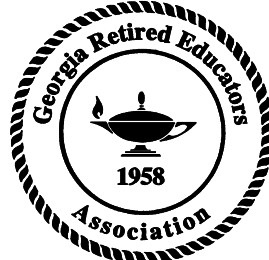


THE GRE BULLETIN



JOURNAL OF NEWS AND REFLECTIONS FOR
RETIRED EDUCATORS OF GEORGIA

Make Plans Now
**GRE
48th ANNUAL
CONVENTION**
MAY 2, 3, 4, 2006
MARRIOTT HOTEL
AUGUSTA

VOL. XXIV, NO. 4

GAINESVILLE, GEORGIA

SPRING 2006

Governor Sonny Perdue To Address The 2006 GRE State Convention

The Governor of the State of Georgia has graciously accepted the invitation of the Georgia Retired Educators Association to be the keynote speaker for the 2006 State Convention. Governor Perdue has been an active supporter of the retired educators in Georgia and we are proud to have him address our state convention.

Sonny Perdue was sworn in as Georgia's 81st Governor on January 13, 2003. Before his run for Governor, Perdue proudly served his local community as a businessman, community leader, Sunday School teacher, State Senator, Majority Leader, and President Pro Tempore of the Georgia State Senate, as well as an officer in the United States Air Force.

Since taking office, Governor Perdue led the state of Georgia with a clear vision, based on a solid set of priorities for the New Georgia. At the top of his list is education.

For three years, Governor Perdue hosted parents, students, and educators from across Georgia to the Governor's Mansion and the State Capitol, soliciting policy change suggestions. Based on these recommendations, he initiated several pieces of legislation that have improved the classroom environment and expanded education opportunities.

In 2005 Governor Perdue created the Georgia Virtual High School, providing students all over Georgia with access to Advanced Placement classes online. Governor Perdue also initiated the Master Teacher program, rewarding Georgia's best teachers, allowing them to serve as academic coaches.

Governor Perdue has taken an innovative approach to address Georgia's SAT score challenges by creating the Governor's Cup Challenge to improve SAT scores. He has also created a task force to study changes to Georgia's funding formula for K-12 education.

This year Governor Perdue's legislative and budget proposals reflect his top priority: education. He proposed that 72 percent of Georgia's increased revenue be spent on education. Governor Perdue proposed a four percent pay raise for all teachers and a classroom gift card giving educators \$100 each to help them purchase needed classroom supplies.

Governor Perdue introduced legislation this year requiring school systems spend 65 percent of their budget "in the classroom." Understanding the importance of smaller class sizes, the Governor proposed funds to reduce class sizes by two students in grades K-3 and by four students in grades 4-8. Governor Perdue also included \$447 million in his budget to build new classrooms with new technology and add school buses in every school system in Georgia.

Governor Perdue quickly took the lead on the request from

GRE to fund a pay raise for our most senior retired educators. Governor Perdue included funds for HB 400 in his 2006-2007 budget and both the House of Representatives and State Senate have unanimously approved it. Governor Perdue will sign this bill soon in order to provide additional salary allocations for our older retirees.

The members of GRE are thrilled to have Governor Sonny Perdue as our speaker this year! Register today to attend and hear our outstanding Governor speak to our association and thank him for the passage of HB 400.



**CONVENTION HOTEL RESERVATIONS
AUGUSTA MARRIOTT AND SUITES
1-866-316-5958**

BE SURE TO IDENTIFY YOURSELF AS ATTENDING THE GRE CONVENTION

**REGISTER TODAY
GRE STATE CONVENTION
AUGUSTA, GEORGIA
MAY 2, 3, 4, 2006**

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Sue Thornton Elected New GREA President-elect

The Nomination and Election Committee of GREA met at the state office in Gainesville on Monday, March 20, 2006 and after counting the ballots, the committee officially named Sue Thornton of Macon, Georgia as the new President-elect for 2006-2007. Sue will become the GREA President during the 2007-2008 years.

Sue retired from the Crawford County School System in 1994 and has been very active in GREA ever since. She has distinguished herself as Chairman of the Services to Members Committee which has brought many new features for the members of GREA. Her superb work should be an incentive for new members to join our organization every year.

Sue has an A.B. Degree from Lake Erie College, a M.Ed. Degree from the University of Arizona, and an Ed.S. Degree from the University of Georgia. She also attended the University of Madrid, Spain for one semester. She served as a Counselor and System Test Coordinator for the Crawford County School System, was the Advisor for the National Honor Society and has served as a teacher and assistant principal in the Virgin Islands. She was named the Teacher of the Year on the Island of St. Croix. Sue has three daughters and one son and her hobby is domestic and international travel.

Elizabeth McEuen Elected Area IV Director

In addition, on Monday the Nomination and Election Committee announced the winner of the Area IV Director contest for a position on the GREA Governing Board. Elizabeth McEuen of Waycross was the winner for the only contested seat on the Governing Board for 2006. She was elected to a two-year term!

Elizabeth retired from the Ware County School System in 1999. She graduated from the University of Georgia School of Home Economics with a BSHECED and has taught in Newnan, Ga. and the Ware County School System. She has served as the President, Vice-President, and Scrapbook Chairman of the Waycross/Ware County REA. She is very active in the Trinity United Methodist Church in Waycross. She is married to Archie R. McEuen and has four grown children.

A Letter from Sue

Campaigning for the office of GREA President-elect has been a most enjoyable experience. During the past two months, I was able to visit several units around the state, to meet many GREA members, and to discover the positive difference that they make in their local communities as well as at the state level. As a result of those visits, I am more proud than ever to be a part of GREA.

The factor that contributed most to my enjoyment of the campaign was the ethical, professional way that the other candidate conducted her campaign. Brenda Bigham is, in every way, a quality person. She and I worked together as Area Directors and as members of the Service to Members Committee. We learned to respect each other and became good friends. During the campaign period, and now that it is over, Brenda and I have retained that mutual respect and friendship, and I look forward to her continuing her outstanding work on behalf of GREA.

I pledge to each GREA member that, as President-elect during this coming year and as President the following year, I shall work hard to serve each local unit and each member. I shall do everything I can to continue the good work of my predecessors and to help GREA continue to improve in its service to Georgia's retired educators.

With heartfelt appreciation for each of you,
Sue A. Thornton

Convention Leadership Seminars

TUESDAY, MAY 2, 2006 • 1:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m.

Convention Kickoff	Estes Exhibit Hall (All Delegates Invited)	1:30 p.m.-2:00 p.m.
Welcome	Lester Dean, GREA President	
Overview of Seminars	Harry Werner, GREA President-Elect	
Local Unit Presidents	Lamar Ballroom A 2:15 p.m.-3:15 p.m. 3:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m.	Harry Werner
State Health Benefit Plan	Lamar Ballroom B 2:15 p.m.-3:15 p.m. 3:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m.	Nancy Stafford
Legislative Update	Lamar Ballroom C 2:15 p.m.-3:15 p.m. 3:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m.	Charlie Roberts

CONVENTION PREREGISTRATION FORM GEORGIA RETIRED EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONVENTION CELEBRATING 48 YEARS

AUGUSTA MARRIOTT AND SUITES
AUGUSTA, GEORGIA • MAY 2, 3, 4, 2006

Please complete a separate form for each person attending.
Preregistration DEADLINE is APRIL 21.

Local Unit _____ Area _____

Name (To be printed on convention badge) _____

Address _____ Telephone _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Office Held (if any) _____

Convention registration fee must be paid by everyone attending any part of the Convention. Admission to meetings by badge only. Meal functions require a ticket. No exceptions please.

CONVENTION PREREGISTRATION \$30.00 No. _____ Amt. _____

ON-SITE REGISTRATION \$35.00 No. _____ Amt. _____

2005-2006 LOCAL PRESIDENTS/AWARDS DINNER
(Tuesday, May 2, 6:30 p.m.) \$32.00 No. _____ Amt. _____

LUNCHEON—Speaker, Georgia Secretary of State Cathy Cox
(Wednesday, May 3, 12:00 p.m.) \$22.00 No. _____ Amt. _____

BANQUET—Speaker, Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue
(Wednesday, May 3, 6:30 p.m.) \$32.00 No. _____ Amt. _____

TOTAL AMOUNT _____

Circle—YES—I will be willing to sing with the choral group at the Wednesday Banquet.

NO REFUNDS AFTER APRIL 21, 2006

Your check should be for the total amount shown above. Please do not include any other types of payments/donations in your Registration check. All other types of payments/donations, including Hospitality Donations, Spotlight Ad Payments, Membership Dues, and Foundation Donations should be in separate checks. Thank you for your help in this regard.

Please return Convention Preregistration Form and payment to:
GREA, 615-C Oak St., Gainesville, GA 30501-8522

GREA 48th Annual Convention May 2, 3, 4, 2006 Convention Schedule

TUESDAY, MAY 2

Registration	9 :30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
GREA Executive Committee.	10:00 a.m.
Credentials Committee	10:00 a.m.
GREA Governing Board Meeting/Lunch	11:00 a.m.
Exhibits	10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
Hospitality Room	2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.
Silent Auction	1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.
Leadership Seminars*.	1:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m.
GREA Chorus Rehearsal	4:45 p.m.
Local Unit Presidents/Awards Banquet	6:30 p.m.

*All Convention attendees are invited

WEDNESDAY, MAY 3

Registration	8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
Exhibits	8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
First General Session	9:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m.
Luncheon.	12:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m.
Hospitality Room	9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. 2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. 8:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m.
Best Practices	2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
Breakout Sessions.	2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
Silent Auction	2:15 p.m.-4:15 p.m.
GREA Foundation Board Meeting	2:00 p.m.
Banquet.	6:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, MAY 4

Exhibits	8:30 a.m.-11:00 a.m.
Memorial Service	9:00 a.m.
Second General Session	9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.
Adjournment	
Luncheon**	12:00 noon

**GREA Governing Board, Old and New Members

**GREA Foundation Board of Directors

Message from the President

By Lester L. Dean



It's been a very challenging year as President. First, we had to conduct the process of advertising, interviewing, and hiring a new Executive Director. But it worked out so very well.

The problems with our health care was a nightmare in the waning months of 2005, but much of that has been solved. There are still some problems, but we feel they will all be solved in the future.

And all of our goals, except one, have already been met. The only one, increasing membership to 16,000, is gradually getting close. We feel we will meet that goal also by the end of the year.

I have met so many thousands of wonderful retired educators all across the state. They have been so gracious and cordial to Betty and I. The state of Georgia is so fortunate to have such intelligent and gifted teachers through the years. They have helped us meet our membership and legislative goals.

I am so impressed and proud of our local units. None of them are content to just meet and greet, they are all working in their communities to make better lives for others.

Now it's time to celebrate with our state convention. Much work and planning has been done by many all across the state to make this convention memorable and enjoyable. See you there!

Customer Service at TRS

It's not just an initiative, it's an attitude!

Not only does Jeffery L. Ezell, Executive Director for the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia (TRS), believe in the Governor's pledge to make Georgia the best-managed State in the nation, but he is supporting it through the development of innovative technologies, processes and procedures to provide unsurpassed customer service at TRS. This commitment to excellence is what drives Mr. Ezell to actively participate in the Governor's Customer Service Task Force, implement an enhanced outreach program, and champion a change in the organizational structure at TRS—one that concentrates on the future of TRS and the needs of every customer, and ties into the Governor's vision of providing faster, friendlier, and easier service.

The new and improved TRS customer outreach program, the Customer Excellence Program, aims at expanding the educational and counseling opportunities TRS provides its retired members, active members and employers throughout the State. This program will enhance the quality of service TRS provides by targeting specific customer groups with unique educational opportunities throughout their TRS membership, and will expand the availability of these opportunities to various locations throughout the State. The Customer Excellence Program will allow TRS to partner with our members and employers and provide them with more opportunities to learn about their retirement benefits, life after retirement, and encourage them to use the resources we have available to make their retirement as beneficial and as easy as possible. This enhanced outreach program launched in March, 2006, and will continue to grow and change with the needs of our customers.

The new organizational structure was created in an effort to streamline operations and enhance the level of customer service delivered internally, between divisions, and externally, to TRS active members, retirees, and employers. A focus on strategic and operational leadership will ensure the TRS vision is supported by the daily operations of the agency. "To deliver quality service to our customers, it is imperative that our mission, vision, and goals are communicated throughout the agency and that work is processed seamlessly between and within all divisions. Every technological advance and procedural enhancement we make internally puts us one step closer to achieving our vision of becoming the model retirement system," explains Mr. Ezell.

As the visionary, Mr. Ezell sought champions of change who could translate his vision into a reality. Stephen J. Boyers, Chief Financial Officer, and David McCleskey, Chief Operating Officer, will manage the daily operations of the TRS divisions, along with the administrative support of Alice Rafferty, Executive Assistant, enabling Mr. Ezell to focus on "the big picture" and lead the way to becoming the model retirement system. Both gentlemen bring a vast amount of experience to their new positions and believe in capturing the imagination and enthusiasm of their team members. The management team leaders/division directors—Cathy Hart, Member Services; Diann Green, Retirement Services; Dina Jones, Employer Services; Lisa Hajj, Communications; Tonia Morris, Human Resources; Laura Lanier, Financial Services; Greg McQueen, Information Technologies; and Chuck Warren, Contact Management—will be leading the charge with the staff in their divisions to ensure the customer service attitude is contagious

NRTA To Recognize GREA Volunteers

NRTA (National Retired Teachers Association) will present NRTA Day of Service tee shirts and caps to 575 local unit members who participate in the National Day of Service. Local unit members will be eligible for a tee shirt and a cap by participating in the May 11, 2006 Day of Service. Many local units do volunteer work all year, but any individual or group volunteer activities which take place during the week before or after May 11 will entitle the participant(s) to receive a tee shirt and a cap in recognition of their service. The activity can be anything of a volunteer nature including, but not limited to, work in a school, nursing home, hospital, local service agency, library, etc. The only requirement is that the activity be done near the May 11 date. The shirts and caps will be sent to Augusta to the Convention and will be given out there as long as they last. The local units can send a list of activities and their requests for shirts and caps in ahead of time and have a representative of the unit to pick up the items at the Convention. Any that are not picked up at the Convention will be issued during the June meetings. Patricia Bassett, P. O. Box 392, Roberta, GA 31078 or lpjbassett@pstel.net.

GREA Area Directors Beginning New 2-Year Terms 2006-2008

AREA II	LIZ TOTTY, AMERICUS
AREA IV	ELIZABETH C. McEUVEN, WAYCROSS
AREA VI.	DOROTHY WILSON, SAVANNAH
AREA VIII.	RITA MARABLE, ROBERTA
AREA X.	CAROL LUNSFORD, FAYETTEVILLE
AREA XII	BETTY TUTT, AUGUSTA
AREA XIV	MYRA STEPHENS, CONYERS
AREA XVI	WILLIAM WEAVER, DALTON
AREA XVIII	JOHN C. UPCHURCH, DAHLONEGA

throughout the agency.

Prior to his promotion to CFO, Mr. Boyers served as the Controller for both the TRS and Employees Retirement System of Georgia since 1994. Mr. Boyers is a Certified Public Accountant with 30 years of experience and is currently a member of the American Society of CPA's, Government Finance Officers Association, and the Georgia Fiscal Management Council.

New to the TRS family, Mr. McCleskey has served as the staff coordinator for the Governor's Education Finance Task Force since November 2004. He has almost 30 years of service in education, having worked with the Gwinnett County School System for all but two years while he served as executive director of the State Board of Education. In Gwinnett County, McCleskey began in 1976 as a classroom teacher and later joined the Gwinnett County Superintendent's Office where he primarily served as the coordinator of governmental relations, grants and business programs from 1991 to 2004. Mr. McCleskey will serve as the TRS champion of customer service to the Governor's task force.

"The focus of the TRS management team is the continued success of the agency and I am looking forward to integrating short-term goals and results with our long-term focus of providing exemplary customer service—making it faster, friendlier, and easier. My goal for the agency is to service: 1) those who depend on TRS for information regarding one of the most important decisions of their lives—their retirement; 2) those who rely on us for timely and accurate benefit payments; and 3) over 370 employers who partner with us to make sure contributions and service credit are reported correctly each month. The information and services TRS provides make a huge difference in the important decisions TRS members are faced with at retirement and beyond," explains Mr. Ezell.

Mr. Ezell, along with the support of Mr. Boyers, Mr. McCleskey, the management team and the entire staff, will continue to forge ahead in 2006 developing new and better ways to deliver service to all TRS customers.



(L-R) back row: Dr. Bill Sloan, Jim Hayes, Lester Dean, Jeff Ezell. Front row: Charlie Roberts, Ruth Shaw, Diann Green. GREA members at the March TRS Board of Directors meeting along with Jeff Ezell, Executive Director of TRS and Diann Green, Director of Retirement Services.

GREA Member Benefits Program

The Services Committee of the Georgia Retired Educators Association has really been working for you, the members. Please find on this page several opportunities that are only available to GREA members through their membership in our organization. If you have any questions about these services please call us at the State Office at 770-287-7721 or 1-800-637-2883. ALL OF THE BENEFITS COME THROUGH OUR ASSOCIATION WITH AMBA.

LONG-TERM CARE/HOME HEALTH CARE. AMBA will build a policy to match your own needs. You select the daily benefit amount, elimination period, and benefit period which best suits your needs for care. AMBA endorsed Long-Term Care Policy features include: no prior hospital stay, no waiting period for pre-existing conditions, pays in addition to your other insurance, and no premium increases with age.

FIRST DIAGNOSIS CANCER. The First Diagnosis Cancer plan pays money directly to you in cash at one time in one lump sum payment upon first diagnosis of cancer. You can select the lump sum payment of \$10,000, \$20,000, \$25,000, \$30,000, \$40,000, or \$50,000 that best fits your needs.

MEDICARE SUPPLEMENT INSURANCE PLANS. The Senior Class Medicare Supplement Plan offers Medicare Plans A, B, C, D, F, and G. Senior Class Plans pay for eligible expenses not paid by Medicare, and gives you the freedom to use your own physician, specialist, and medical facility. A drug discount card is provided with this policy.

FINAL EXPENSE WHOLE LIFE POLICY. You can have peace of mind knowing that your premiums are guaranteed never to increase, and your coverage is guaranteed never to decrease. Death benefits paid to your beneficiary are tax free.

TAX-DEFERRED ANNUITY. AMBA offers a Single Premium Tax-Deferred solution for your retirement featuring tax-deferred accumulation of interest, guaranteed competitive interest rate, multiple payout options, and a nursing home waiver.

MEDICAL AIR SERVICES ASSOCIATION. Over the past 30 years Medical Air Services (MASA) has become an international company dedicated to providing life-saving emergency assistance. The coverage is designed to protect members against catastrophic financial loss when emergencies arise. The Platinum Membership offered through AMBA offers the following 13 services: Emergency Air Transportation, Helicopter Transportation, Ground Ambulance Transportation, Organ Retrieval, Organ Recipient Transportation, Recuperation/Repatriation, Return Transportation, Escort Transportation, Non-Injury Transportation, Minor Children/Grandchildren Return, Mortal Remains, Vehicle Return, and World Wide Coverage. More information about these services offered through your membership may be obtained by registering online at www.amba.info or by contacting AMBA at 800-258-7041.

AMERITAS DENTAL INSURANCE. Ameritas dental insurance plan offers the freedom to use your own dentist or you may choose one in the Ameritas Dental Network for additional discounts. For information and application call AMBA at 800-258-7041, or check www.ameritasgroup.com/provider/dental.htm to find a dentist near you.

VSP WELL VISION PLANS. VSP is the largest national quality eye care company. VSP can offer you one-stop shopping for eye care. VSP offers discounts for quality eye exams and unlimited eyewear choices. VSP WellVision Plans offers eyewear, contacts, and a Laser VisionCare program. For information and location of a VSP provider near you call 800-877-7195 or check www.vsp.com. Contact AMBA for the application at 800-258-7041. Check your association's web page to find program and rates.

ASTRUM HEARING SOLUTIONS. This is a national network of hearing professionals who have audiologists in all states. Astrum offers you a complete hearing evaluation, warranty on digital technology aids in any style, loss and damage protection, and batteries with a complete benefit package. Your hearing aid benefit package includes four levels of pricing on most major brands. Use benefit number #RTA000053101 when calling 866-988-5403 or check www.astrumhearing.com for more information.

GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE TRAVEL OPPORTUNITIES (GETO). This is a unique "Space-A" vacation condominium and hotel, resort, program exclusively for you. Space available condos located anywhere on the planet are for a flat rate of \$299 per week, good for short-notice vacations. Use eligibility number 823 when making condo/resort reservations. GETO hotel discounts are available by using ID #60712 when making reservations for the following hotels: Days Inn, Ramada, Super8, Travelodge, Howard Johnson, Wingate Inn, AmeriHost Inn, and Knights Inn. For full details and samples of

resort availability, check www.getravelop.com or call the reservations center at 877-867-3639.

GRAND CIRCLE TRAVEL. You get "Group Tours" for worldwide discovery at extraordinary value. Your group buying power gives you the best rates on airfares, hotels, tours, and cruises. With 46 years in the travel industry, Grand Circle Travel offers the most complete vacation packages. For information about group or individual tours, check www.gct.com or call 800-321-2835 and reference AMBA Group #3082 when making reservations.

GLOBUS/COSMOS TOURS. Globus is one of the oldest international tour companies. They conduct tours and offer independent travel packages whether you want to visit Europe, Asia, North America, South America, Australia, or Africa. Globus has recently added Cosmos to their family of traveling companies to increase the number of tours to be offered each year. Globus/Cosmos has offered AMBA's associations' members a \$50 per person discount on all travel booked through them. Check www.globusfamily.com or call 800-851-0728 for more information. Must use code PRMX54 when making reservations.

VACATIONS TO GO CRUISES. This online company constantly scours the itineraries of every cruise line to create an exclusive list of the world's great cruises with every conceivable discount included. Ameba's association members can subscribe to the free weekly *Vacations to Go Newsletter* where most cruises are discounted 40-60% off the published catalogue price. Check www.vacationstogo.com for cruise information, www.resortvacationstogo.com for resort information, and www.tourvacationstogo.com for tours or call 800-338-4962.

LA QUINTA INN AND SUITES DISCOUNT. La Quinta Corporation now gives you a 10% discount at their La Quinta, Baymont, and Woodfield Suites locations. In order to take advantage of this offer, when you make reservations, please mention the "eligibility word—AMBA" and the name of your state association. If you have a question or for reservations, please call 800-531-5900 or check www.LQ.com.

AUTOMOBILE RENTAL DISCOUNTS—BUDGET AND ADVANTAGE. AMBA has partnered with two car rental companies for members to receive significant discounts. Call Budget for reservations or information at 800-455-2848 or check www.budget.com. For Budget mention the AMBA's ID number X925500. Call Advantage for reservations or information at 800-777-5500 or check www.advantagerentacar.com. When making Advantage reservations, mention AMBA's ID number 153702-FSC.

DELL COMPUTER. AMBA members are now able to get discounts on Dell computers through the Education Personnel Purchase Program. You may receive a 2%-12% discount depending on the cost of the unit and the warranty selected. Call Dell at 866-257-4711 or check the Dell site at www.dell.com/edubuy and enter your GREA ID number KS62497751 to receive your discount.

COSTCO. Costco is the premier warehouse club. Costco's 44 million members enjoy low warehouse prices on thousands of high-end, brand-name products and services for their home or business at more than 440 locations worldwide. Costco is committed to offering the best value to its every product and every membership. Join Costco and start saving today with a \$10 Costco Cash Card. An annual Costco membership is \$45 (plus tax, where applicable), and includes a free spouse card. The \$10 Cash Card is available only to non-members for their first year of membership. Limit one offer per household. Offer is non-transferable and cannot be combined with any other offer or coupon. For more information, check www.costco.com or call 800-774-2678.

Traveling Teachers

Time for guaranteed rooms and flights have expired on about six of this year's trips. However, 8-14 spaces remain open on a nationwide basis as of copy deadline on all of these. We have to call to be sure spaces remain available before we can accept a deposit on these. They are Western National Parks, Branson, London-Paris, Italy, Portugal, and China. Guaranteed spaces remain available strictly on first come-first served basis, for Hawaii, Islands of New England, New York.

We're still finishing details on an exciting new Las Vegas arrangement. The trip will be 2nd or 3rd week in October. Check the web site for more details. Also, if you see a trip that interests you, let us know which ones and we'll rush you a specific brochure on that trip. Because of gas prices, airline tightening, etc., lead times are shortening dramatically. When you decide you want to go on a trip, you need to make the initial deposit to hold your room as quickly as possible to ensure you'll get to go. Friends and family are welcome, too. Write or call Traveling Teachers at 770-534-4203 or P. O. Box 663, Gainesville, Ga. 30503.

GREA Mourns the Loss of Two Past Presidents

The Georgia Retired Educators Association extends its sincere sympathies to the families of two former GRTA (GREA) Presidents who have recently passed away.

Earl W. May, 91, was President of GRTA during the 1981-1982 term. President May passed away on May 31, 2005 at the Health Park Care Center in Fort Myers, Florida after an extended illness. A native of Cook County, May was a lifetime educator finishing his career in Wayne County in 1972. In 1965 he came to Wayne County from Camden County and was principal of Jesup Junior High School and later Jesup Elementary School. Mr. May held office as President of the Wayne County Retired Teachers Association as well as President of the State Association. He was a member of the Jesup First Baptist Church, the Kiwanis Club, Wayne Memorial Auxiliary, and was a U.S. Navy veteran of World War II.



Earl W. May

He was preceded in death by his wife, Essie S. May. Funeral services were held on June 4, 2005 at the Jesup First Baptist Church.

William Starr Miller, 84, was President of GRTA during the 1989-1990 term. President Miller died suddenly Thursday, January 26, 2006. He was a retired college educator whose career spanned more than 40 years.



William Starr Miller

Dr. Miller was President Emeritus of Brewton-Parker College where he had served twice as president, and was Dean Emeritus of the School of Education of Georgia Southern University where he served for 18 years. His

educational service, beginning in the public schools of Gordon County, also included an administrative and teaching role at Young Harris College, as well as Academic Dean of Tift College.

An activist for retired persons, Miller had served as the Georgia State Director of the American Association of Retired Persons and as president of the Georgia Retired Teachers Association. Miller's various leadership roles have included serving as chair of the Board of the Georgia Baptist College of Nursing, chair of the Education Commission of the Georgia Baptist Convention, chair of the Deacons of First Baptist Church of Statesboro, chair of the Georgia Accrediting Commission for Georgia Schools, president of the Georgia Association of Colleges, and president of the Southern Council of Teacher Education of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Though Miller held and earned a doctorate from Duke University, he is often cited as a most appreciated recognition the honorary doctorate that his colleagues of Brewton-Parker College later presented him. The Miller Music Building of Brewton-Parker College was built during his tenure as president and carries that name as an honor to him and his late wife, Sarah Fallin Miller.

He was preceded in death by a spouse, Sarah Fallin Miller. W. Starr Miller is survived by his wife, Luine Wilson Baxter Miller of Newnan.

A graveside funeral service was held at 11 a.m. Tuesday, January 31 at Eastside Cemetery in Statesboro. A memorial service followed at 4 p.m. in Saliba Chapel of Brewton-Parker College in Mt. Vernon. In lieu of flowers, the family has requested memorial tributes be sent to: Brewton-Parker College, Mt. Vernon, GA 30445, designated for the Newnan Campus or the Miller Music Building Expansion Project.

Local Unit Programs for 2005-2006

The following is a partial example of many unique and wonderful programs that are being held across our state at local unit meetings. If you are not attending a local unit meeting you are missing a real treat. Call the State Office for information on people to contact about monthly meetings in your area of the state.

GORDON REA—had a physical therapist to show how to do some low stress flexibility exercises, especially ones to do sitting down, and how exercise is beneficial for older people.

GWINNETT REA—The Razzle Dazzle Women's Barbershop Quartet.

COBB-MARIETTA REA—had a speaker who discussed Travel in Georgia.

BARTOW/CARTERSVILLE REA—the local Pilot Club presented a program on teaching children to protect their brain (BrainMinder's Program).

FLOYD/ROME REA—a program on Driver Education for Seniors by the AARP Driver Education Instructor.

STEPHENS COUNTY REA—a program on "Hazard Kits for Emergency Situations."

MERIWETHER REA—Superintendent of Schools spoke.

POLK REA—Treasure Auction was held for raising scholarship money with a local auctioneer participating.

PAULDING COUNTY REA—took a bus trip with the local Superintendent to visit new schools under construction.

FORSYTH COUNTY REA—Harris Consulting presented a program on "Financial Planning for Retirees."

CAMDEN COUNTY REA—a program that consisted of a "State of the County" address from The Chairman of the Camden County Board of Commissioners (their former School Superintendent).

FAYETTE COUNTY REA—a Senior Attorney with the Federal Trade Commission talked about the necessity of seniors to be aware of scams, fraud, theft, etc. He listed the latest methods used by criminals to con the unaware.

OGLETHORPE COUNTY REA—a speaker from the Athens Regional Medical Center, on Diabetes Education.

CATOOSA COUNTY REA—a local judge spoke on the importance of wills, etc.

TRI-COUNTY REA—a speaker from "Habitat for Humanity."

WORTH COUNTY REA—a physical therapist spoke on the different types of arthritis and what could be done for them, when therapy would help and when not, etc.

WASHINGTON COUNTY REA—a local tax service provides a program

"All About Taxes, Tax Laws."

THOMASTON/UPSON REA—a couple spoke and showed artifacts from their month-long visit to China.

CRAWFORD COUNTY REA—a local technical school presented a program about the different kinds of new technology.

HANCOCK COUNTY REA—a program by the County Extension Director.

MADISON COUNTY REA—two nurses talked about health care and offered screenings for blood pressure, cholesterol, and bone density.

BRYAN/EVANS REA—Elementary School Chorus Highlight Program.

COLQUITT COUNTY REA—held their meeting at and toured the local Museum of Colquitt County History.

WAYCROSS/WARE COUNTY REA—show and tell. Members bring hobbies, projects, family treasures, and share the history of each.

June 2006 Area Meetings

DATE	AREA(S)	CITY	LOCATION
June 5	V & VI	Savannah	Carey Hilliard's Restaurant
June 6	VII	McRae	Southern Star Grill
June 7	XI & XII	Sparta	Hancock Central High School
June 12	IV	Waycross	Captain Joe's Seafood
June 13	III	Moultrie	Embers Restaurant, Spence Field Rd.
June 14	I & II	Americus	South Ga. Technical College
June 15	IX & X	LaGrange	Highland Country Club
June 19	XV & XVI	White	White United Methodist Church
June 21	XVII & XVIII	Gainesville	Civic Center
June 22	XIII & XIV	Decatur	W. B. Bryant Center
June 26	VIII	Macon	Vineland Methodist Church

The Story of HB 400

In 2005, with the encouragement of GREA, Representatives Brooks Coleman, Bill Cummings, and Ben Bridges introduced HB 400 in the House of Representatives. This bill would increase the monthly benefit to certain TRS retirees. A bill of this nature requires two years for adoption.

GREA took this as our No. 1 priority for the 2006 legislative session. Many, many GREA members worked countless hours to encourage our representatives and senators to pass this piece of legislation.

In January 2006, Governor Sonny Perdue included \$3,760,000 in his budget request to the state legislature to fund this bill. This was an important step in getting it passed and GREA appreciates the Governor's support of this bill and asking for the money to pay for it.

On February 13, 2006, the state House of Representatives passed HB 400 by a vote of 164-0. Rarely does a piece of legislation receive a unanimous vote.

On March 14, 2006, with several GREA members in the gallery, the state Senate passed HB 400 by a vote of 52-0. Again it received a unanimous vote by this body!

HB 400 will become law when Governor Sunny Perdue signs this piece of legislation. He has 40 days from the end of the General Assembly session to sign the bill. We hope he can sign it at our State Convention in Augusta if the 40-day limit will allow it. If not he will sign it before the convention.

Thanks to all of you who worked on this bill and if you called, emailed or wrote your representative, senator, and governor about this bill, then please follow up with a Thank You note of some kind. You all did a great job!

Effective July 1, 2006, the increased benefit amounts will be based on the date of retirement as follows: Educators who retired prior to 7/1/74 would receive a 10% pay raise. Retirees between 7/1-74-6/30-82 would receive a 6% pay raise. Retirees between 7/1/82-6/30/87 would receive a 2% raise. This is in addition to the regular COLA raise of 1.5% each 6 months.

Welcome E. Mason Lincoln County Citizen of the Year

Welcome E. Mason, member of the Georgia Retired Educators Association (GREA) and the Lincoln-Wilkes Retired Educators Association (LWREA) was recently named Lincoln County Citizen of the Year. The honor was bestowed upon Mr. Mason at the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. program that was held on January 15, 2006.

Mr. Mason, a native of Lincoln County, completed high school in his hometown, graduated from Paine College in Augusta, Georgia, and completed further educational courses at Atlanta University.

Mr. Mason taught for three years in the Lincoln County School System before serving as a principal for thirty years. During his tenure, he moved the high school to a level of excellence. In 1984, he retired as principal and for the next four years he was the part-time Curriculum Director of Lincoln County Schools.

Numerous national, state, and local accolades have been bestowed upon this member of the Ebenezer Baptist Church, Lincolnton, Georgia. Mr. Mason continues to serve his community. He has served in such capacities as president, director, and member of various civic organizations and committees. He is also a charismatic motivational speaker and musician.

As a reminder of his contribution to the Lincoln County School System and to the community at large, Mr. Mason's portrait adorns the halls of the Lincoln County Elementary School.

Welcome E. Mason is married to Rubye Fielder Mason, and they are the proud parents of six children.

SCHOLARSHIP DONATION

Lafayette High School principal David Friend presented an appreciation gift recently to Ken and Alice Loggins for their scholarship donation to the school. Alice is a retired educator who taught in the county system for 34 years, mostly at Fortune Grammar School. Both are members of the LaFayette Optimist Club. "To God be the glory because He has blessed us and we want to share it." Alice said. The donation was \$50,000 and the amount given to each student per year will be more than \$1,000 toward college.



Retired Educators Enjoy Fair Day

Dr. Robert W. Green, Jr., President of the Peach County Retired Educators Association, gave full approval to the Recreation Committee, Chaired by Mrs. Bettye Zachery to plan for entertainment and educational tours for the Unit. This matter was stated in the planning session held in August, 2005.



Peach Retired Educators group at the Georgia National Fair.

The first of two planned tours came to fruition on Wednesday, October 12, 2005 when a group of 20 educators departed by bus from Trinity Baptist Church on State University Drive en route to the Georgia National Fair in Perry to have a day of fun and excitement.

The first stop was made at the famous Priester's Pecans of Georgia for lunch during the noon hour. After enjoying a delicious repast, the next stop was to the Fair grounds to tour the Exhibit Hall and other attractions.

Dr. Robert Green extended accolades to the Recreation Committee for a job well done. He also graciously thanked Mr. Elijah Weatherspoon for safely driving the group to their destination and return to Fort Valley.

PCREA is indeed appreciative to Rev. Gregory Moore, Senior Pastor, and the Trustee Board of Trinity Baptist Church, for their timely cooperation in approving our request to use their transportation to attend this exciting tour.

Another educational tour is planned for the Spring of 2006.

Rock Collection Donated

By Eric Beavers, Walker Messenger

A former Walker County teacher is loaning her extensive collection of rocks, minerals, and fossils to the Walker County Science and Technology Center.

Helen Solomon began collecting specimens 70 years ago while in the sixth grade. It was while riding through mining towns in her home state of Arkansas that she uncovered a passion for the rocks men pulled up from the earth.

"The miners were allowed to sell the beautiful crystals that they came upon as they were looking for pay-dirt, the ore," Solomon said. "They sold them at fruit stands along the road."

Solomon said her love for geology was cemented with her frequent visits to the Academy of Natural Sciences Museum in Philadelphia.

"I would go over there and spend whole Saturdays looking at their natural science museum, particularly the rocks and minerals," she said.

Solomon was encouraged by her father, an electrical engineer working for RCA who developed technology in 1920 allowing radios to play over speakers instead of headphones, she said.

Over the years, Solomon's collection grew to fill the basement of her current house as well as a two-car garage in her back yard. A large portion of that collection will be on "permanent loan" to the Walker County school system.

The donation will include seven lighted displays to showcase the specimens, samples to take to classrooms for hands-on class work, and lesson plans to guide teacher instruction, she said.

GREA Membership Report

		Data Associated With Membership Report	
Members Paying Annual Dues	3,235	Current Total Membership	15,561
A.D.D. Plan Members	7,070	Membership One Year Ago	14,741
LIFE Plan Members	4,382	Increase In Membership	820
LIFE Plan Plus ADD Plan Members	308	(Compared to one year ago)	
Emeritus Members	294	Current A.D.D. Plan Members	7,070
Disabled Members	75	A.D.D. Plan Increase	822
Deceased Number of Members	197	(Compared to one year ago)	
(Number to be deducted June 30)		Honorary Members	246
Current Total Membership	15,561	(Not included in Total Membership)	

Executive Director's Message

By Bill Sloan



William Sloan

The State Convention is on the horizon. I hope you are making plans to attend this exciting event. We will have two excellent speakers this year at the convention. At lunch on Wednesday, we have the Georgia Secretary of State, Cathy Cox, and at the Evening Banquet we have the Governor of the State of Georgia, the Honorable Sonny Perdue. We are very fortunate and pleased to have both of these important people speak at our convention this year.

Membership in our organization has continued to rise all year and with the addition of many new services from AMBA it will continue to increase year round as people learn of the services that GREA is now providing for its members. We have grown to approximately 15,550+ members at the printing of this *Bulletin*.

There are many exciting programs being held this year around the state at the local unit meetings. I congratulate all of you who schedule these programs for your local units. You are really doing a great job for our members.

It was exciting to see so many of you coming together to work on the passage of HB 400. Each of you who contacted your legislators to encourage their support of this bill is to be congratulated for your hard work. The passage of this bill was wonderful for our older retirees who really needed this increase in pay. The passage of this bill shows that hard work will pay off in dividends for our membership. There truly is power in numbers and GREA led the way in pushing for this bill. Thanks again to each of you who played any part in this endeavor and to our Governor who helped by including money for the raise in his budget request to the General Assembly this year.

I wish to congratulate Sue Thornton on being elected the President-elect of GREA for next year. I look forward to working with her for the next three years. She is a real asset for GREA and has done many wonderful things already for our organization and will continue to lead in the future. In addition, the members of Area IV have chosen a wonderful person in Elizabeth McEuen to represent them on the Governing Board and we all look forward to working with Sue and Elizabeth. All of the candidates for these positions were excellent people and would have made great leaders for GREA and we all thank them for running for these two offices.

GREA is alive and well and I look forward to the things that we can achieve in the future by working together for all of our GREA members. You are a great group of people and I look forward to working with you to move this organization to an even higher level.

See you at the convention in May!

Two Dawson County REA Members Receive Emeritus Status

Ailene Couch Stowers and President Charles Finley.



(Left to right) Beth Harben (granddaughter), Pete Harben (husband), Lois Harben, and Charles Finley. Mrs. Harben taught Charles in the 6th grade!

Dodge County REA Member Recognized In The Christian Index

Bertie Mae Garrett was recognized in this magazine after publishing her second book *Gathering Jewels*. It follows her first book *Chug Chug Lady from Georgia* which chronicled her adventures around the world in 990 days as a 48-year-old Peace Corps volunteer.

Jewels picks up where her Peace Corps venture ended and highlights her 34 years as a summer missionary to 37 countries. Her theme is discussing remote locations "where people have so little and we have so much."

She begins the book with a trip to Alaska in 1969 and concludes with a 2003 venture to Russia. The book is as much a travelogue as devotional guide. Garrett, now in her 80's, discusses hardships and joys along the way in the style of a personal journal with spiritual insight.

Jewels is available in Christian stores and libraries.

State Convention General Information

HOTEL REGISTRATION

Rooms are reserved at the Augusta Marriott and Suites (formerly the Radisson Riverfront Hotel and the Country Suites Riverwalk). These two hotels are located on opposite ends of the convention center and are owned and operated by the same company. Rooms at either hotel are \$107.00 per night plus tax for single/double/triple occupancy. These rates are available for three days before and after the convention for anyone who may wish to arrive early or remain in Augusta for a few days after the convention. A free breakfast is no longer available at the Country Suites. *Rooms are guaranteed until April 3, 2006.* After that date rooms will be on a space available basis. For reservations call: 1-866-316-5958.

HOSPITALITY SUITE DONATION

The Bryan-Evans REA and the Chatham REA are in charge of the hospitality suite at this year's convention. As in past years, each local unit is asked to donate \$10.00 to help with the expenses of this suite.

DOOR PRIZES

In addition to the silent auction item, each local unit is asked to bring only one very nice gift (\$25.00 or more) to be given as a door prize. Please mark the name of your local unit on the outside of the gift. On the inside of the gift, place the name of the local unit and the name and address of the donor. The door prize drawings are a fun part of the convention. Door prizes should be given to a GREA staff member when you arrive at the convention.

SILENT AUCTION

We hope that each local unit will donate at least one item for the silent auction. Sally Johnston is chairperson of the Silent Auction and all of the proceeds will go to the GREA Foundation. Auction items may be either a gift donated by or purchased from a local business or a self-made craft, painting, etc. Bring these items to the convention and give them to Mrs. Johnston or to either Linda Bray or Joy Smith at the registration table.

SPOTLIGHT ADS

We hope that every local unit will sell at least six ads. Twenty-five dollars will be retained by the local unit for each ad sold. Each unit should only send \$25 to the staff office for each ad sold and your local REA should keep \$25. This year each ad sold will be displayed on our web site for entire year recognition. This should help encourage participation as it can be seen by all of our members daily.

Proposed Bylaw Change

This proposed change was presented by Bill Weaver, Chair, Bylaws Committee to the Governing Board at the January meeting. It was approved by the Governing Board for the membership to vote on at the Convention in May.

Proposed change in Article IV, Section 1, Subsection A currently reads:

ADD membership shall be granted to any individual who has dues automatically deducted from the member's monthly TRS benefit check (Automatic Dues Deduction).

The following change in Article IV, Section 1, Subsection A is presented for your consideration:

Automatic Dues Deduction (ADD) membership is the preferred membership choice and is granted to any individual who has dues automatically deducted from the member's monthly Teacher Retirement System (TRS) benefit check.

ANNIVERSARIES—From Cobb-Marietta REA: Nell and Clint Adcox celebrated their 61st anniversary on December 15, 2005; J. R. and Inez Livingston celebrated their 55th anniversary on March 21, 2006; Ann and Louise Rich celebrated their 56th anniversary on March 25, 2006. From Floyd REA: Rex and Jo Ann Abernathy celebrated their 50th anniversary on June 17, 2005; Sanford and Sara Payne celebrated their 57th anniversary on December 5, 2005.



Dora Spiva of Union REA celebrated her 101st

Jean Jones Wall Publishes Book

Jean Jones Wall has written a children's book about her Grandmother's early childhood growing up on a farm in Banks County. The book was self-published by JWALLPUBLISHING, and was printed at Life Springs Resources, Franklin Springs, GA 30639.

"Mom Bar," tell us about when you were a little girl," Jean and her cousins would beg. Mama Barden, born in 1889, would begin her entertaining, hilarious stories about her life as the daughter of a sharecropper.

Jean had heard these stories so many times that she never forgot them, and didn't realize until she was an adult what a skillful storyteller "Mom Bar" was. She decided to write them down and share them, hoping to inspire young writers and adults to record similar stories from their Grandparent's life.

Jean has visited several schools, where *I CAN STAND BY A ROSE*, has been enthusiastically received by students and teachers. Many adults have also commented that they have also enjoyed the book. Books can be ordered by calling 770-725-7465, e-mail thegreatwall@bellsouth.net, or by mail, Jean Wall, 287 Jones Rd., Statham, GA 30666. The cost is only \$10.00 plus \$2.00 for shipping and handling.

Jean Jones Wall has a BSED ('78) and MED ('83) from UGA. She has taught elementary-age children for 25 years. Although retired, she is still working with students. She is a member of Jackson County REA.

FAYETTE COUNTY GIVES LAMP OF KNOWLEDGE TO MEMBERS

Chrystine Peebles, to the left, unwraps the Lamp of Knowledge presented to all members of Fayette County REA aged 75 and above; immediately to her right sits Maynard Brown and Florrie Witt, both aged 97.



birthday on February 11, 2006 at Choestoe Baptist Church.



Richmond County Retired Educators Association has a new website. Check it out at www.boe.richmond.k12.ga.us/rcrea.



Fayette County is displaying their spotlight ads on a big board at all their meetings with a caption of "Friends of Retired Educators."



State Office Emails To Local Presidents

The State GREA office is trying to send emails occasionally to local unit presidents with information to share with your members. To date we have an email address for 106 local unit presidents or their designee. Thirty-eight local units are missing these updates, so if your local unit is not receiving email from the state office please send me an email address ASAP. If you, as President, do not have email, surely one of your officers or members could be responsible for this information. Email is a fast, economical way to communicate and is becoming the best method of sending information to everyone. This year when you change officers please send us the email address for the new Presidents or their designee. Previous Presidents may remain on the list! Please send the email address to greas3@earthlink.net. Thank You!

Free Credit Reports

You are entitled to a FREE copy of the credit reports compiled by the three national credit reporting bureaus. You can get one free copy from each company every twelve months. It's easy, and it's important—you can catch errors and detect identity theft.

The credit reporting companies collect information about you—information such as if you pay your bills on time, how much you owe, and whether you've filed for bankruptcy or been arrested. The companies sell your information to creditors, insurers, employers, landlords, and other businesses who want to evaluate your credit.

The three national credit reporting agencies are Equifax, Experian, and Trans Union. The FTC required them to create a joint clearinghouse for consumer requests, so it's very easy: Go to www.AnnualCreditReport.com. Or call toll-free to 1-877-322-8228. Or write to P. O. Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348-5281. You can order all three reports at once, or you can get them one at a time every four months or so.

You may also go to www.FTC.gov (the Federal Trade Commission web site) for even more information about how, why, where, and when to get your free credit report, how to dispute errors, and what to do if you are a victim of identity theft.

Important Telephone Numbers

STATE HEALTH BENEFIT INSURANCE PLANS

Call the Customer Service number on the back of your SHBP ID Card
Prescription Drugs—call the number on the back of your SHBP ID Card

TEACHERS RETIREMENT SYSTEM OF GEORGIA

JEFF EZELL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Atlanta Area 404-352-6500
Toll Free 1-800-352-0650

Jenkins County REA member Joyce Hodges-Hite completed a 50-mile run on January 21, 2006 in 13 hours, 49 minutes, 30 seconds. Her husband, Jim Hite, was named All-American in the sport of Duathlon (run/bike/run) by *Inside Triathlon Magazine* in the Jan.-Feb. 2006 issue. Jim was one of three duathletes from Canada and the U.S. so named in the 70-74 age group.

Volunteer Substitute Teaching in Mississippi

Recently, two retired educators, Lowell and Carol Russell, from the Houston County REA spent the week of February 20th volunteer substitute teaching at Bay High School in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. This is an area devastated by Hurricane Katrina. The school was under 8 feet of water and closed for 47 school days. Everything in the school was ruined. The local teachers were paid during that time, but lost all of their leave time and, consequently, could not take any time off. The Russells were able to give twenty teachers each a half-day off.

The Russells were joined by two retired educators, Gene Rodgers and Pat McNamara, from Harris County, who stayed three days to help. Unfortunately, no other volunteers have made themselves available to the teachers in that area.

Since housing is a problem in the area, the Russells pulled a travel trailer to Mississippi in order to have a place to live while there. Almost all of the teachers and students are living in FEMA trailers.

GREA OFFICERS:

Lester Dean, President
Harry Werner, President-elect
Zimma Jones, Past President
Patricia Bassett, Secretary
William Chandler, Treasurer
Dr. Bill Sloan, Executive Director

AREA DIRECTORS

Commodore Conyers, Area I
Liz Totty, Area II
Jacqueline Harper, Area III
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Charles Adams, Area XVIII

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