, collate, staple, prepare "first-day informational packets/permission slips," and so much more! They help out in libraries, provide filled backpacks, donate "Thank You" gift bags to teachers, and so much more. In fact, one affiliate gives a children's book to every library in the county!

If you check out the December 2017 and 2018 issues of *The Clarion*, you will see volunteerism at its best! Students, teachers and administrators around the state appreciate the work that is done by hundreds of retired volunteers.

Androscoggin

Androscoggin Retired Educator Association continued their Day of Caring Backpack Project for 2019.

New this year were small Backpacks for Pre-K -2 students.

Cindy Peters, Gina Fuller and Crystal Ward delivered 28 Backpacks to the following schools:

LEWISTON: Lewiston High School "The Store Next Door" is a program for homeless students in Lewiston Middle School, Lewiston Alternative School Longley, Connors School, McMahon School, Farwell School, Montello School, and Geiger School

RSU 4 Sabattus, Litchfield, Wales: Oak Hill High School, Oak Hill Middle School, Carrie Ricker School, Libby Tozier School, and Sabattus Primary School

Pairs of age-appropriate backpacks are tied together

and a tag attached explaining who we are, what we do, and to whom we are delivering Backpacks. The president's name, address, emails, and phone number are included. Some schools even send a Thank you. We rotate deliveries around Androscoggin County schools each year.

Aroostook

Aroostook Retired Educators Association (AREA) donated school supplies to students and teachers in the Van Buren District Elementary School through our Bulging Backpack program.

Each year, we collect school supplies at each of our four summer AREA meetings. We also accept monetary donations if the members would like us to shop for them. We then work with our chosen school to decide when

to make our presentation—at a school assembly, at a designated place during Open House night, or at a faculty meeting.

Thanks to the generosity of our members, we were able to present the 10 classroom teachers and 6 special program teachers with a gift bag which included a "Thank you" card and a cash gift of \$25 to purchase special things for their students.

We attached a 'school pin' to each card that had been proudly worn by a retired educator—a highlight of our presentation this year.

During our presentation, we talk about the importance of MEA-Retired and our chapter's involvement in the Day of Caring initiative.

After our introduction, we invite the teachers to "shop" from the backpacks and the tables of supplies.

The remaining supplies are placed in the school's supply closet for future use.

Cumberland

Cumberland County Retired Educators Association supports the South Portland, Portland Chapter of the "Locker Project."

This program was established several years ago when it was discovered that about 20 percent of students in Maine are considered to be "food insecure."

This means that students wonder what the next meal is. Many students eat on a regular basis only in school.

Consequently, the Maine Locker Project came into being. The project sends food home with students over the weekends. We collect donations from food banks, grocery stores, and individuals.

We stock schools with a variety of easy-to-use goods including canned foods, pasta, rice, cereals and snacks. On Friday afternoons, the school representative distributes food to students for the weekend.

On the following Monday, another Locker Project representative goes into the pantry and takes inventory of the empty food boxes and then returns them to the Locker Project headquarters.

There is also a Gorham School District Locker Project—founded and operated by



The Androscoggin Retired Educators Association provided backpack filled with school supplies for schools in the area.



Members of AREA provided a large variety of classroom supplies for teachers and students in the Van Buren Elementary School. "Thank you" gift bags containing \$25 were presented to the teachers to get items that would be helpful in their classrooms.

See Cumberland, Page 8

Cumberland, from Page 7

Heather Whitaker, a Gorham Middle School teacher. Mrs. Whitaker was voted the Cumberland County Teacher of the Year this past season. She is one of three teachers being considered for Maine "Teacher of the Year." The results will be announced in December.



Tom DiPasqua of Scarborough coordinated the Locker Project for CCREA.

Franklin

The Franklin County Retired Educators Association (FCRE) participated in the annual Day of Caring sponsored by the Maine Education Association Retired.

To help the new teachers hired this year at Academy Hill School in Wilton, they bought supplies the teachers needed to set up their classrooms for elementary students. The items included math manipulatives, flash cards, books and other items that would help get the year started.



Courtney Bailey, Grade 4; Joanne Dunlap FCRE Day of Caring Chairperson; Shannon Lee, Grade 2; Terry Sawyer, FCRE member; and Haley Teacutter, Grade 4.

Hancock

The Hancock County Retired Educators Association donated \$100 to the Brooklin School. The staff decided that the funds will provide a "celebratory party" when students have 100 percent attendance for a full week!

Kennebec

Kennebec Retired Education Association (KREA) chose to work at the Libby Tozier School in Litchfield.

Each spring, we contact a Kennebec County school that has been nominated by our members and select a date late in August to help teachers prepare for opening day.

Eleven retired teachers and one guest joined a similar number of teachers and support staff at this K-2 school. We worked from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. finishing a great variety of jobs.

We photocopied, collated, labeled library books, prepared first-day-of-school documents in student folders, cut words for a word wall, ripped pages out of workbooks, and much more.

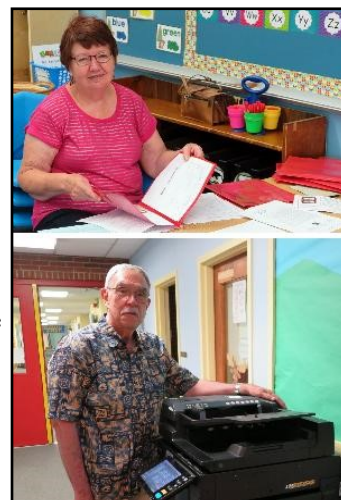
The camaraderie of the day made the day very fulfilling and exciting. It is so rewarding to see how much work can get done when you have these extra knowledgeable hands helping! Teachers are always so very grateful at the work we can accomplish to help them open their doors on that first day of school.

As in other schools where we've worked, the Libby Tozier staff greatly appreciated our assistance and would love for us to come back to their school yearly. Lunch was prepared and served by Roberta Morin and Kathie Choate. We invited the teachers to join us.

Over lunch, KREA members told teachers about the KREAtive grants for which they are able to apply. (Two \$150 grants for classroom use are awarded by KREA each year providing funding for special projects that are not part of the school budget.)

As we parted, active teachers, not yet ready for retirement, were encouraged to keep in mind MEA-

Retired and KREA as future organizations who will welcome them as they move from active to retired status.



Linda Ellis of Clinton collates documents and fills student folders. Carl Daiker of Waterville photocopies student projects and worksheets.

Knox

Knox County Retired Educators Association (KCREA) selected Friendship Village School that has 100 students in Grades K-6, for this year's Day of Caring project.

Through the generous donations of members and the Day of Caring grant, KCREA was able to give the school \$175 to support the goal of increasing their curriculum dealing with Maine history.

We also donated numerous school supplies to help teachers and to give to students who need supplies to succeed in school



KCREA members donated school supplies to Friendship Village School. (L to R) Beth Chamberlin, vice president; Jennifer Woodward; Linda Woodman, auditor; Robert Jean, president; and Tiare Messing.

Mid-Coast

Members of the Mid-Coast Retired Educators Association returned this year to the Bowdoin Central School for its Day of Caring. The day commenced at 8:30 a.m. with Principal Ryan Keith and Karen Mayo, the school secretary, welcoming the crew.

We started the morning off by clean-

ing and organizing the supply closet so the new supplies could be brought in. They had a lot of fun organizing and reminiscing about getting supplies from the closet which was always a fun time in setting up one's classroom. The school's roof was worked on most of the summer, so the boxes that were normally in the

See Mid-Coast, Page 9

Mid-Coast, from Page 8

entrance way which is near the supply closet had to be stored in the library.

Merle Wagg moved the boxes from the library to the closet. He did the heavy lifting so his wife, Debbie Wagg and Marilyn Webb could do the emptying and placing of the supplies onto the shelves. Staff provided fresh strawberries as well as crackers and cheese that were provided for us.

We returned to work and finished emptying and storing the rest of the supplies, checking off the sales slips, and cleaning up the mess made with the packing paper and boxes. The boxes were stored in a corner of the hallway for a local business in town that collects and uses them. It was great helping at Bowdoin Central—a day we always enjoy.



School secretary Karen May checks out the work of the retired educator volunteers.

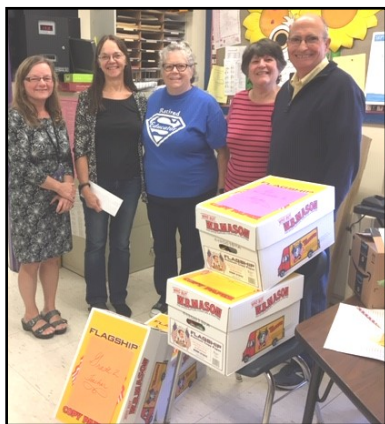
Penobscot

Penobscot County Retired Educators Association awarded a check in the amount of \$200 to the East Corinth Middle School. Mike Smart presented the check to student council members. The money will be used to purchase new playground equipment.

Somerset

The Somerset Educators Association Retired (SEAR) participated in the annual Day of Caring program again this year.

They purchased and assembled packets of school supplies. They delivered them to staff at the Bloomfield Elementary School in Skowhegan and donated \$100 to the library.



(L to R) Bloomfield Elementary School Principal Jean Pillsbury, Nancy Luce, librarian, Pam Partridge, Anna and Ron Wilber present school supplies to the school and a gift of \$100 to the library.

Oxford

"Maine books for Maine kids"

The Oxford County Educators Association-Retired (OCEA-R) has maintained a community project for approximately 15 years. Its goal is to provide children's books for all libraries in Oxford County.

The idea for this project was originally inspired by Karen Ellis and Elaine Lagueux, who had worked together before their retirement. The members of our Association enthusiastically voted to pursue the idea.

Over the years OCEA-R has provided books described by Karen Ellis as ranging from "board books to chapter books" in an effort to reach as many age groups as possible. The name of our project explains its goal. Fortunately, a number of OCEA-R's members personally knew authors to contact. A committee chooses a new book for purchase and distribution every year.

The Association has been fortunate to welcome several of the authors as guests at our monthly retired meetings. Furthermore, many of the books have

been autographed by the authors.

Our first author was Lynn Plourde, the author of at least 30 children's books. The story OCEA-R chose was *At One in a Place Called Maine*. She was a speech therapist in Maine schools for 21 years.

Other authors we have sponsored include Dean Bennett, who wrote among other books *Everybody Needs a Hideaway*. Robin Taylor-Chiarelo wrote two books that we chose for the project—*Limbo* and *It only Takes One*. Among other books the committee chose were Juliese Padgett's *The Newest Flower* and Liza Kleinman's *Azalea Unschooled*.

The librarians of the county have been most grateful for these new books and assure OCEA-R that the books are extremely well-received by the children who come to their libraries.

OCEA-R at first raised money to purchase the books by soliciting "sponsors" among the group who would buy a book for a library in their town. Soon the project became part of the group's planned expenditures from the organization's budget. Now everyone can feel a part of the project.

Piscataquis

Piscataquis County Retired Educators Association (PCREA) Day of Caring project involved giving \$50 to five schools in Milo, Dover-Foxcroft, Guilford, and Greenville.

Realizing that food insecurity is a very real concern of many students, we gave the money to the school nurse to buy nutritious snacks for students who need food.

We have done this project for three years and thank the dedicated members of PCREA for faithfully supporting our local students and teachers.



PCREA member Jane Lander hands a donation to Courtney Arcaro, nurse at SeDoMoCha School.



Waldo

The Waldo Education Association Retired (WEAR) met for our monthly meeting on September 14 at the Ocean's Edge restaurant.

Members brought contributions of clothing to be given to students at Walker Elementary School in Liberty and at Monroe Elementary School.

In addition to the clothing items, each school was also given a check for \$100 to use for student needs.



(L to R) WEAR members Constance McCarthy, Bonnie Maguire, Mary Alder, and Nancy Desautels present school supplies to two local schools.

Washington

The Washington County Retired Teachers Association affiliate has established a tradition of participating in the MEA-Retired Day of Caring project which was started in 2010.

Our members vote annually on the school or schools to be the recipients of the treasure chests.

We provide treasure chests filled with a wide variety of school supplies donated by our members.

This year six elementary schools were selected. The treasure chests were delivered by members who had a specific connection to the school.

Deliveries were made by David and Ruth Sousa to Alexander Elementary School;

Nancy Willey to Cherryfield Elementary School; Hazel Hammond to Bay Ridge Cutler; Mary McFadden to Edmunds Elementary; Barbara Maloy to Fort O'Brien Machiasport; and Dawn Noonan to Lubec.

Our membership was very pleased with the positive feedback from each school. This statewide project is one that is supported by our membership at large.

In addition, individuals recognized active educators in our county for Teacher Appreciation Day and others plan to do the same during American Education Week from November 11-15.



Members of the Washington County Retired Teachers Association participated in the statewide Day of Caring program. They purchased a variety of school supplies and filled treasure chests for students and teachers in five area schools.

York

York County Retired Educators Association (YCREA) held their 10th annual Day of Caring at Marshwood Middle School (MMS) in Eliot.

Each year, as part of a statewide volunteer project, county associations of the Maine Education Association Retired, do "Something Special" for a local school, library or community agency in their county on or around September 11th.

This is our way to honor those affected by the tragic events of that infamous, catastrophic day.

Students from St. Joseph's College, MMS staff, and MEA President Grace Leavitt joined YCREA members at MMS for a very successful workday.

We painted in the cafeteria, in a locker room and in the gymnasium. We also painted a large storage cabinet in the art room. Others helped in classrooms as well.

We dusted shelves in the library, and we cleaned and arranged displays in three large cabinets in the lobby. After our work was finished, we had a wonderful lunch provided by Principal Tony Bourbon.

We were also able to donate to the school, backpacks, school supplies and a generous check to be used for students and staff, thanks to the support of many

YCREA members, active MEA members from York County, MEA President Grace Leavitt, MEA Uniserve Director Judy Beverage, and Matt Haas, manager of the Staples Store in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

The annual Day of Caring has become a very special activity in our Association. It is amazing what can be accomplished when we work together to make a difference for others.



YCREA member Pat Kennedy and a student from St. Joseph's College in Windham painted in the cafeteria of the Marshwood Middle School in Eliot.



YCREA member Jan Cerabona (kneeling) and Maine Education Association President Grace Leavitt cleaned and reorganized a trophy display case in the foyer at Marshwood Middle School in South Berwick.