

# THE GREA BULLETIN

JOURNAL OF NEWS AND REFLECTIONS FOR RETIRED EDUCATORS OF GEORGIA

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GAINESVILLE, GEORGIA

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## *Welcome to Athens, Georgia*



## **GREA 64th Annual Convention**

Athens is a consolidated city-county and college town in the U.S. state of Georgia. Athens lies about 70 miles northeast of downtown Atlanta and is a satellite city of the capital. The University of Georgia, the state's flagship public university is in Athens and contributed to its initial growth. The city is dominated by a pervasive college town culture and music scene centered in downtown Athens, next to the University of Georgia's North Campus. Major music acts associated with Athens include numerous alternative rock bands such as R.E.M., the B-52's, Widespread Panic, Drive-By Truckers, of Montreal, Neutral Milk Hotel, and Harvey Milk. The city is also known as a recording site for such groups as the Atlanta-based Indigo Girls. As a GREA member you are invited to enjoy all the activities that have been plan by President Joe Boland and the convention chair Liz Bouis. It will be an exciting convention!

The convention will convene on May 7th at 3 p.m. and adjourn on May 9th at 12 p.m. The host hotels this year are the Hyatt Place and the Hilton Gardens at The Classic Center. You can find a registration form inside.

## A Message from the President

Joe Boland, President



Joe Boland

I hope you had a great Retired Educators Day, November 5th. I am proud to celebrate that day with you. Many of us are veterans and were proud to serve our great country. Happy Veterans Day. Thanksgiving and Christmas are coming up. My objective - pace myself - don't get too stressed out - shop Amazon. Truth

be told, I hardly ever go shopping. Our daughters buy everything I need on Amazon.

I have been holed up for the last couple of weeks because of health issues in the family. My 4 loyal readers have checked up on us. Thanks. We are better now. My objective - go hard - get stronger - stay active. I have had to miss some visits with an REA or two. I hope to visit you soon. (Polk, Berrien, South Fulton, Cobb/Marietta).

I have really enjoyed my time as GREA President. I learn things all the time. Here are three of my recent rabbit-hole adventures.

1. TRS data breach - freeze your credit (Clark.com). Go to - Your Credit, then go to How to Freeze Your Credit. Protect your accounts with two-factor authentication- TRS has this. TRS Newsroom, 4th tab down, Enhance the Security of Your TRS Online Account.
2. dental insurance - a few school systems allow retirees to keep dental insurance; most do not. Retirees purchase their own dental insurance; many pay as they go. AMBA offers us a policy. The annual maximum is limited in all dental policies. If you are looking for a dental policy with a small monthly premium and a high maximum benefit, you are probably not going to find it.
3. retirement plan - I had forgotten the details of my retirement plan I had signed up for with TRS.
  - a. log into your TRS account
  - b. click on "View my payment information" which is the 1st option in the box to the right of the page.
  - c. your info appears in the "Account Information" section.

My next adventure will be to look at some of the webinars on GREA and TRS sites.

It is always nice to see a friendly, familiar face. Jesse Hunter will be one of those familiar faces at the Convention in Athens, along with Lester Dean, and Jewell Howard. Jesse will be a greeter, helper, ombudsman. I met Jesse through GREA, and he has been a friend for over 10 years. He has served as Pickens REA President, Area 15 Director, and 2016-17 GREA President. His charity, Furst Readers, was very well received and several units continue to support this cause. He worked for 30 years in

Clayton County and has been retired for 27 years. For the last few years Jesse has worked for GREM as Building and Grounds Manager. He was tasked with completing the Brick Memorial and is now working on the Honor Plaque. Seventy of 270 names have been placed on the Honor Plaque. For \$50 you can have a name on the plaque.

Jesse and Debbie live in Canton. They have 2 sons and 6 grandchildren. They will travel to Washington state in January to attend the swearing in ceremony where their son Eric will be sworn in to command the USS Ohio - "The lead boat of her class of nuclear-powered fleet ballistic missile submarines." (wikipedia) - look it up.

Jesse stays active with GREA, playing tennis and golf, and driving his Porsche through the winding roads of Georgia at a somewhat high rate of speed. I survived such a ride.

Question: Why should retired educators join GREA?

Answer: fellowship/service/support; state organization that looks after retired educators; pennies a day; AMBA.

We had a board meeting in Young Harris in October. What a nice group of people who give their time and talent to make our organization vibrant. We should all appreciate their gift of service.

Thanks for your continued service to your community.

## A Word from the President-elect

by Shirley Grant, President-elect



Shirley Grant

Fall has finally arrived, and it seemed as if the leaves were at their peak in color for the Fall Conference which was held in October at Brasstown Valley Resort in Blairsville, GA. Both units from Towns and Union gave us a hearty North Georgia welcome and shared highlights of both counties since they both work together so well. Of course, I am partial to this little area of our great state because I can truthfully say that we get to experience all 4 seasons of the year. I am happy that all other visiting GREA members could witness this Fall season as well. Even though our "Bus Driver," Dr. Bill Sloan couldn't be with us for the conference, Johnny Smith, our Director of Communications and Joe Boland, GREA President kept the wheels rolling. All matters involving GREA were conducted in a professional and timely manner. We certainly missed those who couldn't make the trip. However, it was great to have a former Area Director, Evelyn Fillingame to drive all the way from South Georgia, since she had just lost her husband. In my opinion, that is dedication and sincere love for GREA. Each conference offers an enlightening experience because not only is the business of GREA discussed, but members present can renew friendships, share highlights of happenings in their area, enjoy delicious meals, and enjoy a little free time to explore the area, or just relax. The next stop on our Bus Tour is scheduled for Columbus, GA in March 2024. Start



making plans for a good time of Fellowship, Service, and Support, but don't forget to reserve a seat on the bus for the state convention in Athens, GA scheduled for May 7-9, 2024. Make this a red-letter date on your calendar. Looking forward to another great year in 2024!

## **The Will Written Under A Tractor**

by L.C. (Buster) Evans, Ed.D.



*Buster Evans*

Hello to all our GREA friends! It continues to be such a joy to work with our retired as well as active TRS members. Now in my 8th year in this role, even though it was one that I never saw myself being in, the friendships that we have made across the state make this truly a highlight of my professional life. Because of my work with retirees and these many friendships, I continue to explore how I personally and professionally can help our retirees thrive in their retirement years. In this article, I am going to venture into an area that I don't have much experience in, but I believe it has an opportunity for all of us to learn and be better prepared.

My friends who know me well are probably familiar that I spend a little time throughout the year "on a tractor!" For those of you who know the experience, you can relate, but wow, spending a little time now and then on a tractor can be some of the most therapeutic time you can spend! For most of my life, I've solved a number of problems while riding on a tractor.

I want to share a true story about a Canadian farmer named Cecil George Harris. Back in 1948, Mr. Harris was tending to his Saskatchewan farm on his tractor. The tractor turned over, and Mr. Harris was trapped underneath it for hours. Fearing that he may die before being found, with his knife he scratched the following words onto the tractor's fender: "In case I die in this mess I leave all to the wife. Cecil Geo Harris"

Some hours later, Mr. Harris was found and rescued only to pass away the following day. He never told anyone about the "will" that he had written, but his neighbors found it the following day. The will had to be presented to the court, so the fender was removed, taken to the judge where allegedly, the judge promptly accepted this validity of the will. Today, the "fender will" is on public display at the University of Saskatchewan College of Law.

There are a few lessons for us aging retirees in this cute but true story. First, for those of us who enjoy working in our yards or on our farms, please be safe. Farm accidents happen every year injuring older people who are very experienced with equipment as well as newly engaged farmers.

More to the point for all of us: 1) do you have a will? 2) have you planned for your health care or living will directives for later in life? 3) have you designated someone to serve as your power of attorney? Based on my experiences in both the passing of my parents and our growing older, it might be

wise to work with a legal or other professional to prepare this type of information as well as to make sure that your fiscal, legal, and health issues are handled as you would desire in latter years. Whether it is an eldercare attorney or other professional, let me encourage you to take a look at these needs as one of your goals for the new year.

Thank you for your past service as a Georgia educator! Thank you, as well, for your continued service as you support the profession by being an active member in your local retired educators association as well as GREA! We sincerely wish you all a wonderful holiday season bringing us into the new year.

## **Ramblin' Around with the Executive Director**

By Bill Sloan, Executive Director



*William Sloan*

It has been a spectacular year in NE Georgia with the changing of the seasons. Fall in the mountains is a terrific time for wonderful views of the leaves turning. God has painted us a beautiful view this year. The fall of the year is by far the best time of the year for me.

I hope all of you visit our Facebook page regularly. There have been some really outstanding activities going on all across the state. GREA local units are really doing some wonderful things this year in their local communities. Thank you to every local unit that shares info with us to publish. We have folks from all over the USA that look at our Facebook page. We love to see the names of people who "like" our page. We have many loyal visitors, and we say thank you for visiting.

Here is some exciting news for local unit presidents. Because we came into some unexpected extra money this year our Governing Board has decided to pay the registration fee and the awards banquet fee for one person from each local unit to attend the 2024 convention in Athens. Please know that this is a one time treat. See the registration form in this bulletin.

The GREA Nominations and Elections committee has completed its work for the year and is pleased to announce these members who will assume new leadership positions in GREA for the 2024-25 year. President/Elect Geraldine Reid from the Tri County Local Unit (McDuffie, Warren, and Glascock counties), Area 2 Director Jane Butler from Sumter County, Area 6 Director Gwen Yarborough from Bulloch County, Area 16 Director Becky Oliver from Gilmer and Fannin Counties, and Area 18 Director, Juanita Tipton from Lumpkin County. These members met all the qualifications to be appointed. Thanks to each of them for stepping up to assume leadership positions. A resume for each of them will be the Spring Edition of our bulletin.

GREA is alive and well thanks to the leadership of all the local unit presidents. We have an outstanding group

this year and you are making a difference in your local communities. Thank you for your work!  
It is a wonderful time to be a retired educator in Georgia.

Fellowship – Service – Support

Dr. Henrietta Gray, GREM President



*Henrietta Gray* among us who are leaders have good sense, high moral turpitude, integrity, and excellent character. I pray that we are building a high definition GREA so that our posterity is unified and solidified.

As we heed President Boland’s admonition to Stay on the Bus let us do so being intentional about maintaining the Bus by ensuring that as we “fellowship” our members have a pleasant and positive experience. Let us underscore the importance of loyalty and commitment to GREA. May our Fellowship encourage us to make sure we are facilitating the President’s goals and good of GREA!

Service is the hallmark of any great organization as is the case with GREA. May we all lead by example with character as the guiding principle. Be courageous in demonstrating the mental, moral, and physical perseverance to deliver goals, objectives and service in a timely manner working with all our stakeholders, using all available resources for the good and soaring of GREA.

Finally, to keep the bus rolling, full and in good repair let us all work together and “Support” our President and each other. Let us cooperate and collaborate toward our common goals. See ourselves as a TEAM. No big “I” and little “u”. Among the Team let us build trust and congeniality.

As we ride the bus, we must explore uncharted experiences to deliver the best and increased fellowship, service and support by embracing new ideas and creating innovative approaches to current and emerging problems. I am happy to report that our President is already moving with some innovation and creativity.

I would be remiss to not give you a report on our museum for which I am the 2023-2024 President. I reiterate that our museum is alive and well in its relevance and authenticity. We had a workday on September 15, 2023. Led by our Museum Curator, Marsha Wendel, we had a productive day of adding artifacts and descriptive Verbiage to the items we displayed. I continue to urge all our Leadership and Membership to visit our museum.

The GREA MUSEUM is a shining Point of Pride for all of us. Let’s enjoy and support our museum. You will be proud of what has been accomplished!

As we STAY ON THE BUS, Serving with Power we will continue to have Reasons to Cheer for GREA!!

All Aboard to Athens!



GEORGIA RETIRED EDUCATORS CONVENTION  
TENTATIVE SCHEDULE  
MAY 7 – 9, 2024  
CLASSIC CENTER, ATHENS, GEORGIA

TUESDAY, MAY 7, 2024			
10:00 AM	5:00 PM	Convention Registration	Main Floor Lobby
10:00 AM	5:00 PM	Information/Welcome Table	Registration Area
10:00 AM	5:00 PM	Exhibitors/Vendors	Main Floor Lobby
10:00 AM	5:00 AM	Display Room Set-up	Athena F
10:00 AM	3:00 AM	Silent Auction Set-up	Athena B/C
12:00 PM	5:00 PM	Hospitality/Social/Game Room	Athena F
1:00 PM	2:00 PM	GREM Foundation Board Meeting	Athena D
3:00 PM	5:00 PM	General Session I	Athena E
5:30 PM	9:00 PM	Social Hour with Cash Bar	Pre-Function Area
6:30 PM	9:00 PM	Welcome Banquet	Grand Hall 1-5
WEDNESDAY, MAY 8, 2024			
8:30 AM	10:15 AM	Local Unit Award Breakfasts	Various
8:30 AM	11:00 AM	Convention Registration	Main Floor Lobby
9:00 AM	5:00 PM	Exhibitors/Vendors	Registration Area
9:00 AM	5:00 PM	Information/Welcome Table	Registration Area
10:00 AM	3:00 PM	Silent Auction	Athena B/C
10:00 AM	4:00 PM	Hospitality/Social/Game Room	Athena F
10:00 AM	4:00 AM	Display Room	Athena F
10:45 AM	11:30 AM	Breakout Sessions I	Various
11:45 AM	12:30 PM	Breakout Sessions II	Various
12:45 PM	1:30 PM	Breakout Sessions III	Various
2:00 PM	3:30 PM	Additional Sessions I	Various
4:30 PM	5:30 PM	Memorial Service	Athena E
5:30 PM	9:00 PM	Social Hour with Cash Bar	Pre-Function Area outside Grand Hall
6:30 PM	9:00 PM	Banquet	Grand Hall 1-5
THURSDAY, MAY 9, 2024			
9:00 AM	11:30 AM	General Session II	Athena E
12:00 PM	2:00 PM	Governing Board Luncheon & Meeting	Olympia 1



## News From GREA Local Units

**Bibb REA** members volunteer periodically assisting the “Motivating Youth Foundation and United Way of Central Georgia Giveaway.” Brand new apparel and house items are given to well-deserved segments of Macon-Bibb Communities, and essential workers including Bibb County School Employees! Retirees assist by unboxing, sorting, preparing, and assisting the give-away participants. The former NFL football player, Roger Jackson is the Executive Director.

**Burke County REA** met Sept. 7th. YMCA District Executive Director Tarig Robinson and Program Director of the local YMCA Kenteri Jones were guest speakers. They shared programs focused on Health/Healthy Living and exercise classes offered for youth and adults. The speaker for November’s meeting was County Commissioner’s Chairperson, Terri L. Kelly who shared updates, duties, and responsibilities of the Commission. She read and signed the Proclamation designating Sunday, Nov. 5th as Georgia Retired Educators Day. Speakers were very informative.

**Chatham REA** members have been very busy during the months of October and November! We received nine Georgia Retired Educators Day Proclamations! The proclamations were presented to Chatham REA President Carrie Howard, and President-Elect Princetta Simmons from: The Savannah City Council, Chatham County Commission, Savannah-Chatham Board of Education, Bloomingdale City Council, Garden City Council, Pooler City Council, Port Wentworth City Council, Thunderbolt Town Council, and Tybee Island City Council. Chatham REA members worshipped at St. Paul C.M.E. Church, and other churches throughout the city. Chatham REA thanks all the municipalities in Chatham County for recognizing Retired Educators. At the November meeting, Chatham REA presented a \$1000 scholarship to Ms. Madeline Davis, a Junior at Georgia Southern University (Armstrong Campus). She is an Early Childhood Education Major. Chatham REA members will volunteer to serve during the “Savannah Feed the Hungry” Thanksgiving dinner, sponsored by Representative Carl Gilliard on November 22, 2023. During the month of December, Chatham REA members will volunteer to support Greenbriar Childrens’ Center with their gift-wrapping campaign and provide gift cards for children and their families at the Tom Austin House, Greenbriar Childrens’ Center, and Safe Shelter.

**Coweta REA** began the year with three important and informative guest speakers: Georgia State Representative Lynn Smith (September), Georgia State Senator Matt Brass (October), and Coweta School System Superintendent Evan Horton (October). As our first service opportunity of the year, members prepared and served homemade desserts at the annual Public Safety Recognition Luncheon (October). In observance of Veterans Day November 11th, and as an act of service commemorating Georgia Retired Educators Day (November 5th), members handwrote and mailed thank you notes to local veterans. The cards had been designed by a Newnan High School student, and each envelope also included a star from an honorably retired American flag (sponsored by Stars for Our Troops). CARE continued to celebrate Georgia Retired Educators at the November meeting with special refreshments (sheet cake decorated with an edible GREA logo), party favors (Get on the Bus memorabilia), and a visit from local author and retired educator Andy Denny, who read excerpts from his book, A Collection of Life Stories. Andy’s stories of growing up in Newnan inspired an impromptu time of sharing as we related memories of our own teaching careers.

**Crawford County REA** has been quite busy for the 2023-2024 year. Summer activities included providing and serving snacks to Camp Grace campers and staff on Thursdays for 7 weeks and a Macon Bacon game in July. August brought Dinner and the Dan Darden & Friends concert and the Areas 7 & 8 meeting. Our first meeting was September 14th in the fellowship hall at Musella Baptist Church. We reviewed state and local goals, the CCREA Handbook and Directory, and plans for this year. The speaker, Dr. Linda A. Smyth, retired FVSU Professor, shared her “Antics of a Retired Educator”. On October 12th, we honored Crawford County’s Teacher of the Year, Ms. Kristina Koch, a kindergarten teacher, with the GREA Outstanding Educator Award. CC Superintendent Anthony Aikens also gave an update on school and system activities. Member Milton Bentley then read some of his original poems, to our delight. On October 26th members participated in Jumpstart’s Read for the Record Day by reading the book, With Lots of Love, to students at CC Primary and Elementary Schools. Also, several members of CCREA assisted, as Delta Kappa Gamma presented dictionaries to CC third graders, a project CCREA supports as well with an annual donation. In celebration of GA Retired Educators Day on November 5th, members attended the October CC Board of Commissioners meeting where the proclamation was signed. The Board of Education marquee announced the Day. Educators and employees who have completed 25 years were honored with a goodie bag and letter of thanks. Members attending worship on Sunday were also recognized. A “Salute to Veterans” was the theme of our November meeting. The CCHS Army JROTC Eagle Battalion Color Guard presented colors. Towaliga Circuit DA and veteran Jonathan Adams was our speaker. We received legislative updates from Sen. John Kennedy and Rep. Robert Dickey and had a silent auction. All meetings included lunch and a drawing for Retired Educator of the Month.

**Dalton Whitfield Murray REA** held the first meeting for 2023-2024 in September at Western Sizzlin in Dalton. Guest speakers were Leeann Sturtz from AMBA, and Smitty Barnett, Whitfield Education Foundation executive director. The October meeting was also held at Western Sizzlin in Dalton, and featured Mike Ewton, superintendent Whitfield County Schools, and Tim Scott, superintendent Dalton Public Schools. The two men shared the latest news from the school systems with the members. The November meeting was also held at Western Sizzlin in Dalton and Steve Tarvin, member of the Georgia House of Representatives, 2nd District shared news from the state to members. Also on the agenda were Mike Zarem from TRS, and Chelsea Dewaters from CASA (court appointed special advocates). Plans are underway for the annual DWMREA December auction at the Dalton Golf and Country Club. Money raised will benefit the scholarship fund. A goal of \$15,000 has been set.

**Douglas County REA** may be small, but they have hit the road running. In September, they learned how Circles Douglas County (Circles USA) is working to help low-income families rise above the poverty level with their unique, long-term approach. In October, LeeAnn Sturtz informed members about the benefits and savings offered by AMBA. October and November was packed with Retired Educators Day proclamation signings at the Board of Education, Board of Commissioners, and City of Douglasville Council meetings. Members learned about the hidden treasures of Douglas County and the app TourTownUSA at their November meeting. The organization hosted a cookie decorating class after November’s meeting to provide members with a fun-filled, bonding opportunity.

**Effingham REA** held their annual banquet in September with 54 in attendance. Dr. Henrietta Gray brought us a very inspirational message and it was great to have her join us. Our scholarship winner was announced. Pam Anderegg, President, and Beth Kight, Scholarship Chairman, recognized Carla Luke, art teacher, at the BOE county-wide meeting in September. Ms. Luke is obtaining her Master's degree in Art. At the October meeting, Rep. Billy Hickman, was our guest speaker. He spoke about educational concerns, including failing schools, reading scores, etc. We made plans for celebrating Retired Educators Day in our county by giving out ribbons for those to wear on Sunday, November 5. Also, a group of our members attended the County Commissioners meeting, and they issued a proclamation in observance of the special day. In November, we were informed about the foster care program that is involved with our schools. Ms. Erin Woodcock, school social worker and foster care liaison in the school system shared facts and figures about this program, and the effectiveness it has with maintaining school stability with students who are in the county foster care program. We will be hosting a bake sale on Friday, November 17 at Ebenezer Elementary School. Proceeds will be divided between our Scholarship Fund and our school project, which is honoring our county bus drivers and maintenance department. Plans are in progress to host a meal for these special employees in February 2024. We will have our next meeting on Monday, January 8, 2024.

**Fayette County REA** members are proactive as we prepare for better physical and mental health in the New Year! The speaker at our November meeting was Laura Milner, Fitness Manager at Piedmont Wellness Center. Laura's presentation was interactive and very informative as she shared handouts with all thirty-eight members and instructed us in several exercises. Laura focused on exercises to improve muscle strength with resistance training and actives to improve mental health and cognition for adults 65 and over. She also shared several tips to help get members started. Our members left the meeting excited and ready to incorporate new activities into their daily physical routines in the New Year.

**Forsyth County REA** has had two meetings this year where we have been supporting our local community and learning about our schools. So far, we have made food and monetary donations to Feed Forsyth Kids and The Place. We were literally "on the bus" to attend our November meeting at Alliance Academy. This is a career pathway school that we toured and learned some smartphone tips. For Georgia Retired Educators Day, we were recognized by our local city government, as well as our churches. We are currently getting ready for our December meeting where we will celebrate our 50th Anniversary, as well as recognize two emeritus members.

**Greene County REA** members are on the bus and every seat is filled. Filled with current members and new members who are eagerly joining in to do the work of the organization and current administration with the theme, "GET ON THE BUS." Our Unit gathered at the Lake Club Restaurant/Harbor Club in Greensboro on Friday, November 3 for an early lunch. What a fun reunion! Much chatter, laughter, and delight filled the room as fond memories of by gone teaching days were remembered. A noticeable hush filled the room once the tasty salads, soups/chili and sandwiches were served by the wait staff. President Gus Robinson gifted each member with a warm fuzzy throw with a note that read, "This throw tells me I am not just retired from my school. It also tells me I'm retired from my stress, my commute, my alarm clock, and my iron." Happy Retired Educators' Day 2023.

**Gwinnett County REA** members were invited by Grayson Mayor Allison Wilkerson on Tuesday, October 3, 2023, to celebrate the proclamation stating November 5, 2023, will be known as "Retired

Educators Day. Mayor Wilkerson graciously greeted various members of GCREA and expressed her appreciation for their service to the students of Gwinnett County. Mayor Wilkerson is a product of Gwinnett County Public Schools and is an avid supporter of our students and teachers.

**Habersham REA** held their first meeting of the 2023-2024 year at Blackhawk Fishing Camp on HWY 197. It is highly known for its wonderful trout fly fishing. Members have been busy this fall cleaning our state adopted "Chitwood Road," holding a Silent Auction and Book Sale, and lastly delivered goody bags to lunchroom ladies in all schools in Habersham County. Several members attended the First Presbyterian Church in Cornelia, GA for NRE Day with lunch afterwards. We are looking forward to the December Christmas Party meeting. Happy New Year to All from HREA!!

**Haralson-Bremen REA's** October meeting was a pink out. We dedicated our meeting to all those who are fighting cancer and have fought cancer. Our theme for this meeting was "No One Fights Alone." We decorated our tables in pink and wore our pink attire. This was a new project that we added this year in addition to our other service projects. Due to the generous donations of our members, we were able to donate to "The Journey" cancer walk. Our speaker was Stacey Carter Morin which shared her journey through breast cancer treatments and recovery while being a wife and mother of young children. She also stressed the importance of self-examinations and mammograms. Stacey is a senior lecturer in the first-year writing department at the University of West Georgia where she has worked for twenty-two years. Many of the members of our unit taught and coached Stacey while in our local school system. It was a very moving and informative meeting.

**Houston County REA** had many speakers at its October 12th meeting. Mike Zarem from TRS was there to advise members about the data breach and gave updates on TRS news. The Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, Dan Perdue, spoke on the upcoming SPLOST in the November election, which has since passed overwhelmingly. GREA Communications Director, Johnny Smith, was in attendance as a special guest. On October 16th, Judy Moore, Lorene Wilson, and Vetris Lewis, attended the Warner Robins City Council meeting where Mayor LaRhonda Patrick read a proclamation for Retired Educators Day. At that meeting, Judy gave a GREA membership card to councilman Keith Lauritsen, a retired educator who joined within days. The November 9th meeting had Retired Brigadier General Jonathan McCollum who talked about what he put in his "backpack" that led him to a very successful 33-year career in the United States Army: the Power of God, his faith, memories of family and friends, and what he learned from teachers, employers, superiors, and older people. Prior to the meeting, a silent auction was held which raised \$425 for Totes to Tots and \$525 for the Scholarship Trust Fund. Many thanks go to Route 76 Cuisine which provided a Thanksgiving meal at the last minute when the regular caterer was hospitalized. At the December 14th meeting the Houston County High School Freshman Girls Choir performed under the direction of Choral Director, Tee Smith.

**Mitchell-Baker REA** held its first meeting on September 13, 2023. Members were excited to resume another exciting, momentous year engaging in laughter, fellowship, and service. Mrs. Bonita White, a new member, was installed as the president elect for the 2023-2024 year. Members were extremely excited about Mrs. White "Getting on the Bus." On Monday, October 16, 2023, we visited schools in Mitchell and Baker Counties, "Poppin in to say thank you." During this teachers' workday, the local unit shared popcorn and water for staff members at each school. Administrators, faculty, and staff were



very appreciative. The local unit also celebrated "Georgia Retired Educators' Day." Baker County held its Proclamation ceremony on Tuesday, October 24, 2023, in Newton, GA., and Mitchell's Proclamation was held on Monday, October 30th in Camilla, GA. During the celebration in Camilla, we fellowshiped by feasting on tasty food while enjoying each other's presence. This year has gotten off to a "GREAT" start.

**Muscogee REA** welcomed and recognized new members at their first meeting on September 8, 2023. Joe Boland, President of GREA, was present and shared his theme "Get on the Bus" and his project "Totes to Tots". District 9 President Dr. Marietta Webb encouraged members to focus on fellowship, support, and service. Ms. Shawna Love, CEO of Boyz 2 Men Development, Inc. shared about the mission, volunteer opportunities and successes of her charitable organization. A Legislative Forum was held at the October 13, 2023, meeting featuring several of our local representatives and senators. They emphasized their gratitude and appreciation to teachers and offered to answer any questions or address any concerns that we should have. Columbus Mayor B.H. "Skip" Henderson echoed Governor Brian Kemp's proclamation that Sunday, November 5, 2023, be observed as Georgia Retired Educators Day. Several of our local churches recognized their retired educators during the worship service and took photographs to be shared.

**Newton County REA** started off the new year on September 7 by welcoming GREA President, Mr. Joe Boland and his wife Melinda, to help us kick-off the new season! We were all excited to "Get on the Bus"! We added two new features to our monthly meetings, Dollars for Scholars to benefit our Scholarship Fund and a raffle to benefit our service projects including Totes to Tots. At our October 5 meeting, Legislative Committee Chair Charles Woods provided an update on the state and local legislature. Our guest speaker was Melissa Thompson, the community leader for Relay for Life in Newton and surrounding counties. Following the meeting we hosted a pumpkin centerpiece fundraiser where members and friends created beautiful centerpieces for the fall season. The pumpkins were donated by Mitcham Farm in memory of Emmy Mitcham, one of our members. Our unit presented a pumpkin arrangement to Alcovy UMC in appreciation of the use of their Fellowship Hall. Newton County Commissioners Chairperson, Mr. Marcello Banes, presented a Georgia Retired Educators Day Proclamation to our unit at our November 5 meeting. Our guest speaker was Charles Morrow from the Newton Salvation Army. Our unit adopted two children in the upper age category to sponsor for Christmas! Each month our unit honors members for their contributions to education and the community. Our Spotlight members were September-Lillie Roberts; October-Nan Bohannon; and November-Jackie and Larry Mattison!

**Oglethorpe County REA** held our second meeting on October 10th. Our Georgia District 124 representative, Trey Rhodes, talked to us about what was being worked on within the subgroups to be introduced to Congress in their next session. He specifically gave us a rundown of what he knew involving education. We also continued our Blessings & Brags Bag moment to raise money for our local ESP summer programs. On October 30th, our Oglethorpe County Commissioner, Jay Paul, signed the county's Retired Educators' Day proclamation and ribbons were given out to wear on Sunday November 5th. Our next meeting will be held on December 12th at the Oglethorpe County Elementary School library where we will honor the elementary school's Teacher of the Year, Lindsay Gregory, and her Excellence in Academics selected student. We will also enjoy Christmas music from the OCES chorus and share a delicious Christmas lunch.

**Paulding REA** got on the bus in October and visited the fabulous GREA Museum. We also gathered over \$300 in gift cards for our adopted school-of-the-year, South Paulding Middle School to distribute to needy students. One of our dear members, Retha Tibbitts, knit over 50 book totes for their staff, students, and our PREA members. Our wonderful new area director, Frank Hutcheson, spoke at our November meeting, as well as Fire Specialist Jim Sprankel. We gathered food and clothing items for Paulding Helping Hands to distribute to those in need, we counted our many blessings and look forward to a great New Year in 2024!

**Peach County REA** started the year off with a trip down memory lane with a visit to the Georgia Retired Educators Association Museum in Flowery Branch Georgia in June. In September the members were also present at the Area 7 & 8 meeting at Macedonia Baptist Church in Macon Georgia. The guest speaker at the first PCREA meeting in September was GREA President Joe Boland. He reminded us to "get on the bus". In honor of Breast Cancer Awareness month for the month of October, the members wore pink, and a moment of silence was observed. Information on breast cancer was given by Nurse Practitioner Kimberly Porter. Members also received information on voting. In October the members "Got on the Bus" and traveled to Blue Ridge Scenic Railway in McCaysville, GA and Copperhill, TN. A good time was had by all. In November PCREA members celebrated Georgia Retired Educators Day with a church service at Saint James CME Church in Marshallville, Georgia. The pastor at Saint James is PCREA member, Rev. Angela Wootson. After the sermon, the members enjoyed lunch and gifts provided by the church. At the November meeting, PCREA members were on the move with Montel Powers with cardio line dancing.

**Pickens County REA** has had a productive fall season. On August 30, eight PCREA Members attended the GREA Area 15 & 16 Meeting. At our September 13th meeting our speakers were Area Director Frank Hutcheson and AMBA Rep LeeAnn Sturtz. In October Dr. Travis Thomas, Pickens County Schools Superintendent, discussed his vision for this year and Dr. Kent Austin spoke on health in our county. We also held a bake sale to raise money for Totes To Tots. Members donated items for the Weekend Snack Program and bagged Treats for Teachers. On October 18, six members went to the Office of Pickens County Commissioner Kris Stancel to sign a Proclamation for Georgia Retired Educators Day to be recognized in our county. On November 5, three schools and a local bank posted Georgia Retired Educators Day on their outside digital signs. Our November 8 Katie Dobson from the Sequoyah Regional Library spoke and then Jesse Hunter and Pat Denney told us about the GREM. We held a silent auction of crafts and holiday items to raise money for our Scholarship Fund. On November 11, six of our members put up a Christmas tree with the GREA Theme at our local library for the Festival of Trees. We are looking forward to December when Georgia House Representative Rick Jasperse will speak.

**Rockdale REA** has had a fun time at their fall meetings. In addition to our normal luncheon and general meeting, we have had two very informative presentations by guest speakers. In September, we had representatives from the Rockdale County Fire Department speaking about smoke and carbon dioxide detectors in the home. At our October meeting, we had the GREA Director of Communications, Johnny Smith, speaking about the use of media in unit publicity. We have continued our monthly "Dress for the Month" program. September was wear a shirt of your favorite college, or sports team. There was some friendly rivalry talk during the meeting. October was Halloween attire. We had some interesting costumes. We had a witch, a pumpkin, Superman, and Johnny Smith even wore an orange shirt for the occasion. Also, at

the October meeting we even had a special guest- Elton, the Skeleton and his little dog, Bonie Parts. Our Christmas meeting will feature Christmas attire. Plans are well underway for Annual Silent Auction to support our scholarship fund. The auction will be held the first Tuesday of December. In the past 24 years, RREA has awarded 69 scholarships, totaling \$83,000.00 to former Rockdale County Students pursuing college degrees in education.

**South Fulton REA** celebrated 50 years of service with nearly 60 retired educators and special guests at Hotel Indigo in College Park on Thursday, November 9, 2023. For the last five decades, this unit has worked to improve benefits of retired educators, volunteer in schools, and award a scholarship to a deserving high school senior. (Previously the scholarship was awarded to a South Fulton educator.). Mrs. Alice Washington served as the first president of SFREA in 1973. The attendees were mesmerized by an instrumental selection from flutist Bertha Hightower-Smith, vocalist Jackie Foster, and spoken word poet Andy Foster. An inspirational message was given by Joe Heckstall. The five emeritus members were recognized and received emeritus certificates. Emeritus member Audrie Kellon (who is still active) also received a plaque for her contributions to the group. The event was chaired by Vickie Menefee and Helen Kelley. Deborah Killin-Butter and Dr. Dorothy Hicks served as the emcees. Members from the Fulton County Board of Education, GREA, and Family First Credit Union were among our invited guests. A great time was had by all!

**Sumter County REA** members voted at their November meeting to donate \$200 to South Georgia Technical College and \$200 to Georgia Southwestern State University to help feed the basketball teams over the Thanksgiving holidays. After seeing a plea from Kristi Weaver, wife of GSW's President Neal Weaver, to help feed the Lady Canes during the Thanksgiving Holidays, member Brenda Jennings presented the information to the organization, where the membership voted to donate not only to GSW Lady Hurricanes, but to the South Georgia Jets. Pictured with SCREA President Sue Hite and Treasurer Donna Franklin is Sherrell Bailey, receiving the donation on behalf of South Georgia Technical College basketball athletes.

**Tri-County REA** recognized and celebrated retired educators of McDuffie, Warren, and Glascock County for Georgia's Retired Educator's Day celebrated the first Sunday in November annually. A proclamation for retired educators was signed by Mayor Kenneth Usry of McDuffie County, Mayor Chris McCorkle of Warren County, and Mayor Greg Kelly of the city of Gibson. Tri-County REA members wore ribbons at local churches and were recognized by pastors and friends. Local public schools in the Tri-County area engaged in the celebration by posting signs in recognition of retired educators with the support of Dr. Rhodes of McDuffie County schools and a Facebook announcement by Dr. Burnett of Warren County public schools. Gifts were given to all tri-county REA retirees by Candace Bank of Thomson. Two local newspapers, The McDuffie Progress, and the Warren County Leader, published pictures and articles recognizing retired educators and the signing of the Retired Educators' Day proclamation by the local mayors. The display of gratitude, public praise, and recognition plus the countless types of communication to include Facebook post, articles, and marque signs, not to mention the outpouring of love and appreciation from community members and businesses, showed how much retired educators are valued and appreciated in McDuffie, Warren, and Glascock counties.

**Troup REA** in LaGrange recently held a canned food drive to start their service project campaign for the 2023-2024 term. The canned goods were taken to the LaGrange Personal Aid Food Distribution

Center, where they were very appreciative of the donation. One of the ladies said that teachers continued giving to the community, even when retired.

**Valdosta Lowndes REA** members are "Getting on the Bus" for the 2023-2024 year with much teamwork and enthusiasm. We have many new programs and community service activities that we plan to implement this year. We meet every Second Monday of every month. In September 2023, we met at our new meeting place which is Austin's Cattle Company Restaurant (conference room) Valdosta, GA. Our speaker was our Area 3 Director, Nancy Taylor, who she shared important information from our new President Joe Boland and updated news concerning GREA and local news for our unit. Nancy presented all our certificates received at the 2023 GREA convention. In October, we had the mayor of our great city, Scott James Matheson to speak and Mayor Matheson read the annual Governor's Proclamation for Retired Educators Day and presented President Sharon Walker with the Plaque. Then Mayor Matheson spoke at length about the work being done to get Valdosta up and going after Hurricane Idalia did so much damage in our area and all new governmental happenings in our city. We thanked him for coming out to recognize our retired educators. In November, we had our Valdosta City School System Superintendent, Dr. Craig Lockhart and Lowndes County School System, Mrs. Sandra Wilcher, Interim Superintendent to attend our meeting and gave us updates on what's happening in our school systems. THEY SEEM TO HAVE created a culture that values learning, positive relationships, respect for others, excellence, and equity throughout the educational systems. The Superintendents' expressed their educational programs that will provide opportunities for students to gain academic success, students become creative problem solvers, and gain social, mental & technological skills to be successful in college and career so that they can succeed in their future. In December, our community service project is to donate children's toys to the Salvation Army toy drive to make sure that as many children in the community will have a nice holiday season. We believe we have gotten off to a great start with Fellowship—Service—Support by "Getting on The Bus" for the 2023-2024 organizational year!

**Walker REA** is excited to be celebrating their 50th anniversary during the 2023-2024 year. Our unit officially became affiliated with Georgia Retired Teachers Association on January 29, 1974, although several retired teachers had been meeting previously to continue a collaborative fellowship that had been established when they worked. The small group at the time adopted the motto, "To Serve, Not to Be Served". We have had the pleasure of hearing tidbits of our history shared by some of our past presidents during our monthly meetings. We plan a bigger celebration during our regular January meeting. It is an exciting time to be a part of this great organization!

**Wayne County REA** showed appreciation for current educators in celebration of GA Retired Educators Day. Every teacher and paraprofessional received an ink pen and note of appreciation. Mayor Ralph Hickox attended the October meeting to read and present the Georgia Retired Educators Day Proclamation. Area churches recognized our retired educators on Sunday, November 5th.



## A Word from AMBA

### Tips for Living on a Fixed Income

Retirement is meant to be joyful and relaxing. Creating a plan so you can live within your budget will help you avoid stress and have peace of mind about your finances. It's essential to have a financial strategy to help you live your retirement comfortably and stay within your means and spend what you can afford. Living comfortably on a fixed income is easier when you have a solid budget and have your spending under control.

### 5 Ways to Enjoy Retirement on a Fixed Income:

#### #1 Do Not Accumulate Debt

It is better to enter retirement debt-free. You can manage debt through timely payments, and if you have multiple debts, you can try consolidating your debt or settlement programs. This way, you can repay your debt faster and more efficiently.

#### #2 Have a Fixed Budget

One of the best ways to have a comfortable retirement is to have a fixed budget you adhere to as best as possible. Make a list of recurring bills so you know how much money is going out regularly and a list of the income you're getting, such as from your savings, pension, and investments. This way, you can determine what essentials need to be prioritized and how much you have to spend. One popular method to determine your budget is the 50/30/20 system. 50% of your income goes towards needs, 30% to wants, and 20% to savings for potential emergencies.

#### #3 Pay for Necessities First

Pay all your necessary bills at the beginning of each month before you indulge in any discretionary spending. Your mortgage or rent, food, utility bills, prescription refills, and other expenses should always be your first monthly bills. This rule applies even if you have extra money.

#### #4 Expect the Unexpected

When you're on a fixed income, it is vital to have an emergency fund. Emergency expenses can be medical bills, car problems, home repairs, or other unexpected expenses. An emergency fund can provide you with a safety net in case of an emergency. To be safe, you should put away 3-6 months' worth of living expenses in case of an emergency.

#### #5 Invest In An Annuity

Annuities are a smart and safe way to diversify your savings. You can potentially earn much more interest than CDs or savings accounts. **GREA and AMBA's Tax-Deferred Asset Protection Plan** have excellent advantages, including tax-deferred accumulation of interest, a guaranteed competitive interest rate, multiple payout options, and a nursing home waiver. Talk with an advisor by visiting [amba-review.com/grea](http://amba-review.com/grea).



**REGISTRATION FORM**  
GREA 64<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention  
The Classic Center, Athens, Georgia  
May 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024



*Each individual registering must do a separate form!*

Name (as you want it to appear on your badge): \_\_\_\_\_

Local Unit Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Area: \_\_\_\_\_

Office Held (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Registration for Convention\* \$55 Amt \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\*Early Bird Registration Before April 1<sup>st</sup> \$50

Tuesday Banquet (May 7<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm)\*\* \$50 Amt \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Wednesday Awards Breakfast (May 8<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 am) \$45 Amt \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Wednesday Banquet (May 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm)\*\* \$50 Amt \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\*\* \_\_\_\_\_ I would like to order a vegetarian meal.

\*\* \_\_\_\_\_ I would like to order a vegan meal.

\*\* \_\_\_\_\_ I would like to order a gluten-free meal.

Your check, made out to GREA, should be for the total amount shown above. Please do not include any types of payments or donations in your registration check. No refunds, or changes to meal choices, can be made after April 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Reminder:** Meal Tickets must be bought BEFORE the convention, and they will not be sold at the convention. Everyone taking part in any convention activities including meals must register for convention.

Mail to: GREA Convention Registration  
P.O. Box 1379  
Flowery Branch, GA 30542

**Deadline to register for Convention: April 14, 2024**

**Room Reservation Information will be sent as soon as it becomes available.**



## 2023 Retired Educators Day

*Athens Area REA celebrated Georgia Retired Educators Day with a proclamation from John Daniel, the Chair of Commissioners of Oconee County.*



*Bibb County REA members attended a Ribbon Pinning Ceremony/Breakfast at Macedonia Baptist Church on Retired Educators Day in Georgia prior to their monthly BRE meeting. Each REA member and Macedonia retired educators were presented a ribbon, certificate and an apple.*



*Mayor Jason Holt of Fitzgerald signs the Proclamation Award Thursday, October 25, 2023 officially proclaiming Sunday, November 5th as Retired Educators Day alongside Ben Hill/Irwin President Maude Russell and President Elect Dr. Lillie Bryant.*



*Burke County Commissioner Chairwoman Terri Lodge Kelly (center) signs and presents a proclamation designating Sunday, November 5, 2023 as Georgia Retired Educators Day to Burke County REA Officers (L to R) Secretary Jackie Payton, President Emanuel Larkin, Past President Belle Dent and Vice President Doris E. Smith.*

*Bulloch County REA (L to R) Pam Bland (Vice President), Glennera Martin (President), Priscilla Clifton, Bruce Walker, Wilhemina Walker with Mayor Jonathan McCollar seated in front. The signing of the proclamation picture was taken on Friday, November 3rd at 4:00 p.m. at City Hall in the mayor's office in Statesboro, GA.*



*Chatham REA members worshipped at St. Paul C.M.E. Church, and other churches throughout the city. Chatham REA thanks all the municipalities in Chatham County for recognizing Retired Educators*



*Atkinson County Commission Chairman Parker Liles, Pearson Mayor Robert Johnson and Willacoochee Mayor Samuel Newsome have also signed a proclamation to recognize the retired educators in their county and towns. Present for the signing were GREA/CAREA members seated: Willacoochee City Mayor Samuel Newsome, Atkinson County Commission Chairman Parker Liles, and Pearson Mayor Robert Johnson. Standing: GREA members: Sue White, Linda Cribbs, Evon Floyd, Lena Vickers, CAREA President Laverne Carver, Lena Cooper, Virginia Morrell and Deborah Patton*



*Dooly Retired Educators were recognized on Retired Educators Day at the Bethel Baptist Church in Vienna, Ga. The pastor, Dr. Bobby G. West is a retired educator and member of DREA*



*Members of Fayette County Retired Educators Association were honored with a Proclamation recognizing November 5th as Retired Educators Day in Georgia. The Fayette County Board of Education presented the Proclamation at the October 23rd meeting.*





Floyd-Rome REA co-presidents Nancy Ivester and Judy Angle with Frances Herron accepted the Rome City Commission and Floyd County Board of Commissioners Proclamation that Sunday, November 5, 2023, be observed by honoring retired educators. Rome County Commissioner Rhonda Wallace is pictured making the presentation.



Forsyth County REA Members receive a proclamation from the Forsyth County Commissioners. Back row (l-r): Council members Chad Crane, Jason Evans, Mayor Troy Brumbalow, Council members Joey Cochran, Christopher Light, Linda Ledbetter  
Front row (l-r): FCREA members Amanda Wilson, Fonda Harrison, Linda Lang, Brenda Gossett



Gwinnett County REA members receive a proclamation from Grayson Mayor Allison Wilkerson



Habersham Retired Educators Association members attended First Presbyterian Church in Cornelia and were honored for Georgia Retired Educators Day on Sunday, November 5.



Southwest Georgia Retired Educators celebrated Retired Educators Day fellowshiping at St. Maryland Baptist Church. We would like to express our gratitude to Rev. Roosevelt Gardner and Pastor Edward Williams for their warm hospitality and for allowing us to gather at St. Maryland Baptist Church to celebrate Retired Educators Day.



In Sumter County, Leslie United Methodist Church commemorated this special day during their morning worship service by recognizing the educators in their congregation. After the service, the group gathered for a photo. Seated Martha Usry, Sue Larsen, Barbara Mitchel, Carol Harris. Standing. Sara Gray, Jane Butler, Gail Enloe Shirley Urick



Terrell-Lee members celebrated Retired Educators Day at Blackbeards Restaurant. The event was filled with fellowship, love, delicious food, games, and each attendee received a gift bag in appreciation for services rendered.



Toombs County Retired Educators displaying the proclamation for Georgia Retired Educators Day, November 5, 2023, signed by Lyons City Mayor Willis NeSmith. Pictured (L- R) John Moore, Ivy Toole, Cathy Benton, Mayor Willis NeSmith, Lucy Claroni, TCREA 2023-2025 President, Marlene Tomlin, TCREA 2023-2025 President-elect, Tracey Johnson, Rick Hartley.



White County has November 5th proclaimed GREA retired teachers day in Cleveland, Ga at Freedom Park Front row: Brenda Hunt Area Director, mayor Josh Turner, Linda Ashworth Fitzpatrick. Middle row: Jackie Townley, Marlene Hunt, Judy Lovell, Kim Sosebee, Tony Kemp, Beverly Greene, Martha and Frank Senkbeil. Back row: Randall Townley, Elosie Black, Ann Skelton, Carole Hawkins, Debbie Truelove Petty, Stacie Ward, Bill Schofill, Raymond Collins

## Rosellen Burns receives AARP-REA Award

Rosellen Burns was awarded the AARP - Retired Educator Association's Community Service Award at the Calhoun-Gordon County Retired Educators meeting on October 11. CGCREA President Vickie Spence presented Burns with a framed plaque, certificate, and pin for being one of 37 retired educators in the country recognized for community service.

The award reads: "This 2023 Chapter & REA Unit Community Service Award is presented to Rosellen D. Burns in appreciation of your outstanding service to AARP and your efforts to improve your community."

Since her retirement from Tolbert Elementary in 2005, Burns has dedicated herself to volunteer work. Her concern for the children of Gordon County is reflected in her pursuits. She is an active member of New Echota United Methodist Church and represents her church at the Gordon County Christian Ministerial Alliance and the Swain Outreach Committee. She is



also a member of the Emergency Food and Shelter Program for Gordon County, is publicity chairperson for CGCREA, and has been a part of the Gordon County Hunger Walk since its beginning.

In 2009, Burns and fellow church member Davina Pass began 'Christmas in July', giving clothing, food, school supplies and other items to 50 low-income families in time for school to start. The project has grown for the last 15 years and this past summer Burns and her group of 'Christmas Elves' worked with area churches, organizations, and businesses to provide for over 100 local families. All items were donated and organized through the hard work of Burns and her team.

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Postal rates are rising, so if you do not wish to receive the *Bulletin* or would like to receive it via email, please let us know by emailing us at [greas3@greas3.org](mailto:greas3@greas3.org) and we will be happy to put you on the email list. Thank you for considering getting your *Bulletin* by email.

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### GREA BULLETIN

Georgia Retired Educators Association  
*The Only Organization That Concentrates Exclusively On The Welfare of Retired Educators of Georgia*

Johnny Smith, Editor

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