

THE GRE A BULLETIN



JOURNAL OF NEWS AND REFLECTIONS FOR
RETIRED EDUCATORS OF GEORGIA

VOL. XXIII, NO. 3

GAINESVILLE, GEORGIA

WINTER 2005

Make Plans Now
GRE
47th ANNUAL
CONVENTION

MAY 3, 4, 5, 2005
RADISSON RIVERFRONT HOTEL
AUGUSTA

(See page 8 for further information)

2005-2006 GRE Officers

Harry Werner Unopposed for 2005-2006 GRE President-elect



Lester Dean
Cobb County
President



Harry Werner
Henry County
President-elect



Zimma Jones
Tattnall County
Past President



Patricia Bassett
Crawford County
Secretary

Harry Werner of McDonough has been nominated by the Henry County REA and approved by the Nominations/Elections Committee for the position of GRE President-elect for 2005-2006 according to Committee Chairman Mary Long. Werner retired from the Henry County School System where he served as teacher, coach, assistant principal, principal, and county administrator. He is widely known as a professional storyteller and for portraying "Johnny Appleseed" in schools across the state.

Patricia Bassett of Roberta has been nominated and approved by the Nominations/Elections Committee for the position of GRE Secretary. Bassett, who served as GRE President in 2001-2002, will succeed Elizabeth Scarborough in this capacity. Lester Dean, current President-elect, will assume the Presidency and Zimma Jones will move to the position of Immediate Past President. The position of Treasurer, currently filled by Bill Chandler of Gainesville, will be recommended by the current President-elect and approved by the membership at the convention, in accordance with GRE By-laws.

Area Directors in odd-numbered areas are up for election this year. Two individuals have been nominated for the position of Area VII Director and one person for each of the other eight areas. A ballot for Area VII Director will be mailed on or about February 10th to each GRE member in that area. Mary Long said, "I am very pleased with the slate of nominees. They will assure continued strong leadership for our association in the years ahead. I thank them for their commitment to GRE and their willingness to go the extra mile for retired educators."

Following is the slate of officers and Area Directors.

- President Lester Dean of Powder Springs
- President-elect Harry Werner of McDonough
- Immediate Past President Zimma Jones of Reidsville
- Secretary Patricia Bassett of Roberta
- Treasurer To Be Nominated
- Area I Commodore Conyers of Albany
- Area III Jacqueline Harper of Quitman

- Area V James Twiggs of Baxley
- Area VII Pending Election Outcome
- Area IX Penny Carter of Columbus
- Area XI Lucius Skrine of Sparta
- Area XIII Geraldine Tilson of Doraville
- Area XV Dorothy Houston of Marietta
- Area XVII Bill Edmonds of Gainesville

Biographical data about each of the candidates is on page three of this *Bulletin*. Following the election of the Area III Director and the installation of officers at the GRE Convention, these individuals will join the following Area Directors of even-numbered areas to make up the GRE Governing board for 2005-2006. The Area Directors of even-numbered areas are: Area II, Liz Totty; Area IV, Solomon Sparks; Area VI, Dorothy Wilson; Area VIII, Rita Marable; Area X, Jane Thomaston; Area XII, Beverly Roberts; Area XIV, Brenda Bigham; Area XVI, Bill Weaver; Area XVIII, Charles Adams.

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Georgia Supreme Court Justice Robert Benham, 2005 GREA Convention Speaker

Justice Robert Benham, immediate past Chief Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court, will be the keynote speaker for the Wednesday Banquet at the 47th Annual GREA Convention to be held on May 3-5, 2005 at the Radisson Riverfront Hotel, Augusta. Justice Benham was appointed to the Georgia Supreme Court in 1989 and became Chief Justice in 1995, a position that he held until 2001.



Justice Robert Benham

Justice Benham was educated at Tuskegee University, University of Georgia, and the University of Virginia. He serves on the Board of Curators of the Georgia Historical Society, Board of Directors of the Georgia Preservation and Trust, Westville Historical Society, Noble-Hill Wheeler Historical Society and the Georgia Legal History Foundation. He is a former member of the American Trial Lawyers Association, Georgia Trial Lawyers Association, and Georgia Conference of Black Lawyers. Justice Benham has served as lecturer at numerous law schools and he has served as facilitator for legal conferences in twenty-six different states. He is married to the former Nell Dodson and they have two children.

President Zimma Jones said that other convention plans are well underway. The Wednesday Luncheon speaker has not been finalized as of this writing, but we expect it to be a well-known Georgia public figure. The Convention will kick-off with the Leadership Seminar on Tuesday afternoon. The seminar is designed primarily for new officers but is open to all convention attendees.

It is not too early to make hotel reservations at the Radisson Riverfront Hotel or the Country Inn and Suites, which adjoins the Radisson. Rooms are being held for convention attendees at both hotels. The rate at both hotels is \$104/night for single/double/triple occupancy. Reservations may be made at either hotel by calling 706-722-8900.

47th Annual GREA Convention Activities

GREA CHORUS

Under the leadership of GREA Past President James Johnston the GREA Chorus will again perform at the annual convention. If you would like to participate in the chorus, please complete the information below and send to: Mr. James Johnston, 617 Forrest Ave., Griffin, GA 30224-4911.

Name _____

Address _____

Soprano Alto Tenor Bass

A rehearsal time will be scheduled at the convention.

BAND/ORCHESTRA

If you are interested in participating in an instrumental group, either band or orchestra, at the convention, please contact: Rhea Spence, 960 Mills Dr., Covington, GA 30016. E-mail: Scottie@bellsouth.net.



PRE-CONVENTION GOLF OUTING

Plans have been made by Past State President Reid Mullins for the Second Annual GREA Golf Outing to The River Golf Club in Augusta (five minutes from the convention site). Arrangements are as follows:

Date: Tuesday, May 3, 2005
Time: Tee Time—8:45 a.m.
Cost: \$37.00—includes greens fees, cart and taxes
Players: Open to male and female golfers

Anyone interested in joining this group for fun and golf should contact Reid by the April 9, 2005 deadline in order to be included. Checks should be made payable to Reid Mullins and mailed to: Mr. Reid Mullins, 3400 New Hope Rd., Dacula, GA 30019-1906.

TRS Financial Report

	October 31, 2004	October 31, 2003
Total Number of Retirees	63,059	58,921
Total Monthly Benefits	\$145,619,237	\$130,612,748
Assets in Trust Fund for Pension Benefits	\$42,911,644,254	\$40,483,424,511

Governing Board Approves Dental and Vision Insurance Program for GREA Members

At its meeting on January 18, 2005, the GREA Governing Board, upon the recommendation of the Service To Members Committee, voted to enter into an agreement with Association Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA) for the purpose of providing a "Members Only" dental and vision insurance program for GREA members. AMBA was also approved to provide Medical Air Transportation Services to protect members against catastrophic financial losses when emergencies arise.

The Service To Members Committee has as its primary goal for this year to evaluate and select a company to offer these benefits to GREA members. The committee met with AMBA representatives on several occasions over a period of more than four months. Association Member Benefit Advisors is a national agency that specializes in "Member Only" benefits for groups such as GREA. AMBA has over 23 years of experience in working with retired teacher's associations, and currently handles various benefits for educator associations, both active and retired, in 28 states.

Committee Chairperson and former GREA Area VIII Director, Sue Thornton, said, "AMBA comes to us with an outstanding record of service and excellent recommendations. We have been both pleased and impressed by professionalism and qualifications of AMBA and have already established a very positive relationship with them." She also said, "A number of GREA members have expressed an interest in these services in the past and we are very happy that the Governing Board has added these to the list of GREA member benefits."

During the spring each GREA member will receive a direct mailing from AMBA giving specific details regarding premiums and benefits for these programs plus enrollment information. These voluntary programs will be available on an individual member, member and spouse, and family basis. President Zimma Jones summed up the feelings of the Board by saying, "We want to continue to expand services for our members and further enhance the advantages of GREA membership."

Tax-aid Begins 37th Year

Tax-aid is a wholly volunteer program sponsored by the AARP Foundation and Internal Revenue Service Tax Counseling for the Elderly. Tax-aid volunteers are trained under the IRS Tax Counseling for the Elderly Program to correctly complete personal federal and state income tax returns that do not entail specialized or extensive forms. They are specifically trained to handle items that frequently apply to senior taxpayers, such as taxable and non-taxable pensions and social security, sale of primary home, qualifying widow(er), tax credit for the elderly, earned income credit, child or dependent care credit, differences between federal and state credits and exclusions, estimated tax, etc.

Tax-aid services are free and confidential, performed for taxpayers who need them, at sites open weekly from February 2 through April 15. To find a site near you, call Tax-aid 404-488-7744 or the AARP toll-free number 1-888-AARP NOW (227-7669).

Introducing the GREA Candidates

PRESIDENT-ELECT, HARRY WERNER, McDONOUGH

Retired from Henry County School System. **Education:** A.A., Truett-McConnell College; B.A., Georgia Southern College; M.Ed. and Ed.S., West Georgia College. **Career:** Teacher and Coach in DeKalb, Hall, and Henry Counties; Assistant Principal and Principal, Henry County. **Memberships/Service:** Past President of Henry County REA, Henry Heritage Reading Council, Georgia and International Reading Association, Locust Grove Optimist Club, Southern Order of Storytellers, National Storytelling Association, travels as professional storyteller portraying "Johnny Appleseed."

SECRETARY, PATRICIA BASSETT, ROBERTA

Retired from the Crawford County School System. **Education:** B.A., LaGrange College; M.Ed. and Ed.S., Auburn University. **Career:** Secondary math teacher in Heard, Butts, and Crawford Counties and Gordon Military School; Department Chairperson, Registrar at Crawford County High School; Math Consultant for Crawford County School System. **Memberships/Service:** 2001-2002 GREA President; Past President of Crawford County REA; Secretary, GREA Foundation; Local Unit REA Volunteer of the Year; Chairperson of AARP "With Our Youth" Programs for Georgia; Delta Kappa Gamma, Local Unit President.

AREA I DIRECTOR, COMMODORE CONYERS, ALBANY

Retired from Dougherty County Schools. **Education:** B.S., Savannah State University; L-5 Certificate, Valdosta State University; L-6 Certificate, Albany State University. **Career:** Industrial Arts Teacher in Dooly County, D.C.T. Coordinator, Vocational Supervisor, High School Principal and Director of Technology/Career Education in Dougherty County. **Memberships/Service:** GAE, NEA, Georgia Vocational Supervisors Association, Georgia Professional Practices Commission, American Legion, United Way of Dougherty County, President, Albany Technical College Advisory Board.



Commodore Conyers

AREA III DIRECTOR, JACQUELINE HARPER, QUITMAN



Jacqueline Harper

Retired from Brooks County Schools. **Education:** B.A., Albany State University; M.Ed., University of Georgia. **Career:** English Teacher and Department Chairperson, Brooks County High School. **Memberships/Service:** GREA Local Unit President, GAE, NEA, Board of Directors, Brooks County Educational Foundation; Board of Directors, Brooks County Museum and Cultural Center; Life member, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority; Vice-Chairman, Brooks County Library Board; Brooks County Tax Equalization Board, Sunday School teacher, Beulah Missionary Baptist Church.

AREA V DIRECTOR, JAMES TWIGGS, BAXLEY

Retired from Appling County Schools as Superintendent of Schools. **Education:** B.S., Florida State University; M.Ed., Georgia Southern University. **Career:** Teacher, Principal and Superintendent of Schools in Appling County; Georgia Department of Education, Consultant with Middle Georgia and Heart of Georgia RESAs. **Memberships/Service:** PAGE, Phi Delta Kappa, National Association of Secondary School Principals, GSSA, Appling County Housing Authority and Board of Health, President of Baxley Lions Club.



James Twigg

AREA VII DIRECTOR, (CANDIDATE), JANIE O'CONNOR, HELENA



Janie O'Connor

Retired as GED Coordinator, Georgia Department of Corrections. **Education:** A.A., Andrews College; A.B., Wesleyan College; Teacher Certification, Georgia Southern University. **Career:** Teacher in Bulloch and Telfair Counties; GED Coordinator, Georgia Department of Corrections. **Memberships/Service:** President, Telfair County REA; President of Local Chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma; Star Teacher; Sunday School teacher.

AREA VII DIRECTOR, (CANDIDATE), MARY ANN McDANIEL, OCILLA

Retired from Irwin County School System. **Education:** B.S., Georgia State College for Women; M.Ed., Ed.S., Valdosta State University. **Career:** Middle and High School Teacher in Irwin County; Department Chairperson; System Curriculum Coordinator, Supervisor of Student Teachers, Valdosta State University. **Memberships/Service:** President, Ben-Hill Irwin REA; Member and Past President, Local Chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma; President, Ocilla Book Club; Board of Directors, GAEL; Ocilla-Irwin Arts Council; Past President, Georgia Association of Instructional Supervisors Association.



Mary Ann McDaniel

AREA IX DIRECTOR, PENNY CARTER, COLUMBUS



Penny Carter

Retired from Muscogee County School System. **Education:** Shorter College; Columbus State University. **Career:** Office Manager in Private Sector; Coordinator of Staff Benefits, Muscogee County Schools. **Memberships/Service:** Co-organizer and Charter member of Georgia Public School Worker's Compensation Administrators; Green Hills Garden Club; Columbus Jaycettes, Columbus Historic Foundation; Museum.

AREA XI DIRECTOR, LUCIUS SKRINE, SPARTA

Retired from Hancock County School System. **Education:** B.S., Fort Valley State University; M.A. and Ed.S., Atlanta University. **Career:** Teacher and counselor in Glascock and Newton Counties, Principal and Director of Head Start, Hancock County. **Memberships/Service:** Past President of Hancock County REA; Alpha Phi Fraternity; Master Mason; Deacon, Springfield Baptist Church.



Lucius Skrine

AREA XIII DIRECTOR, GERALDINE TILSON, DORAVILLE



Geraldine Tilson

Retired from the DeKalb County School System. **Education:** B.S., East Tennessee State University; M.Ed., University of Georgia; J.D., Woodrow Wilson College of Law. **Career:** Teacher in Washington County and Kingsport, Tennessee; Teacher, Principal, and Instructional Supervisor, DeKalb County. **Memberships/Service:** 2000-2001 GREA President; Past President, DeKalb County REA; Treasurer, GREA Foundation; Kappa Delta Pi; PAGE; NAESP; Chairperson, Georgia Credit Union Board of Directors.

AREA XV DIRECTOR, DOROTHY HOUSTON, MARIETTA

Retired from the Cobb County School System. **Education:** B.S., M.Ed., University of Georgia. **Career:** Teacher in Louisville, Ky. and Cobb County, Instructor in Women's Department of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance at UGA. **Memberships/Service:** Past President, Cobb/Marietta REA; Administrator, International Student Conference; PAGE; Cobb/Marietta REA National AARP "With Our Youth" Award; Phi Kappa Phi; GREA Governing Board.



Dorothy Houston

AREA XVII DIRECTOR, WILLIAM EDMONDS, GAINESVILLE



William Edmonds

Retired from Gainesville College. **Education:** Young Harris College; B.S., LaGrange College; Graduate Studies, Vanderbilt University; M.Ed., University of Georgia. **Career:** Teacher, Stephens and Dawson Counties; Registrar, Director of Admissions and Assistant Professor, Gainesville College. **Memberships/Service:** Past President, Hall County REA; Interpreter, Northeast Georgia Medical Center Auxiliary; Phi Kappa Phi; Kappa Delta Pi; Southern Association of Collegiate Registrars, Honorary Member.

124 Local Unit Presidents Attend October Area Meetings



AREA V LOCAL UNIT PRESIDENTS (left to right) Carlton Walton, Toombs Co. REA; Stanley Brobston, Appling Co. REA; Rufus Akins, Tattnall Co. REA; Eva Bentley, Golden Isles REA; Denzil Thomas, Wayne Co. REA; Carolyn Strickland, Liberty/Long REA.



AREAS I AND II LOCAL UNIT PRESIDENTS (left to right) seated: E. Hankerson, Macon Co. REA; P. Love-Gaines, Bainbridge/Decatur REA; S. Eubanks, Sumter Co. REA; L. Medders, Worth Co. REA. Middle row: Z. Jones; J. Lee, Terrell Co. REA; K. Thomas, Mitchell/Baker REA; T. Bearden, Grady Co. REA; C. Lemmons, Crisp Co. REA; F. Perymond, Stewart Co. REA; J. Williams, Dooly Co. REA; S. Johnson, Lee Co. REA; M. Wright, Dougherty Co. REA. Back row: J. Harrell, Decatur/Seminole REA; J. Shorter, Randolph/Quitman REA; L. Dean; L. Ingram, Early/Clay/Calhoun REA; F. Keaton, Miller Co. REA.



AREA VI LOCAL UNIT PRESIDENTS (left to right) Nancy Page, Bryan/Evans REA; Charles Bonds, Bulloch REA; Doris Thomas, Chatham REA; Woodrow A. Billups, Jr., Emanuel Co. REA; Marcia Smith, Effingham Co. REA; Jimmy Wilcox, Candler Co. REA.



AREA III LOCAL UNIT PRESIDENTS (left to right) front row: Marge Fitzsimons, Director; Christine Bryan, Berrien Co. REA; Zimma Jones GREA President; Sheila McNitt, Thomasville/Thomas Co. REA; Sarah Mashburn, Colquitt Co. REA; Lois Davis, Lamar Co. REA. Back row: Jacqueline Harper, Brooks Co. REA; Christian Hannon, Tift Co. REA; Richard Lawrence, Cook Co. REA; Wayne Baxter, Valdosta/Lowndes REA; Lester Dean, President-elect.



AREA VII LOCAL UNIT PRESIDENTS (left to right) seated: Bernice Myers, Laurens/Dublin REA; Carolyn Heath, Treutlen Co. REA; Zimma Jones, GREA President; Helen Cook, Area VII Director. Standing: Sharon Williams, Bleckley Co. REA; Lester Dean, GREA President-elect; Helen Clements, Dodge Co. REA; Patsy Brown, Wilcox Co. REA; Prentiss Brown, Ben Hill/Irwin REA.



AREA IV LOCAL UNIT PRESIDENTS (left to right) Donald Aultman, Waycross/Ware Co. REA; Faye Callahan, Brantley Co. REA; Lester Dean, GREA President-elect; Mary Ruth Harper, Clinch Co. REA; Iris Waye, Camden Co. REA; Solomon Sparks, Area Director; Pauline Turner, Bacon Co. REA; Martha Dykes, Jeff Davis Co. REA; J. L. Veal, Coffee Co. REA; Zimma Jones, GREA President.



AREA VIII LOCAL UNIT PRESIDENTS (left to right) Jessie O'Neal, Peach Co. REA; Jo Ann Hill, Houston Co. REA; Burney Lester, Bibb Co. REA; B. J. Bassett, Crawford Co. REA; Shirley Henderson, Monroe Co. REA; Annie Bush, Lamar Co. REA.



AREA IX LOCAL UNIT PRESIDENTS (left to right) Emma Reese, Marion/Schley/Webster REA; Alonza Ransom, Troup Co. REA President-elect; Etta Perry, Harris Co. REA; Menlia Trammell, Meriwether Co. REA; Bill Abrahamson, Muscogee REA; Joan Dickson, Area IX Director.



AREA XIV LOCAL UNIT PRESIDENTS (left to right) Front row: Sam McGee, Rockdale REA; William Breeding, Greene Co. REA; Beverly Dryden, Gwinnett Co. REA; Mary Frazier, Morgan Co. REA. Back row: Jim Finlayson, Rockdale REA; Felton Locklin, Walton Co. REA; Charles Knapper, Athens Area REA.



AREA X LOCAL UNIT PRESIDENTS (left to right) Brenda Wahlig, Clayton Co. REA; Celeste Lawrence, Butts Co. REA; Jane Thomaston, Area X Director; Bernice Brooks, Carroll/Hearl REA; Carol Lunsford, Fayette Co. REA; James Johnston, Griffin/Spalding REA; Linda Holcomb, Henry Co. REA.



AREA XV LOCAL UNIT PRESIDENTS (left to right) Brenda Richardson, Polk Co. REA; Frank Middleton, Bartow/Cartersville REA; Cynthia Ables, Floyd/Rome REA; Jim Brookshire, Cherokee Co. REA; Bobbie Edge, Pickens Co. REA; Sara Ragsdale, Pauldng Co. REA; Zimma Jones, GREA President; Lamuriel Adams, Cobb/Marietta REA; Dorothy Houston, Area XV Director.



AREA XI LOCAL UNIT PRESIDENTS (left to right) Betty Skrine, Hancock Co. REA; Mary Slaughter, Johnson Co. REA; Jeanne Carson, Washington Co. REA; Nancy Hodge, Baldwin Co. REA.



AREA XVI LOCAL UNIT PRESIDENTS (left to right) Carolyn Mayo, Chattooga Co. REA; Barbara Holland, Catoosa Co. REA; Netha Dunlap, Calhoun/Gordon REA; Zimma Jones, GREA President; Jane Shelton, Walker Co. REA.



AREA XII LOCAL UNIT PRESIDENTS (left to right) Ann Patterson, Burke Co. REA; Coleman Kennedy, Lincoln/Wilkes REA; Peggy Carter, McDuffie/Glascock/Warren REA; Frank Gordy, Jefferson Co. REA; Rev. Raymond Thompkins, Richmond Co. REA; Doris Belcher, Columbia Co. REA.



AREA XVII LOCAL UNIT PRESIDENTS (left to right) Vivian Teasley, Madison Co. REA; Elizabeth Nevil, Oglethorpe Co. REA; Linda Lang, Forsyth Co. REA; Fern Patterson, Hall Co. REA; Linda Harris, Hart Co. REA; Ruth Parten, Franklin Co. REA; Pat Miller, Jackson Co. REA; Emily Gunnells, Area XVII Director. Seated: Zimma Jones, GREA President.



AREA XIII LOCAL UNIT PRESIDENTS (left to right) Gerry Tilson, Area XIII Director; Isabelle Holston, Decatur/DeKalb REA; Jean McFarland and Charles McFarland, North Fulton REA; Verline Dennis, Douglas Co. REA.



AREA XVIII LOCAL UNIT PRESIDENTS (left to right) Jack Parker, Union Co. REA; Constance Hand, Fannin Co. REA; Ruth Caudell, Gilmer Co. REA; Curtis Chappell, Dawson Co. REA; Lorna Reece, Habersham Co. REA; Ted Smith, Rabun Co. REA. Seated: Zimma Jones, GREA President.

Message from the President

By Zimma C. Jones



Zimma C. Jones

It's been about 20,000 miles so far, but what a special journey. From the mountains to the seacoast and from the Savannah River to the Chattahoochee, I've had the privilege of speaking to hundreds of my fellow GREA members about local, state, and national priorities and accomplishments.

As you might expect, our number-one goal is increasing membership. Recruitment, retention, and renewal are the three aspects of membership growth. Each word speaks for itself and cannot be overlooked. We urge local unit officers and other members to attend area and state meetings to hear and share ideas and to interact and network with fellow GREA members from neighboring units as well as across the state.

As President, I am pleased that we have continued to experience growth statewide. I commend and congratulate all of those who have and continue to work diligently to facilitate growth both in numbers and in quality. Both leadership and commitment are evident as I attend local unit meetings that are well organized and meaningful. Local unit meetings provide an opportunity to stay informed of the concerns of retirees and the priorities of our association.

On a personal note, I would like to once again say a heartfelt "thank you" to the Local Unit Presidents as well as to the members who have made me feel so welcomed and so very much at home. My goal is to visit as many local units as possible before the year is over: so keep those invitations coming. And Betty, those were the best homemade cookies I've ever eaten.

The October Area Meetings were well planned and conducted. They were enormously successful in terms of attendance, participation, and information provided. In November, Retired Educators Day was observed in a myriad of ways across the state with some communities observing the entire week. We thank Governor Perdue again for proclaiming Retired Educators Day in Georgia.

Here are some other reminders:

1. Work closely with your legislators and stay in touch with them during the legislative session.
2. Work to be a Unit of Excellence and a Unit of Distinction as well as receive the other GREA Awards at the convention.
3. Remember to prepare and send the local unit scrapbook page to: Zimma Jones, P. O. Box 306, Reidsville, GA 30453.
4. Please share your copy of the *GREA Bulletin* with a friend who is not a GREA member or take it to a local school's teachers work area/lounge.
5. Be sure to visit the GREA Website at www.grea.biz.
6. Finally, register early for the convention and encourage the other local unit officers and members to do so also.

Traveling Teachers—2005 Schedule

Following are the trips that have already been arranged for 2005 and are ready for booking. Information on additional trips will be made available on the GREA Website and in the Spring *Bulletin*. All trips, unless otherwise noted, are priced from the Atlanta airport. The prices include travel and trip cancellation insurance on all foreign destinations. Group rates are contingent on at least ten travelers.

May 15, 2005: African Safari. Thirteen days, 27 meals included. Sign-up deadline is February 20, 2005.

May 25, 2005: China. Fifteen days, 38 meals included. This trip has limited spaces left.

May 27, 2005: Britain, Ireland, Scotland. Fifteen days, 22 meals. This is another trip with only a few spaces left.

June 13, 2005: Italy. Thirteen days, 19 meals. Reservations are subject to availability.

June 27, 2005: Danube River Cruise. Nine days, 17 meals.

August 17, 2005 Alaska. Thirteen days. This trip includes a land trip in Alaska and a cruise from Anchorage to Vancouver. Travelers are responsible for meals on the land portion of the trip. Early sign-up for this trip is important.

September 8, 2005: Canadian Atlantic Coast. Nine days, 13 meals. Fifteen spaces are available until April 1.

Other planned trips include a Panama Canal Crossing, a Las Vegas trip and a New York long weekend Broadway tour. Additional details are available on the GREA website at www.grea.biz. To request a brochure on a specific trip or for further information please visit the website or call Traveling Teachers at 770-534-4203 (fax no. 770-532-1978), or write to Traveling Teachers, P. O. Box 663, Gainesville, GA 30503.

NRTA Publishes National COLA Study For Teacher Retirement Systems

In December 2004 NRTA: AARP's Educator Community (formerly called the National Retired Teachers Association) published its fourth Cost of Living Report for Teacher Retirement Systems nationwide. Previous reports were published in 1997, 2000, and 2002. The purpose of the report is, "to present information on the manner in which state retirement systems provide retired educators with adjustments to retirement income designed to offset the effects of inflation."

According to the study, Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) fall into two categories of automatic and ad hoc adjustments. Under the automatic COLA, the legislature by law authorizes a COLA at specific intervals. The legislature is not required to approve each COLA adjustment. By contrast, the ad hoc COLA requires legislative approval each time that it is given. The study further stated that, "Either automatic or ad hoc COLA's may be based on specified flat dollar amount or flat percentage increases or may be determined by more complicated formulas."

The study explained that the methods for funding COLA's fall into several categories:

- Employer contributions specifically designated for COLA funding
- Employee contributions specifically designated for COLA funding
- A combination of employer and employee contributions
- Existing trust fund money
- Investment earnings explicitly defined as "surplus" or "excess" funds

HOW DOES GEORGIA COMPARE TO OTHER STATES?

The nationwide range for Cost of Living Adjustments is from one to five percent with the average COLA for all states being approximately three percent. Georgia's semi-annual adjustment of one and a half percent (3% annually) compares very favorably with what other states are doing, especially in light of the additional ad hoc adjustments that have been approved periodically by the General Assembly and the TRS Trustees. Georgia's COLA is compounded, which means that previous COLA's are counted when new adjustments are made. The COLA is funded from existing TRS funds. According to the report a total of 37 states grant automatic COLA's and eleven states grant ad hoc COLA's. The remaining states take a different approach.

The entire study is available on the NRTA website at www.aarp.org/nrta.

Appreciation from John Pearce

To: GREA

I would like to express my sincerest appreciation to all GREA for your expressions of sympathy over the passing of Carolyn. Thank you for the cards, calls, and donations to the Ministry of Caring. The wreath from GREA was beautiful and helped to make the entombment site more lovely for many days. Your sympathy and thoughtfulness is gratefully remembered and deeply appreciated.

Warmest regards,
John Pearce

GREA LEADERS AT OCTOBER MEETING

(Left to right) 1999–2000 GREA President Marinelle Simpson, 1977–1998 GREA President James Johnston, GREA President Zimma Jones, President-elect Lester Dean attend Areas IX and X October meeting.



Executive Director's Message

By Bill Gardner

The New Year, 2005, is both a new year and a new era for politics in Georgia. When the General Assembly convened on January 10th there were over 90 new members, including former members of the House of Representatives who are now in the Senate. For the first time since Reconstruction, both the House of Representatives and the Senate are controlled by Republicans with a Republican Governor. This year, legislative rules were waived, providing that all Committee Chairmanships were up for assignment. House and Senate Committees have both new and old members. The new Chairman of the Senate Retirement Committee is Bill Heath, Bremen, and the Chairman of the House Retirement Committee is Ben Bridges, Cleveland. The Chairman of the Senate and House Education Committees are Dan Moody, Alpharetta, and Brooks Coleman, Duluth.

The General Assembly operates on a bi-annual basis. All bills not passed during the 2004 Session died on July 1st and will have to be re-introduced to be considered. The GREA Legislative Committee met both during the summer and fall of 2004 and again in January, 2005. The GREA Priorities, as established by the Committee, are:

1. MAINTAIN COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENTS. Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLAs) are based on increases in the Consumer Price Index (CPI), are granted to TRS retirees by the TRS Trustees. The adjustments of 1½% are made every six months on January 1 and July 1 and are compounded.

2. SUPPORT "PENSION EQUITY" FOR OLDER RETIREES. H.B. 624 sponsored by Reps. Coleman, Cummings, Smith, Mills, McBee, and others died in the House Retirement Committee during the 2004 Legislative Session. This bill proposed increased benefits to certain retirees based on their year of retirement. GREA continues to place a high priority on improving benefits for teachers who retired in the sixties, seventies, and early eighties, whose average pensions are approximately one-half that of more recent retirees.

3. OPPOSE ANY PROPOSALS WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO A "TWO TIERED" SYSTEM OF RETIREMENT BENEFITS. GREA supports the concept that pension benefits should be calculated using the same formulas for all retirees regardless of year of retirement. Also, retirees should have a greater voice in the decisions affecting their retirement.

4. CLARIFICATION OF THE "RETIREE RETURN TO WORK" LAW. Under the interpretation of the current law, certain service and administrative positions have been denied the opportunity to benefit from this legislation. GREA supports legislation that clearly stipulates that the legislative return to work provisions apply to all personnel.

5. ENCOURAGE LOCAL UNITS TO CULTIVATE A CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR LOCAL LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION. Local Units are encouraged to invite their legislators to their meetings, to be a resource for the legislators, and to be sure to express appreciation for GREA of GREA priorities and other legislation that benefits retirees in general.

Monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income benefits for over 52 million beneficiaries increase by 2.7 percent in January 2005. Social Security and Supplemental Income benefits increase automatically each year based on the rise in the Consumer Price Index for Urban Workers (CPI-W) for the prior year. However, Medicare Part B premiums also increased, with the new monthly amount being \$78.20. By law, the Part B increase cannot be larger than a beneficiary's COLA increase.

Finally, with over 14,700 members GREA's membership is the highest ever for the month of January. A very special thank you for all those who have been so faithful and worked so diligently for membership growth. Start planning now to recruit the new retirees this year. I hope that you had a blessed and joyous Christmas season and wish for you a healthy, happy, and prosperous New Year!



DR. KOFI LOMOTEY RECEIVES OUTSTANDING EDUCATOR AWARD

Dr. Kofi Lomotey, President, Fort Valley State University, spoke to the Peach County REA and was presented the **GREA Outstanding Educator Award** by Dr. Robert Green.

The GREA Membership Grapevine

GREA Membership Committee:

Dorothy Wilson—Chair, Betty Adams, Charles Adams, Joan Dickson, Solomon Sparks, Delores Washington, LaRonnia Williams

CLINCH COUNTY'S SECRET WEAPON

By Mary Harper



Doris Strickland

At the 2004 GREA Convention, the Clinch County REA had the distinction of winning the highest percentage increase in the total membership statewide. That honor was due entirely to the efforts of our membership chairperson, Doris Strickland. Doris has held this position in our local unit since 1995 and continues to willingly accept the same responsibility each year. Our county is a relatively small system with only one primary, one elementary, one middle/high school, and one charter school.

Each year Doris gets the names of those retiring in every school and, with membership materials in hand, she personally goes to each school to enroll the new retirees in GREA. Our success is due to her personal dedication to membership growth. Any REA would be fortunate to have a Doris Strickland in their unit, our "secret weapon."

HALL/GAINESVILLE—PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF

By Dee Snow

The Hall/Gainesville REA has utilized several recruitment techniques for gaining new members; each being successful in its own way. Just prior to the close of the school year, all new retirees from the Hall County and Gainesville City Systems are invited to a reception at the Civic Center for GREA orientation and information. Once the year begins, a membership committee member checks the status of members as they enter each meeting to be sure that *all* dues are up to date. When the *Handbook* is printed in October, all GREA members have GREA after their names; a subtle reminder that state membership is important. Finally, non-state members are contacted by telephone by a member of the membership committee during the year. Remember—persistence pays off.

Let's Go To Augusta

GREA 47TH ANNUAL CONVENTION
"GREA United"

Radisson Riverfront Hotel—Augusta • May 3–5, 2005

Final plans are underway for another exciting and informative convention. It is not too early to make room reservations at the Radisson Riverfront Hotel or at the Country Inn and Suites (which adjoins the Radisson). The rate at both hotels is \$104 per night for single/double/triple occupancy. Reservations may be made by calling 706-722-8900.



SIGNING BEN HILL/IRWIN "RETIRED EDUCATORS DAY" PROCLAMATION

(Left to right) Fitzgerald Mayor Gerald Thompson, Ben Hill County Commission Chairman Larry Davis, and Irwin County Commission Chairman Armond Morris. Not pictured is Ocilla Mayor Lamar Royal.

GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY LIST: We extend our sincerest congratulations to the following GREA members who have celebrated Golden Wedding Anniversaries: **WILLIE L. AND ROBERT ALLEN OF ABBEVILLE, DECEMBER 5, 1944 (60 YEARS); GWENDOLYN T. AND LUTHER H. CONYERS OF BAINBRIDGE, DECEMBER 25, 1948 (56 YEARS); MARTHA AND GILBERT DEAN OF SANDERSVILLE, NOVEMBER 5, 1949 (55 YEARS); MARJORIE AND JACK FITZSIMONS OF VALDOSTA, DECEMBER 29, 1954 (50 YEARS); MAMIE AND RANDOLPH GRANT OF SANDERSVILLE, AUGUST 31, 1954 (50 YEARS); BETTY AND CHARLES W. HALL OF LAWRENCEVILLE, DECEMBER 9, 1953 (51 YEARS); MADELYN AND SHERMAN B. HALL OF PAVO, AUGUST 7, 1948 (56 YEARS); ELOISE AND RICHARD TURNER OF SANDERSVILLE, JUNE 12, 1953 (51 YEARS); JUNE AND GROVER WORSHAM OF THOMASTON, DECEMBER 19, 1954 (50 YEARS).**



TRS RECOGNIZED FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

The Teachers Retirement System of Georgia (TRS) is the proud recipient of the Call Center Team Award for Customer Service Excellence presented by the International Customer Service Association (ICSA). TRS joined ICSA, an organization dedicated to promoting the development and awareness of the customer service profession, in an effort to share knowledge and best practices, as well as network with other customer service professionals in various industries.

The ICSA board used the following criteria to award and recognize those who excel in the customer service arena:

- Companies that demonstrate the greatest positive impact on customer service
- The magnitude to which goals have been met or exceeded
- The ability to be an inspiration to others in the same or similar industry (such as another call center operation).

Having just celebrated its first anniversary in August, the TRS Call Center was honored to receive the award. To win this award, the TRS Call Center competed against such well-regarded companies as Georgia Pacific, SunTrust, Hartsfield-Jackson, and Verizon Wireless. "This is a tremendous accomplishment for TRS and we couldn't have asked for a better anniversary present," exclaimed Jeffrey L. Ezell, Executive Director.

The TRS Call Center employs twelve customer service representatives (CSRs) who provide world-class service to over 230,000 active members and over 60,000 retired members, as well as 120 internal TRS staff members. Not only has the creation of the Call Center helped to streamline processes that better serve our members, the CSRs handle about 3,000 calls per week, of which 95% are handled without ever having to be transferred elsewhere in the agency.

COBB-MARIETTA REA: Local unit members assisted as poll workers in the "Kids Voting Program" with over 300 students participating. Members also donated funds to help with research for Alzheimer's disease.



BALDWIN COUNTY REA: In November Lib Cathy was presented with the first Elizabeth Cathy Service Award, named in her honor. She served as membership chairperson for over ten years and was largely responsible for significant membership increases in recent years. Doris Hardie received the GREA Leadership Award and Elizabeth Horne received the GREA Community Service Award. Lib Cathy passed away in December after an extended fight with cancer.



Ruth Merritt



MITCHELL/BAKER REA:

Ruth Merritt was recognized and presented with a plaque from Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority for Outstanding Community Service.



JEFFERSON COUNTY REA: State Senator Randy Hall spoke to retirees at the Jefferson County REA monthly meeting. Hall is known for his special efforts in the legislature on behalf of Georgia's Senior Citizens.



ISHAM ALEXANDER, retired music educator in Muscogee County, has produced and released

a CD for beginning and intermediate percussion instruction, entitled, "Ten Basic Rudiments for Percussionists." For additional information go to www.cdbaby.com/ikealexande



LINDA LANG, FORSYTH COUNTY REA PRESIDENT: An annual project of Forsyth County Retired Educators is staffing the schoolhouse at the Cumming Country Fair and Festival. Members of the Forsyth County REA greet visitors, young and old, and introduce them to education as it was in "olden times." Children are amazed while parents reminisce.



Linda Lang

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Important Telephone Numbers

PUBLIC EMPLOYEE HEALTH BENEFITS

Nurse Call 24 1-800-524-7130
 State Health Benefit Plan Retiree Line . . . 1-800-586-9288
(Not for Prescription Drug Questions)
 Internet Site for Provider Lists . . www.healthygeorgia.com
 Blue Choice Vision Program 1-800-377-6436
 Express Scripts, Prescription Drugs 1-877-650-9342
 Medical Pre-Certification (MPC) 1-800-762-4535

TEACHERS RETIREMENT SYSTEM OF GEORGIA

JEFF EZELL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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

AIG VALIC

State Area 1-800-448-2542

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL TOURS

State Area 770-534-4203
 Fax 770-531-1978

AMERICAN HEARING AID ASSOCIATES (AHAA)

Toll-free 1-800-984-3272
 Web site www.AHAAnet.com

GREA OFFICERS:

Zimma C. Jones, President
 Lester Dean, President-elect
 Mary Long, Past President
 Elizabeth Scarborough, Secretary
 William Chandler, Treasurer
 William Gardner, Executive Director

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Commodore Conyers, Area I
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 Dorothy Houston, Area XV
 William B. Weaver, Area XVI
 Emily S. Gunnells, Area XVII
 Charles Adams, Area XVIII

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