



THE CLARION

The Newsletter for Retired Educators
Maine Education Association Retired Vol. 132, No. 5

June 2020

MEA-Retired
68th Annual Meeting
October 15, 2020
**“Happy 200th
Birthday, Maine!”**

From our President



Kay Grindall

Greetings on this beautiful spring morning. When I went out to pick up the newspaper, little crocuses greeted me in all their color and splendor. The chorale of birds sang beautiful melodies, as they flitted from branch to branch.

As I approached the newspaper tube, two squirrels scurried ahead of me to the nearest tree—chattering about their plans for another normal day for them!

It had rained during the night and territorial worms

were lounging across the pavement—each claiming its space. Pretty soon the sun would warm up the pavement, and they would wither or disappear into the earth.

Then, reality set in as I glanced at the disheartening COVID-19 headlines of the *Morning Sentinel* (that used to be four sections and is now two).

I began reading more heartbreaking stories of deaths and self-distancing and separation and loss and grief. The single most disruptive event in our lifetime continues to take its toll.

I was so sorry to read that a nearby tannery would be

closing—115 people would be losing their jobs. Think of the impact on families and children. Our spiraling world seems pretty dark and hopeless. And there is nothing we can do to stop the spiral.

But wait.

I turned to the next page to see a picture of teenagers loading up their parents’ vehicles with bags of groceries for families who are experiencing food insecurities. How reassuring it was to see a picture of a bus driver delivering food to homes where children depend on breakfast and lunch at school.

See President, Page 2

Come to our Annual Meeting

By Rheba Michaud
Convention Coordinator



Rheba Michaud

Oh, no! No convention?!

But wait!

At least we can have an annual meeting. It is the annual opportunity to meet with friends and colleagues to socialize. We often reminisce about our days in the classroom and share the fulfillments of projects and volunteerism that enhance our retirement.

Some of us are volunteering in libraries, schools, local agencies, non-profit organizations, etc. We usually come away from convention filled with ideas about volunteer opportunities we could pursue.

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m., and the general session assembles at 9:30 a.m. Business will be conducted, the honorary membership award will be presented, and the “In Memoriam” time will be re-

See Annual Meeting, Page 9

Day of Caring plans underway

By Jan Cerabona, Coordinator
Community Participation



Jan Cerabona

We celebrate the tenth anniversary of our MEA-Retired “Day of Caring” in 2020.

Each year on or around September 11 county associations do something special for a school, library, or local agency in their county.

Thanks to the commitment of our members all across Maine, this annual statewide volunteer project has become very successful and gives us all the opportunity.

Retired educators and college students have partnered to give back to the communities in which we live and taught and where college students hope to teach.

All 15 county associations participated in last year’s Day

of Caring and are eligible for a \$100 matching grant from MEA-Retired for their 2020 Day of Caring.

If you would like to see the creativity and volunteerism of our members, go to our website, mea-retired.org. You will see a most impressive four-page document delineating each county’s projects. They are all so different.

As you can imagine, as we begin planning for another year, we are finding ourselves in the throes of very difficult circumstances. Now more than ever our students, staff, schools and communities need our support and help.

However, the what, when, where and how are so difficult to plan. Our suggestion for 2020 is as follows.

Each association should make a plan that works for their members and communi-

ties during this unusual year of 2020. Once you have your plan, please send me a brief description of your project on email. I will then notify our treasurer, Robert Souther; and he will send your matching grant check.

Our members are always ready for a challenge, and I am confident that, as always, we will meet rise to accomplish even more in the year ahead.

We will, once again, work together to support our students, staff, schools and communities across Maine.

We will be sure to do everything with a **SMILE—Seniors Make It Look Easy.**



Feel free to contact me for more information: 207 748-0932 or send an email to jcerab2805@aol.com.

Thank you for all you do for students and teachers.

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Legislative Update



By Crystal Ward
Legislative Liaison



The latest Legislative news as of May 10, 2020, is quite obvious in light of the massive fallout of COVID-19.

Maine's budget has a big hole in it due to lack of revenue coming in because of the pandemic shut down.

The Federal government has sent money for specific losses but not to fill holes in state budgets. Maine does have a pretty big rainy day

fund. (Gov. Mills did not spend this money.) The rainy day fund is about \$250,000,000, but the hole may amount to twice that much.

That would mean unprecedented cuts all across all state-funded programs. The Maine Legislature voted before they left to carry all bills forward from the last session. They may go back in November.

Down in Washington, D.C., they are fighting over whether to send money to the states to help fill the holes caused by the shutdown. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he would rather let state governments declare bankruptcy during the coronavirus pandemic than receive more federal funding.

He suggested Republicans should oppose additional aid for state and local governments in future corona-

virus relief bills.

This is a TERRIBLE idea!

We need to contact Senators Collins and King and Representatives Golden and Pingree and ask them to support funding to help states. If the Federal government can bail out big businesses, then states and local governments should be helped as well.

MainePERS' reorganization of the funds risk has helped it lose a lot LESS than in 2008 and LESS than other pension funds even now. There were still losses, but we will not know the whole picture until June 30. The bill we were able to help pass allows the payback for events like this. The emergency COVID-19 shutdown enabling payment to be spread over 20 years will certainly help.

What will the 2021 COLA be? No one knows yet. Some predictions are

around 1 or 1.5 percent, but some have it lower. Remember, a few years ago it was minus 1 percent where the amount of our pension checks decreased. We will not know until the end of August when the Federal COLA amount is released.

There are many statewide programs that can help during these tough times of great uncertainty. One way to find out about them is to call 211.

Be safe and healthy and stay in touch with others. And keep washing those hands!



President, from Page 1

Doesn't it just warm your heart to see the images on the news of people lining up to honor our healthcare workers and first responders during these days of urgent, critical need.

The Thunderbirds, Blue Angels, and Bandit Flight Team did several flyovers to honor coronavirus workers.

It is great to hear the melodious synchronized singing and playing of instruments on balconies and neighborhoods all around the world.

An amazing awareness continues to evolve through this cataclysmic health disaster. Teachers are now esteemed and valued like never before. Parents and communities hail them and attribute great respect to all that they do to educate our youth day after day. Their students remain their priority even in the face of difficulty and inequity of support and technology at home.

These thoughtful acts of kindness and encouragement are happening globally and have contributed much to the sense of community and connectivity and compassion during these days of isolationism, distancing, and quarantines.

Furthermore, our very own retired educators are seizing opportunities to make a difference in serving others in so many ways. See examples of our members serving others on Page 8.

Our officers and Board of Directors have been meeting on Zoom to carry on the business of MEA-Retired. We thank our leaders who prioritize their time to attend these meetings and share valued input. They bring concerns of our members to the forefront for discussion and resolution.

As you know, our May convention was cancelled and an annual meeting will be held on October 15. We

encourage you to make plans to attend and remain involved in the decision-making of MEA-Retired.

Another decision that was made at our recent Board of Directors meeting will increase our annual dues from \$12 to \$15, effective September 1—the beginning of our fiscal year.

MEA-Retired dues have not increased since 2003. The basic expenses of mileage, meals, meeting rooms, stipends, printing, postage, and technology have increased significantly over the past 17 years.

The costs of our convention have increased since 2003, yet we still charge just \$20 to attend the all-day event. Our pre-retirement seminars have increased in number and costs of printing materials, mileage, and meals have grown. Funds required to send six delegates to the annual NEA-RA have almost doubled since 2003.

Feel free to contact me or a Board member at anytime if you have questions or issues of concern to you.

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 tenth day of the month preceding publication. Please send to our editor.

We pay 50 cents for every *Clarion* returned due to "incorrect address." Please send address changes to Lisa Collins at 800-281-3191, Ext. 2400 or 207-498-3191 or via email at lcollins@maineea.org.

Communications Committee:

Chairperson Jane Conroy
Carl Daiker, Proofreader
Larry Given, Information Coordinator
Kay Grindall, *Clarion* Editor
Pam Partridge, Web Administrator

Kay Grindall, President
Maine Education Assoc. Retired

23 Hilltop Drive
Oakland, ME 04963
kay_grindall@yahoo.com
207-512-0027

<http://www.mearetired.org>

“Comfort in COVID-19”

Retired educators around the state have given time, talents, and resources to help those in need during these unprecedented and challenging times. Many retired educators have worked to make differences in the lives of others.

by Craigen Healey, Franklin

Staying at home to isolate from the virus is one thing, but staying home because your work is canceled during the pandemic can make one's stomach growl.

When the announcement came that all schools were closing "for at least two weeks," my husband and I were volunteering as teachers in Honduras. Many of the families live in dire poverty—even without COVID-19.

The country has no unemployment insurance and no food stamps. We learned that many families we have come to love don't have enough food to eat.

We had to help and sent out a plea for donations from friends. Then, we arranged for leaders in the little village of El Junco to use the money to buy lots of rice, beans, corn and more to give every needy family. It won't feed them until they can work again, but it will bring some relief for them ... and for us.



by Beth Chamberlin, Knox

When the stay-at-home orders went into place, I read that a good way to help people and to stay connected was to send written letters. I thought what a great idea. I made a decision to write at least seven letters every week to different people.

Depending on the person to whom I am writing, I usually enclose something with

the letter—a lottery ticket, a few postage stamps, a gift card to Subway, a cartoon or article from a magazine, a recipe or an invitation to lunch when the order is lifted. This project has given me a lot of satisfaction and people really appreciate the letters I send.



by Roberta Morrill, Cumberland



About 12 members of Cumberland County Retired Educators Association write notes or call other members just to keep in touch and to remind them of meetings, etc.

Well, in March, we continued to keep in touch with them. One of our members is notified to send get well cards, thinking of you or sympathy cards when and where needed. A great way to stay in touch especially during this time of social distancing and cancelled meetings..

Since I usually collect volunteer and exercise hours from our members at our April meeting, our callers helped to collect. I discovered that there were more hours than ever reported before. So, many people are volunteering, exercising, and rising to the occasion to help others during these days.

by Peg Newberg, Mid-Coast

I have been cooking and baking for Lunch-to-Go, a Harpswell Aging At Home (HAH) initiative which started when the pandemic hit. For the past seven weeks, we have served or distributed 2,535 meals to 1,049 people.

I have also been planting vegetables at the Harpswell Community Garden. We maintain 12 plots of produce which we give to the Food Mobile, HAH's Meals in a Pinch, and Mid-Coast Hunger Prevention Program.

Both of these volunteer activities have kept me "balanced" and, more importantly, connected to my community and my wonderful neighbors and new friends.



by Carl Daiker, Kennebec

I don't think being quarantined is anyone's idea of fun, but I would like to mention one person who has helped Phil Gonyar and me to make the most of our quarantine. Mark Wilson, pastor of the Waterville United Church of Christ (UCC) has been hosting a daily Zoom meeting for those in the congregation who care to join. It is a combination of chit-chat and prayer and a God send in these troubled times.

The UCC celebrates communion on the first Sunday of each month. Rev. Wilson wanted to be sure that all of his congregants were able to celebrate communion while staying home. Before Palm Sunday he drove to the homes of each congregant and left palm fronds and a packet containing a communion wafer and juice. He did the same thing on Sunday, May 3. He conducts the Sunday services from the church via Facebook and Zoom. We are very fortunate to have someone like Mark to help us through these days. Thank you, Mark.

by George Davis, Kennebec

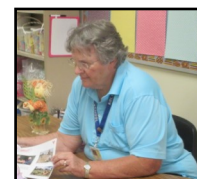
My wife Lauralee and I assist our church in their "Grab N Go" lunch program. On Wednesday mornings we prepare 35 bags of food and store them in a large cooler so that the volunteers who come in at 4 p.m. are able to distribute them to those who need food. They come in and grab a bag..

Each bag contains a main dish, a fruit, a starch, a breakfast item, a small carton of milk, and a dessert. Those who come may take as many as four bags if they have that many people at home to feed. The appreciation of those who benefit from our work is certainly a much larger payment than any amount of money could bring.



by Arline Amos, Franklin

I have continued my cross stitch and embroidery projects for charity. One example of my many projects was a pair of stamped cross-stitch llama kitchen towels. A man bought them for his wife's birthday by donating \$50 to the Wilton Area Food Bank. Other projects are done or in progress to benefit local charities.



Affiliate Leadership Awards

County affiliates recognize members who demonstrate exemplary service to others in schools and communities. Active leadership on local, state, and national levels is encouraged. Unified membership in MEA-Retired is required.
—Gary McGrane, President-Elect

Androscoggin: **Cynthia Peters** of Lewiston taught social studies at Edward Little High School for 38 years. She was assistant director of the Drama Club, initiated the Mock Trial program, and was a judge of Student Congress Debate competitions. She was chaperone at Girls State for 32 years and served as Senate Advisor for the last 10 years. She is an active member of Androscoggin Retired Educators



Association where she serves as historian and corresponding secretary. She serves on the Board of Directors at Senior College, volunteers at St. Mary's Medical Center, and co-organized the "Take a Veteran to School Day" at ELHS. She is a member of the Dempsey Challenge team to raise money for cancer research.

Aroostook: **Diane Parent** of Caribou taught home economics at Caribou High School for 30 years. She is chair of the Aroostook Retired Educators Association Membership Committee and president of Friends of the Acadian Village—devoted to preserving and promoting Acadian culture in the St. John River Valley. Diane is president of the Caribou Home-makers and Chair of the Aroostook Aspirations Scholarship Committee. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Aroostook Wildlife Refuge, and is a teacher in the Area Agency on Aging. She volunteers at the Cary Gift Shop, Soup Kitchen, and the Blanket Ministries. She and her husband Romeo have one daughter and two grandchildren.



Cumberland: **Marie McCann** of Cumberland Foreside taught elementary education, was a lead teacher, interim principal, and mentored younger teachers for more than 20 years in the Cumberland area. She traveled abroad to study at King Alfred's College in Winchester, England; Denmark Early Childhood Education; and participated in Project Harmony where she created a week-long study of Russian culture and schools. An active member in NEA and MEA, she was a delegate to several Representative Assemblies. She has been an active member of Cumberland County Retired Educators Association—second vice president and recording secretary. She is a member of the Portland Museum of Art, a volunteer and usher at the Maine State Music Theater, and a volunteer at the Freeport Public library. She and her late husband have one child and two grandchildren.



Franklin: **Carolyn Parr** of Farmington taught elementary education and was reading specialist in Farmington area schools for 20 years. She was secretary for the UMF Alumni Association where she served on committees: "Friends of UMF," Outstanding Young Graduate, the new Alumni House, and helped with fundraising for the UMF and Farmington Public Libraries. At the Old South Church, UCC, in Farmington, Carolyn was Sunday School



Superintendent, co-president of the Women's Fellowship, and a trustee. After retiring she was a reading tutor for Grade 6 students and did private tutoring. Carolyn is active in communication in the Franklin County Retired Educators Association. She and her husband Jerry have three children and six grandchildren.

Hancock: **Debora Holmes** of Penobscot taught special education in Kindergarten thru Grade 6 and Grades 9—12 in Bucksport for 35 years. She volunteers three days a week in the Penobscot Community School. She participates in the "Pancakes for Santa" program, at the Halloween Fair, book fairs, and book projects. Deb is an active member of the Hancock County Retired Teachers Association and has earned the physical activity and volunteer honors for several years. She and her husband Richard have two children, six grandchildren, and two great grandchildren.



Kennebec: **Laurance Given** of Litchfield taught in Richmond Elementary and Middle Schools for 35 years. He was president of MEA-Retired and is information coordinator and chair of the Policy Committee. He represents MEA-Retired on MEA Benefits Trust and is past president and current treasurer of Kennebec Retired Educators Association. He received the MEA-Retired President's Award and Honorary Membership. He was a long-time active and retired delegate to MEA-RA and NEA-RA. He was chairman of the ConnectEd Credit Union and was president and treasurer of the Tacoma Lakes Society and the Kenway Drive Road Association. He was a volunteer at the Litchfield Community Christian Church Food Pantry and was given the 2014 Muriel Bonin Memorial Volunteer Service Award. Larry has three children and four grandchildren.



Knox: **Bob Jean** of Rockport taught Grade 3 for 38 years at St. George School in RSU 13. He is president of Knox County Retired Educators Association, a delegate to the MEA-RA, and legislative liaison for KCREA. He volunteers for American Cancer Society's Relay for Life and participates in the Area Interfaith Outreach food pantry's weekend backpack program. Bob volunteers in the children's reading program, "Book in Every Nook" at South School in Rockland. He received the Sandra C. Labaree Volunteer Values Award from the New England Division of the American Cancer Society. He is a regular contributor to Donors Choose to help teachers fund classroom projects.



Mid-Coast: **Jill Spencer** of Lisbon Falls has taught reading in middle school for over 30 years. She also taught courses in curriculum, instruction, and technology integration for the University of Maine system. Jill received the coveted James Garvin Distinguished Service Award from Middle School Associations and was on the original Design Team for the Maine Learning Technology Initiative—the laptop project. Jill teaches digital courses in the Merrymeeting Adult Education program. She and two colleagues formed BoomerTECH Adventures—a company dedicated to helping Boomers and seniors develop digital confidence with devices.



More “Comfort in COVID-19”

By Janice Loughlin, Program and Membership Committees
York County Retired Educators Association

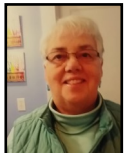
Penobscot: **Michael Smart** of Veazie taught 28 years in John R. Graham School and Veazie Community School. He was also an education technician for two years at Orono Middle and High Schools. He has been president and vice president of Penobscot County Retired Educators Association. He has served on the Board of Directors of the Orono/Old Town (O/OT) Kiwanis and served as coordinator of Special Olympics for O/OT. Mike is a member of the Veazie Historical Society and has been a facilitator at pre-retirement seminars. He and his wife Diana have two children and one granddaughter.

Waldo: **Mary Gilman** of Belfast taught elementary education and nursery school in the Northport area for 32 years—was principal for two of those years. After retirement, she became the volunteer coordinator for school programs and is the library tech at Drinkwater Elementary School. In the summer of 2019, Mary and her principal created a Summer Reading Program where they drove a bus filled with books to neighborhoods where children could sign out books and enjoy ice cream! Mary was an EMT, a member of the Waldo County Extension Club, and serves on the Board of the Historical Society. She served in many positions and as president of the Epsilon Chapter of DKG International. She and her husband Darrell have three children and five grandchildren.

Washington: **Judith Randall** of Jonesboro taught in Jonesboro elementary education for 38 years in the SAD #37 area—Ella Lewis School in Steuben, Wesley Corner, and Maranatha Christian Academy. She is an active member and secretary of the Washington County Retired Educators Association. She joined the Lambda Chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma International in 1993 and has held a number of leadership positions including president. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Down East Christian Church in Harrington. She taught Sunday School at the Unionville Church of God and joined the Jonesboro Grange where she serves as treasurer. She and her late husband Kendrick have two sons and one grandchild.

York: **Carol Ann Scott** of Lyman taught language arts for 37 years at Saco Middle School and joined York County Retired Educators Association (YCREA) upon retirement in 2011. She has been recording secretary for seven years and keeps in touch with members by sending holiday cards, birthday wishes, and well wishes. Carol knits and makes quilts for those needing comfort at the Gosnell Memorial Hospice House and Project Linus serving Sweetser. She volunteers at the Ronald McDonald House in Portland and the Lyman Community Library. As an active participant in her community she sets an example of unselfish service and kindnesses to those with whom she interacts. She and her husband Jeff have two children and four grandchildren.

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



Like most people, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, I was frightened. From the onset I felt strongly that N95 and surgical masks should be reserved for front-line workers like my sister, who is a nurse on a COVID unit at MMC, and like my son-in-law who is a police detective.

The gym where I'd worked part-time for 13 years closed. I now had spare time and I needed to do something to help. I have an enormous fabric stash, plenty of thread, and three sewing machines. So, I began sewing masks and offering them on Facebook for free to anyone in need.

The orders began pouring in; and, admittedly, there were times when it was quite overwhelming. While many people have gratefully accepted free masks; others insist on paying something--in which case I suggest a \$2 donation per mask.

Several people have made generous donations to help defray the cost of materials. I place the masks in

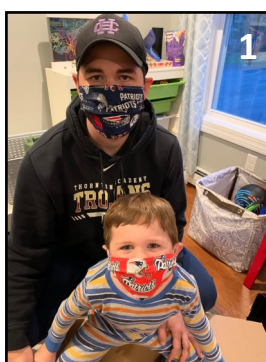
baggies with the customer's name. They go in a tote on the glider by my front door for “no-contact” pickup.

People have left “Thank you” gifts of wine, flowers, food, hand cream, and slippers. I've received free meals from Joseph's by the Sea, IHop, and The Clambake as thanks for helping our community.

I've been sewing from 8-12 hours every day since mid-March. As of this writing, I can proudly say I've made 798 masks! I truly get a feeling of great satisfaction knowing that I am offering people protection against this virus.

My oldest granddaughter just graduated from Northeastern University as a chemical engineer and has accepted a job at Moderna Therapeutics where she will be working on development of a vaccine for COVID-19! I believe we all have a responsibility to use our gifts and talents to make the world a better place.

Janice taught Grades 3, 4, and 5 in Saco for 28 years. She and her late husband Timothy, also an educator, have one daughter and two granddaughters.



(1) Great nephew, Quinn Blake, and his Dad, Justin Blake, model their favorite Patriots masks. (2) Janice's sewing room where her machine hums for 8 to 12 hours a day! (3) Piles and piles of colorful masks have gone out the door of Janice's home in the past seven weeks.

NEA PAC makes a difference

By Gary McGrane, NEA PAC Captain
MEA-Retired President-Elect

As our government gradually eases restrictions on some activities, we at MEA-Retired remain vigilant in keeping our members safe.

We recently learned that the NEA-Representative Assembly (RA) that was planned to be held in Atlanta, Georgia, at the end of June and the first week of July will be conducted virtually online rather than in person.

The question of how to keep 10,000 delegates at the

RA safe became obvious. Furthermore, the NEA-Retired annual meeting that typically precedes the NEA-RA will be conducted online. We will learn more information as time progresses.

While our NEA-Retired Executive Committee grapples with the logistical nightmare of sorting this out, we will move forward.

Even though both the NEA-RA and the NEA-Retired meetings will limit the agendas, important work and critical decisions of the union will tailor essential items for discussion.

One of those activities, raising funds for our Political Action Committee (PAC) will happen via virtual auction. As soon as we get the details worked out, we will let everyone know how you can participate in this unique

fund raiser.

Delegates and family members will be invited to bid on various donated items through an electronic venue. This online fund-raising activity promises to be both memorable and exciting.

In the meantime, open up your wallets and your hearts by donating to the NEA-PAC with a check made payable to the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education and mail to: P.O. Box 96225 Washington, D.C. 20077-7501.

How will PAC Fund contributions be handled? As we know, we need money to elect pro-education candidates to our state and national governmental positions. No dues money is ever designated for this effort. This is accomplished through donations designated for this

purpose.

Elected delegates to the National Education Association Representative Assembly will once again be asked to donate \$200, but that money can be raised at home and not just come from the delegates' personal contributions.

We invite all retirees to donate to this very worthy cause. Every state will be designated its own website through which all members are encouraged to make donations—not just delegates.

Remember the fund supports pro-public education candidates at the state and federal level regardless of their political affiliation.

As our NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia said at our last NEA-RA in Houston, TX; "It's our time to show the world what democracy looks like."

Spread the Word!

Great gifts for retired friends, auction items, birthdays!

Maine Educator



Retired



- Long-sleeved Denim Shirts @ \$35
- Navy Blue Hats @ \$13
- Red, Iris Blue Tee Shirts @ \$21
- Red, Ultramarine Golf Shirts @ \$29
- Sizes: S, M, L
- Sizes XL & XXL: Add \$2
- Sizes XXXL & XXXXL: Add \$4
- Lapel Pins @ \$10

Name _____ Email _____

Mailing Address _____ City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Tel. _____ Affiliate _____

Qty.	Item	Size	Color	Unit Price	Total Cost
	Sizes XL, XXL: Add \$2 Sizes XXXL, XXXXL: Add \$4				
	Total Remittance				

Questions? Contact Rena Kearney at rkearney@ainop.com or 207-429-9041.

Prices include tax and postage/handling.

Make checks payable to MEA-Retired and mail to Rena Kearney, PO Box 377, Mars Hill, ME 04758.

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

MainePERS: \$\$ updates matter for retirees

By Phil Brookhouse
MainePERS Trustee

Whew! Much has happened since my last report. With the incredible market downturn, as of March 31, the fund dropped by \$700 million to \$14,237,313,000.

Believe me, it could have been a lot worse without the perspicacious way the Board and the Investment Team worked on reallocating investments after the 2008 downturn.

To help us understand the situation, we can look at our Performance Measurement as compared to other indexes. Our fund dropped by 2.4 percent; whereas, the Russell 3000 Index dropped 12.7 percent and the MSCI ACWI USA Index dropped by 18 percent. So, that's the bad news tempered with good management.

It is important to remember that these numbers are representative of the month of March which was pretty much just plain awful. If you have been paying attention, April brought somewhat of a recovery; so the numbers will improve by the end of April.

Press release from MainePERS:

The Maine Public Employees Retirement System (MainePERS) has appointed James Bennett as the System's new Chief Investment Officer, effective April 16, 2020.

A Maine native, Bennett has served as the System's Deputy Chief Investment Officer since 2014. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Texas, Austin, and an A.B. from Dartmouth College.

He is a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) charter holder

and CAIA (Chartered Alternative Investment Analyst) charter holder.

Sandy Matheson, MainePERS Executive Director, says, "Jim has the knowledge and experience needed to direct our investment plan, the desired leadership competencies to continue developing our dynamic team of investment professionals, and is such a good cultural fit for our organization."

"With the growing complexity of pension regulations and the immediate and long-term challenges of investing in global financial markets, his knowledge and expertise will be of significant value in advancing MainePERS's investment program."

Over the last six years, Bennett has gained extensive knowledge of the system's portfolio and has worked closely with the investment consultants.

In addition to his broad asset class knowledge and experience, over the past five years, he has been actively involved in sourcing many of the investments to build out the Alternatives portfolio.

Prior to joining MainePERS, Bennett spent 20 years as a finance professor of undergraduate and graduate level classes. He has also taught for three years in Hong Kong and New Zealand.

land.

His experience includes seven years at the University of Massachusetts Boston and ten years at the University of Southern Maine, where he served as a tenured Associate Professor in the Department of Accounting and Finance.

The national search, conducted by Hudepohl & Associates, for a new Chief Investment Officer began in February.

"After assessing Jim's credentials, experience, and his contributions since joining MainePERS over six years ago, with the last five months as Acting Chief Investment Officer, we concluded the absolute best candidate for the job was right here," said Matheson.

MainePERS Board Chairperson Brian Noyes agrees, "It's clear that Jim's extensive knowledge of the MainePERS investment program, his deep knowledge

of finance and investments, and his personal commitment to public service will serve our organization very well during this critical time.

"He is deeply rooted in Maine, has key relationships with the local investment community, and serves as an investment expert on the Board and the Investment Committee of two community-based non-profits."

Jim Bennett responded, "I'm excited and honored to be entrusted with this responsibility to serve the members of the System, all providing such valuable public service across our State."

"I look forward to working with Trustees and staff on the task of providing re-

tirement security for the 155,000+ plan participants in today's world. Again, I am honored and humbled to be selected for such an important position."



Phil Brookhouse

MainePERS has adapted to the new "normal" with many staff working remotely, maintaining safe distances within the building for those who are there, ongoing monitoring of staff health, and all sorts of sanitizing protocols. No travel will be approved. Though it is not business as usual, it is business as best as can be.

I am hanging on as a Board member, due to government working at a new pace to approve a trustee replacement.

So I will attend MEA-Retired meetings sporadically and submit reports as I can. I, too, have a new normal. As always, the website (mainepers.org) has updated information.

If you have questions regarding our MainePERS pension, feel free to contact me—send an email message to pbrookhouse@gmail.com.



Courtesy of MainePERS

James Bennett, Ph.D., was recently appointed the chief investment officer of MainePERS.

MEA-Retired is here for you!

Board of Directors Meeting
ZOOM Online Meeting Venue
June 1, 2020, 9:30 a.m.

Executive Committee Meeting
MEA Building, Augusta
August 3, 2020, 9:30 a.m.

Board of Directors Meeting
Best Western Hotel, Waterville
September 8, 2020, 9:30 a.m.

Executive Committee Meeting
MEA Building, Augusta
October 5, 2020, 9:30 a.m.

Questions? Suggestions?
Please contact us today!



NRTA offers incentive grants

By Carl Bucciantini
AARP Liaison

What strange times these are! AARP, like most individuals and organizations, has been working to create a “new normal.”

While all in-person events are cancelled through the end of June, volunteers and AARP staff have been hard at work trying to maintain a semblance of normalcy; all from a safe distance.

The National Retired Teachers Association (NRTA), which is AARP’s Educator Community, has launched the “We Care” grant initiative. This program is designed to assist state retired educator associations to reach out and engage members as much as possible.

In this time of physical distancing, this grant will be used to support and empower virtual member engagement in relevant and meaningful ways. MEA-Retired, in partnership with AARP Maine, has applied for one of these “We Care” grants.

In our application, we outline a variety of ways in which we will reach out to our members. These projects include the creation of an MEA-Retired Facebook page, mailing and emailing information to members, video calls to include speakers knowledgeable

about COVID-19, scams, and other information.

The plan also includes an outreach call-in opportunity for members to speak with our state association president, the AARP State Director, and others who can provide useful information and answer member questions.

With the abrupt recess of the Maine Legislature, most of our legislative initiatives are on hold. Hopefully, the legislature will resume its work prior to the November election to move pending legislation forward.

One item that did move forward was the High Speed Internet Referendum question. The current pandemic underscores the need to provide reliable, fast, and affordable access to the internet to Maine’s unserved and underserved areas. A “yes” vote on Referendum Question 1 will allow the work to begin.

Governor Mills has changed the date of our primary election from June 9 to July 14. AARP Maine is urging every eligible Mainer to **Vote Safely. Vote from Home.** This means requesting an absentee ballot either from your town clerk’s office or by completing an easy-to-

use absentee ballot request form online (<https://bit.ly/absballotreq>).

In an effort to provide the latest news and updates on COVID-19, AARP Maine keeps their website (<http://states.aarp.org/region/maine/>) updated with the latest news and resources. These matters include unemployment benefits, Social Security, the U.S. Census, stimulus checks and more.

The site also includes a handy list of grocery stores and places where Mainers can buy food (<https://bit.ly/AARPGrocery>) that offer curbside pick-up, shopping hours for older adults, and other services.

Thanks to our volunteers, this list is kept as up to date as possible, but

please send an email to me@aarp.org if you would like to provide updates for your local area. Feel free to share the list! This is Census time! Maine’s self-response rate is hovering at 47 percent which is 10 percent lower than the national average.

There’s money on the table; the more of us who complete the Census, the more federal funding that Maine will be entitled to.

In 2015, 132 programs used Census data to allocate more than **\$675 billion** in funding. These include pro-

grams like Medicaid, SNAP, Section 8 Housing Vouchers, Head Start, Medicare Part B, and Highway Planning and Construction program.

So, yes, it matters. And it only takes a few minutes. Please pass this link around and let’s help make sure Maine does not leave money on the table in 2020! <https://my2020census.gov/>

To accommodate these uncertain times, the US Census Bureau has (1) temporarily suspended field operations through June 1, 2020; (2) moved the response deadline from August 15 to October 31, 2020; and (3) requested that instead of the results being delivered to the President by December 31, 2020, that date to be moved to April 30, 2021 (pending Congressional approval).

AARP maintains connections with volunteers and members through weekly Zoom meetings. They highlight how Maine communities are handling and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as what AARP is doing to ensure our members have the information to make easier decisions and get the resources they need to stay connected and afloat. Do whatever you can to stay connected and well.



Carl Bucciantini



Legacy grants bestowed

By Hugh Keene, Chairperson

The Legacy Committee was established by MEA-Retired to manage bequests and memorial donations received by the organization.

In honor of the late Jane Ritter, renowned educator and MEA-Retired leader, the Ritter Legacy provides funds to assist with expenses that enable our affiliates to provide opportunities of encouragement to others with restrictions of age and

infirmity.

Affiliates use the funds to pay for costs of giving rides to members, sending greeting cards and flowers to shut-ins, composing a booklet on safety procedures, taking older members to lunch; visiting members who cannot attend meetings; honoring those who have been members more than 20 years.

Many members wish they could remain as active. Providing assistance is an

encouragement and enables them to remain connected. This year ten counties applied for funds to assist their affiliates and received \$300 for their projects.

The Sheehan Honor Grant is in memory of Anne Sheehan, a long-time educator, MEA and NEA delegate, advocate for teachers. The annual \$1,500 scholarship is given to an active teacher enrolled in an advanced degree program in education.

This year’s recipient is Katie Liscovitz of Brunswick

who teaches math, science, and social studies at the Community School in Lisbon. Katie received her Bachelor’s degree in elementary education from the University of Maine Farmington.

She is currently enrolled in a Masters program in math leadership at the same university.

She plans to work as an elementary school math coach to help both teachers and students. Katie is the eighth active teacher to receive this award.

We're open 24/7 at mearetired.org. If you haven't visited us lately, you will discover a totally new look.

At first glance it appears there is less information than in the past, but it is all there—just organized differently. The 14 site navigation tabs on the old “Home” page have been reduced to four.

Home page is updated the most frequently. Here you will find a message and time sensitive news from our president, a calendar and a secure contact form. The four site navigation tabs at the top of the “Home” page are as follows:

About contains links to pages about our governance—officers, bylaws, and RA dele-

gates and alternates, affiliates, history, and NEA-Retired.

Member Center tab has information about member benefit information, how to join, a form for joining, pages with links to MEA Benefits Trust, MainePERS and pension payment schedule

It also contains information about our annual meetings and events calendar, a publications page where you will find the current issue of *The Clarion*, tools and forms, legislative news, merchandise and “Day of Caing” activities.

Pre-Retired tab refers active professionals preparing for retirement are referred to pages for Maine-

PERS links and the pre retirement seminar schedule, group life insurance, and Social Security information.

Awards/Grants tab provides information for programs offering awards and grants for affiliates and individuals.

Please visit **mearetired.org** and explore what's there. Just a reminder—we're no longer “.com” but a more secure “.org” site and are open 24 hours a day.

The new format is easier to navigate on all devices. If you don't find what you are looking for, you can contact us any time with a question using the secure contact form at the bottom of the **Home** page.

Connecting via our Website

By Pam Partridge
Web Administrator

You will discover a new look at your next visit. If you have suggestions or questions, please contact us by using the secure contact form at the bottom of the **Home** page.



McGrane: Our new MEA Board member

By Gary McGrane, President-Elect
Member, MEA Board of Directors



Gary McGrane

While working for the United Steelworkers in New Jersey and New York as a union organizer I received a call from Bill Murphy, Director for the Bureau of Labor Education from the University of Maine in Orono.

I had previously inquired about an employment opportunity as an OSHA Project Coordinator for the Labor Bureau to fulfill the obligations of a grant that the University had. Part of the requirements was to have an instructor teach health and safety in the shipbuilding industry in the State of Maine.

As a Penobscot Native I became involved with the Penobscot Indian Nation Enterprises as a member of the Board of Directors for the next ten years. My experiences with union organizing came in handy while working for the Bureau of Labor. I taught labor history but, more importantly, taught leadership develop-

ment for shop stewards, and executive officers for AFL-CIO affiliates.

Until my retirement in 2015, I was asked by my local union, the University of Maine Professional Staff Association, to become their treasurer. I occasionally represented members in grievance hearings at the request of Union President Neil Greenberg.

After retirement I wanted to remain actively involved with my local through Maine Education Association Retired. In 2016, I was asked to serve as secretary. I accepted the position in order to fulfill my desire to empower others in garnering their rights as citizens and becoming more politically active.

I also served as County Commissioner from Franklin County for 28 years where I served on numerous committees advocating for the constituents I represented.

Upon the sudden death of Tom Moore, the MEA-Retired representative

Clip and fill out and send in soon. Encourage some fellow retirees to join you as you drive to Augusta. We have so much to share with one another this year—especially in light of the pandemic that has drastically changed our lives forever!

Plan to carpool and bring friends. If you decide not to remain for lunch, the morning program is free. We look forward to seeing you this fall.

on the MEA Board of Directors, this position became available. I filed my name and letter of intent. A few days later I withdrew when I learned that our former MEA President, Lois Kilby-Chesley, had placed her name for the position.

I soon learned that the position became vacant again because Lois' status as retired changed to active when she took a one-year teaching position.

I applied again, and this time I was encouraged to stay the course and complete the application and interview processes. My intent was to make sure we retirees had a voice for the next five months—to fill the unexpired term left vacant by the late Tom Moore.

It was expected that a new candidate for a three-year term would be chosen by election. Hours before the deadline for this election, I learned that no one had applied for the position of MEA-Retired member of the MEA Board of Directors.

So I reactivated my application. All of this was preceded by my employment with a construction company, an insurance company and a paper company.

All during this time I maintained my status as a life-long learner through the University of Maine culminating with degrees in Business Administration and a Masters Degree in Public Administration.

My wife Deb and I have been married for 44 years and have three children and 11 grandchildren. We live in Jay.

Annual Meeting, from Page 1

membered. There will be a 50-50 raffle.

Susan Grondin of Lewiston is chairperson of our Resolutions Committee. She will present some new resolutions and votes to others that will require your votes.

A few changes in our bylaws will also be presented by our parliamentarian, Phil Gonyar of Waterville.

See the registration form on Page 11.



By Corley-Anne Byras
Immediate Past President

Janice “Jan” Cerabona of Eliot was nominated to receive the 2020 Honorary Membership in Maine Education Association—Retired, and she was unanimously elected by the Board of Directors. The formal presentation will be made at the annual meeting on October 15.



Class of '60
Eliot HS

Jan graduated from Eliot High School and obtained her degree in sociology from the University of Maine at Orono. She worked in an internship and took courses at USM where she received a master’s degree.

“Service! Service! Service with a smile! Service, service going every mile!” is part of a song for another as-

Jan taught “Hickory Dickory Dock,” one of the Mother Goose rhymes to the Pre-Kindergarten students at Eliot Elementary School.



sociation. However, it also fits Jan Cerabona as she serves others constantly and has been the driving, encouraging force behind our annual MEA – Retired Day of Caring since its inception in 2010.

As a member of the MEA–Retired Executive Committee and Board of Directors, Jan

2020 Honorary Membership award recipient

has made the Day of Caring a fantastic, inclusive statewide program serving hundreds of teachers and students in the past ten years.

Students, teachers, and schools benefit from these efforts. Her enthusiastic attitude helped to motivated affiliates to organize caring events.

In Jan’s words, “Our Day of Caring combines the concepts of NEA’s Outreach to Teach and AARP’s Day of Service to honor September 11, 2001. This is an opportunity to give back to the communities in which we live and to the students we love.

“The more hands involved, the more we can accomplish!” says Jan. “Our goal is to make a difference in a school in every Maine county every year for our students and our communities.”

Throughout her teaching career and since her retirement, Jan has made multiple contributions to our Associations. She has served at the local, state, and national levels and continues to do so.

Retiring in 2003, she then began her service years in the retired educator realm. Her first position on the MEA-Retired Board of Directors was Informational Services. She then moved over to Community Participation in 2009.

She also served on the Board of the York County Retired Educators Association (YCREA) for two years as vice president.

Nancy Sullivan, formerly of Turner and now residing in Colorado, has worked with her in YCREA. Upon learning of Jan’s honor stated. “I am so pleased that Jan will receive the Honorary

Membership award in 2020. Jan has always disliked the spotlight and speaking in front of people. However, you would never know that by looking at her achievements.

“The Day of Caring program has been a great success and awareness of wellness and programs within local affiliates have been significant. What a deserving person!”

Jan has been a retired delegate to the MEA Representative Assembly for several terms always advocating for better conditions for retirees. As an active educator she was an MEA Board Member from 1998-2003.

She has often represented the Maine Retirees on the national level by being a delegate to the NEA–Retired and the NEA Representative Assemblies.

At the national level she was a strong advocate for the annual project which combined efforts of students with active and retired educators. All applauded Jan’s appearance at the microphones at NEA-RA in 2014 when she promoted the continuation of the “Outreach to Teach” project.

This event was organized in the schools in the city where the NEA-RA was held. It is the national project that closely resembles our state Day of Caring program.

While teaching in MSAD #35, she served as president of the Quamphegan Educators Association in Eliot/South Berwick areas from 1990-1996.

She continued her involvement serving as treasur-

er from 1996-2003. Jan taught Pre-Kindergarten for 29 years and has substituted for six years in MSAD #35—thus continuing her interaction with students and educators.

More recently, Jan was honored at the University of



Jan introduced a new business item to nearly 8,000 delegates at the 2014 NEA-RA in Denver, Colorado. She urged the delegates to keep the “Outreach to Teach” program as part of the NEA-RA programs every year.

Maine at Orono when she received the 2019 Excellence in Volunteer Leadership Administration as part of the Governor’s Award for Service and Volunteerism program.

As chairperson of the statewide MEA-Retired Community Participation Commit-



In 1990, Jan congratulated her high school English teacher, Mildred Obrey, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the building. Mildred was the recipient of the 1991 MEA-Retired Honorary Membership Award.

tee, Jan has coordinated the annual Day of Caring initiative for its ten years of existence.

MEA-Retired President

See Jan, Page 11



Maine Education Association Retired 68th Annual Meeting



“Happy 200th Birthday, Maine”

October 15, 2020

Augusta Civic Center, North Room, 76 Community Drive, Augusta

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

Name _____ Tel. _____ Email _____

Address _____ City/Town _____

State _____ Zip _____ Affiliate _____ Age 90+ FREE _____

Registration: \$10 includes coffee/juice/Danish and a boxed lunch. Please choose from the following items:

___ Ham Salad ___ Chicken ___ Roast Beef ___ Veggie ___ Veggie Salad
Chips, Apple, Cookie or Brownie, and Water

This form may be duplicated. Please submit a separate registration form for each registrant.

Advance registration is requested by October 2, 2020. Questions? Call Rheba Michaud at 207-564-7494.

*Make check payable to MEA-Retired and mail to Pam Partridge, Registrar, 23 Union St., North Anson, ME 04958-7149.
(Legibly written email addresses will receive a confirmation of registration.)*

Pre-registration for the annual meeting is required in order to confirm membership in MEA-Retired. Since I intend to attend only the annual meeting and will not be present for lunch, I will not need to pay a registration fee. Check if applies.

Jan, from Page 10

Kay Grindall has worked with Jan on the state Board of Directors for more than ten years and says, “Jan is a ready and willing worker whenever asked. She has certainly contributed to the well-being of many retirees, students, and local school districts all over the state through her coordination of our annual Day of Caring projects. She is a hard worker, and her ‘ever-ready’ smile is always very compelling and heartwarming.”

At our annual meeting each year when Jan distributes awards to affiliate members, the awards are always covered with smiling faces. Rest assured, the Board of Directors have smiling faces that Jan Cerabona will be awarded the 2020 Honorary Membership.

Jan has three children and four grandchildren.

Congratulations, Jan!

Membership, from Page 12

Doc Erik finally returned with a stack of papers in hand and a diagnosis. This ‘bump’ was actually an aneurysm, probably caused by a clot that had since disappeared. His paperwork had actual diagrams of this phenomena with the recommendation that a bypass be implanted. There was no immediate urgency’ however, I likely had this bump in back of my knee for awhile without my seeing it.

“Being in good shape and exercising regularly probably saved your life,” Dr. Erik said. However this means surgery will be needed

I am in charge of finishing a big project at the FKOC. Last summer we started developing a disc golf course using our ski trails as fairways and we now want to complete the last nine holes.

We have a mix of volunteers consisting of retirees, teachers and my nephew Rudy, a remote work-at-home programmer from New Britain relocated in Fort Kent.

Part of the course will have holes going through the top of Lonesome Pine Trails offering a view of the whole town of Fort Kent and the St. John River from 500 feet of elevation. Should be a great reward for playing the course.

Disc golf is fast becoming popular all over Maine and we hope our membership will benefit from the exercise and the friendly competition of putting a clay disc into a chained basket in as few strokes as possible.

I will need to find another person to take my place to lead this project, and I have just the person in mind. He is a retired teacher and a friend

who is still not a member but would do a great job if he accepts my challenge.

I will also tell him that the course will probably be used by many other retirees for exercise and socializing since the trail fees will only be \$5 a round and they can ‘rent’ a disc for \$1.

I find that encouraging one to volunteer for a worthwhile project is a great way to have them ‘buy-in’ to an association’s mission. The mission of MEA-Retired is to care for our retired educators. The greater our numbers, the more effective we are.

Speak with a friend or a new, recent retiree. Invite them to help out in an Association project. Teachers like to help. It is likely they will see how easily we help others and listen to the advantages of being a proud MEA-Retired member . . . and join us!



Membership Matters: “Down a bumpy road”

By Ben Paradis, MEA-Retired Membership Chairperson
Aroostook Retired Educators Association



The early morning sun lit up the red brick of Northern Maine Medical Center in Fort Kent, as I walked up to the shiny new glass doors of the Emergency entrance.

The glare caused my eyes

to squint as I read the precautionary warnings in bright red letters. “Face mask on? Fever, dizziness, shortness of breath?” I quickly reached in my pocket and pulled out my homemade mask.

As I entered, Gary, the receptionist and a former student of mine, quickly asked for my birth date and then escorted me inside to an examination room. Nurse Christine, another former student, also asked for my birthday then excused herself to get “suited up.”

As I waited, I started to feel less anxious about being in a hospital where several Covid-19 cases had been admitted. When I called in earlier that Saturday morn-

ing, Christine had answered, as I described the unusual lump I had discovered hidden behind my right knee.

Although there was no pain, the presence of such a large growth frightened me. My wife Nancy was also concerned and insisted I have it checked right away.

I didn’t recognize Christine when she returned clad in her “personal protective equipment” (PPE). After she checked my vitals, Dr. Erik, came in. I recognized him, as he had treated me last summer when I had come to emergency after breaking my little finger in a fall on roller skis.

He lifted my leg and looked at the egg sized lump and thought it was just some sac that had slipped out of place, but would order an

Ultrasound to get a better picture. Still amazes me that sound is used to produce pictures. Took an hour and a half for the technician to come in on a Saturday. She too was in PPEs and started her examination at my hip and worked her way down to my ankle with a ‘camera’ covered with slippery gel. After an hour of sliding back and forth over every pore on my leg, she finally was done.

He was a former Madawaska High School skier and recognized me from competitions. His coach was Howard, a seventh grade math teacher and a second cousin of mine, who had mentored me when I first started coaching. Howard is in his 80’s and is still skiing.

See Membership, Page 11

NEA-Retired Annual Meeting NEA Representative Assembly

6/29–7/6, 2020 – Atlanta, GA
6/29–7/6, 2021 – Denver, CO
6/29–7/6, 2022 – Dallas, TX
6/29–7/6, 2023 – Orlando, FL

