

THE GRE A BULLETIN

JOURNAL OF NEWS AND REFLECTIONS FOR RETIRED EDUCATORS OF GEORGIA

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TRS Board of Trustees Chairperson becomes President of the National Council on Teacher Retirement

Hello to all my Retired Colleagues.

I am Debbie Simonds. I retired from Gwinnett County Public Schools in May 2010, after having served as a teacher in Public Education for 35 years.

On October 14, 2020, I will become the President of the National Council on Teacher Retirement (NCTR). Given the challenges we face today of COVID-19, attacks on Pension Plans, and the wildly fluctuating markets, I will have a lot of work to do! But I am a teacher and we never back away from a challenge!

Let me share with you some background on NCTR and why it is important to all of us. NCTR began in 1924. It is now constituted as an independent association dedicated to safeguarding the integrity of public retirement systems in the United States to which teachers belong. The membership includes 63 state, territorial and local pension funds. These systems serve more than 19 million active and retired teachers, non-teaching personnel, and other public employees. The combined assets of these funds have more than two trillion dollars in their trust funds. NCTR is recognized as the preeminent voice for Teacher Pension Plans on a National level.

My involvement in NCTR began within three weeks of my being elected to the Georgia Teachers Retirement System Board of Trustees by the Board of Trustees.

I knew I had a lot to learn and NCTR offers specialized training for Trustees in the areas of finance, pension policies, trustee fiduciary responsibility, state and federal legislation affecting pensions, and informing us on the threats to public pension plans. I have now participated in over 100 hours of specialized Trustee training with NCTR. Dr. Bill Sloan has also been an active member of NCTR.

I soon learned that NCTR has committees and a Governance structure that determines the goals and objectives for the Organization. One of my goals was to ensure that Georgia has a voice on national issues. To that end, I have served on two NCTR committees and then ran for a Trustee position on the Executive committee. After serving a term on the Executive committee I ran for President-elect which leads to my being NCTR President in October 2020.

I am deeply humbled by the support from the members of NCTR and TRSGA in electing me to be the next President.

I want to take a moment and thank you. By being a member of GRE A you have taken up the challenge to be a part of the important work of safeguarding our pension plan. I am always grateful to each of you every time a pension-related issue comes before the General Assembly. GRE A is a force to be reckoned with at the Georgia Capitol!

My pledge to you as a Trustee and Chairperson for the Georgia Teachers Retirement System and in my upcoming role as the President of NCTR is to work diligently to ensure that pension plan members can retire with dignity.

Together we will succeed.



(Editor's Note: Ms. Simonds is a member of GRE A and the Gwinnett County REA.)

Message From the President

The Perfect Time!

By Jo Ann Tomlinson, GREA President

Time to be Thankful, Grateful and Blessed for ballgames (football, softball, soccer); fresh apples, pears and pecans; pumpkin spice (coffee, latte, pie, cake, etc.); recruiting GREA members; local Retired Educators Association meetings; Loving Thy Neighbor; visits with family and friends; and Walking to ENDALZ.



We are so thankful it is cooler, Fall has arrived, Jo Ann Tomlinson and our GREA year is off to a great start! Already I have performed Installation of Officers for Local Retired Educators Associations by Zoom and face to face with social distancing. Some of you will have already had a meeting or two by Zoom or face to face and are Cheering for GREA for 2020-2021! Association Member Benefits Advisors has offered to set up a Zoom meeting for your REA. All you have to do is contact Brad Jones 770-841-6007 or Ryan Greenfield 770-827-5986. AMBA has been a wonderful partner of GREA. Thank You AMBA! GREA appreciates you so much!

GREA encourages volunteering for activities in your community or church. You may be retired but You have a lot left in you to do and share with others. Get out of your house to see other people and be a part of a group. Yes, even in these different times! I attended a gathering of friends. We met on a big open covered porch. Everyone bought their own lunch and chair. We stationed ourselves six or more feet apart, ate our lunch and enjoyed seeing and visiting everyone! We did not hug or touch each other—just had a great time! It can be depressing staying inside for months at a time. This was my special friend, Debby Steedley's idea.

GREAT NEWS: You can walk everywhere—at your home, yard, neighborhood, walking track, anywhere for the END ALZ/WALK. Fall Walks are in progress around the state for a disease that ALL of us have seen its toll on family and friends. Please contribute to the Alzheimer's Association. Your support is needed more than ever. The Alzheimer's group is ready and willing to have a virtual meeting for you. Alzheimer's Association or mail donations to Amy Richardson, Alzheimer's Association, Georgia Chapter, 41 Perimeter Center East, Suite 550, Atlanta, GA 30346.

CORONAVIRUS: My heartfelt sympathies, thoughts and

prayers are with each one who lost someone or was affected in anyway by this terrible disease. We must remember there is Someone higher than us that is in control! Hope and prayers are what we need to return to normal.

MEMBERSHIP: You folks were really Cheering for GREA in August as membership began growing after a slow start. You are doing a great job! Remember the rules have changed: 7% increase = \$100. 10% = \$150. Receive \$5 for every new member that your REA recruits (not AMBA). Use the list Dr. Sloan sent to your Local REA to find names/addresses. Add \$\$\$ to your local LREA budget!

VOTE: Please Register and VOTE! Absentee, early or in-person on November 3. Last day in Georgia to register to vote in national election is October 5.

CENSUS 2020: IMPORTANT—Please complete the Census Survey for your schools and community! Means money \$\$\$\$ for our schools, counties, cities, hospitals, etc. It only takes a few minutes to complete. [Census2020.gov](https://census2020.gov)

MOVE YOUR BODY: Exercise reduces stress and makes you feel better in all areas of your health. Walk with Leslie Sansome for 12 minutes or three miles. Chair exercises for seniors are available by Deron Budoltz. Your choice!

STATE HEALTH BENEFIT PLAN: Turning 65 SOON?!? Be sure to register you or your spouse at least TWO months before the 65th birthday for Medicare Advantage. If your birthday is December 31, you will be eligible beginning December 1. This means to register by October 1. (Dates are examples) This is soooooo IMPORTANT!

I am Praying for our state, country and world to be a safe and better place. Family holidays are coming, and my wish is we can come together in love spreading hope, peace and joy to ALL! Ending with the words of one of our South Georgia retired educators and my special friend, Nancy S. Romine, "Let this be a season of new beginnings." Wishing you a Fall full of happiness and peace. Time to be a FROG! Fully Rely on God!!

Stay well and Blessings, JoAnn Tomlinson, President
#FellowshipServiceSupport, #GREAisTheBest, #CheeringforGREA
#ENDALZ

Ramblin' Around With the Executive Director

By Bill Sloan, Executive Director



William Sloan

Hopefully, there will never be another year that will cause more changes in our daily lives than 2020. When the world basically shut down in March and we all stayed home for a period and when we did emerge, we all were wearing masks everywhere we went. No one could have ever predicted such a change in the daily lives of people. We all pray that this situation will end soon, and life can return to normal.

GREA was forced to cancel our state convention both in May and October. In addition, we did not have our traditional area meetings throughout the state in August. We were all disappointed in not being able to renew and form new friendships with people from across Georgia. Thanks to our

wonderful partner, AMBA, they stepped up and offered to help facilitate Zoom meeting for any local unit that requested help. A lot of units used their services. AMBA offers great benefits to our members and GREA greatly appreciates their support. We encourage all our local units to have AMBA agents come and speak with their membership either in person or by Zoom.

Even with all the chaos, GREA and its local units have continued to carry on the business of our association and recruit new members. GREA enrolled approximately 1,000 new members between April 1st and September 1st. This was remarkable in that local units have not met in six months other than by Zoom. Through the help of AMBA and mailouts from the state office membership continued to grow. We are now over 31,000 members and we continue to grow every day. Thanks to all that help make this

happen this year.

Local unit presidents and membership chairs do not forget that we will rebate you \$5 for every new member that you recruit this year. You could turn that into a great fundraiser. In addition, just as a reminder we are not requiring a contribution to the Museum or the Foundation to be a Unit of Distinction this year. We hope you will continue to contribute to both, but it is not a requirement anymore.

Thanks to President Jo Ann Tomlinson, President-elect Dr. Henrietta Gray and Past President Mickey Wendel for continuing in their position for a second year. GREA was not able to have a convention this year and we were not able to install new officers. These fine people volunteered to serve another year. Let's keep on with President Jo Ann's slogan "Cheering for GREA." Thank You!

TRS in This Time of Challenge

By L. C. (Buster) Evans, Ed.D
Executive Director, TRS of Georgia



Buster Evans Summer and back to school greetings from your Teachers Retirement System of Georgia! There is no doubt that we are experiencing some of the most challenging times our world has ever experienced. Our active/working members, including teachers, administrators and others who support the educational process, are currently making some of the most difficult and perhaps controversial decisions one could imagine. Many of our retirees fall into the high-risk category for Covid-19 exposure. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of those that we serve as well as our leaders that make challenging policy decisions impacting all Georgians.

COVID-19 and Retirement Implications.

In mid-March, TRS, like most state agencies, began doing the majority of our work remotely. This was a tremendous change for our agency, as most of our work has always been onsite and face-to-face with our members. I am extremely proud of our team members who have continued to serve our membership flawlessly to issue benefit payments, counsel and process retirements, work with employers, and all of the other work that supports our over 400,000 members.

Interestingly, the number of new TRS retirees is somewhat lower for this year. I would like to congratulate the 6,116 newly retired TRS members! You are now a member of a very distinguished club that consists of 135,619 retired educators! Thank you for your work in the educational profession. There's no doubt that you helped enrich the minds and lives of Georgia's youth, and now you get to reap the rewards of a retirement plan established by the State of Georgia to provide you with retirement security.

Investment Returns

Most of you know that investment earnings have been extremely volatile during the past 5 months. In fact, we have seen our TRS fund balance go from over \$84 billion, to less than \$65 billion, and now back up to over \$84 billion. It has certainly been a roller coaster akin somewhat to the recession of 2008 and 2009. The exception during this time has been the recovery, to this point, has been much quicker. Though we did not quite make our assumed rate of return for FY 2020, we did have some of the best returns among pension systems nationally with gains exceeding 5.4 percent for the fiscal year. As I have looked at some of the investment returns from other state retirement systems across the country, I have found that our investment professionals were able to achieve gains that generally exceeded the returns of most

state plans. That means greater security for our current and future retirees. I want you to know that our Governor, his staff, and our legislature have provided the funds necessary to meet the actuarial recommendations for funding continuity. I continue to encourage our active and retired educators to be sure to say "thank you" for their continued support whenever possible.

The Future

Many of us are in that mode where we are pondering "the future." The future of education will likely look somewhat different than it has in years past. For TRS, the future of how we serve our members will most certainly look different as well. Our goal, though, is to continue to serve our members with integrity and commitment to their needs. Because of that, we will continue to emphasize video and phone-based counseling sessions for our members until we resume face-to-face services. We also have implemented more on-demand content to include videos and podcasts to provide more convenient ways for members and retirees to access information. Accessibility to resources are constantly being transferred to digital mediums and we want to make sure that access to TRS is as stress-free possible. Additionally, I am thrilled to share that we have opened up a TRS satellite office in Macon that will save thousands of educators each year the need to drive all the way to Atlanta for counseling and retirement planning. I want to encourage you to take advantage of our Macon office location to avoid the time and costs associated with traveling to north Atlanta especially if you are driving from the southern and central parts of Georgia.

Working After Retirement

Each year, approximately 10 percent, or over 13,000 of our retirees return to work on a part-time basis after retirement with a TRS employer. Retired educators serve as a very valuable human resource option for both TRS and other employers. Please be reminded that there are limitations for retirees returning to work for a TRS employer. Our Retirement Services Division at TRS can assist both employers and retirees for guidance in this process. We are pleased to share with you that our new automated return to work approval process has greatly expedited that processing time.

We look forward to seeing you all over the State at your meetings throughout the year. Look for the latest and greatest from TRS on www.trsga.com and follow us on Facebook, YouTube, Spotify and/or Twitter. Our very best to each of our educators who are either working, retired, or perhaps enjoying the best of both worlds!



2021 GREA Convention
May 4, 5 and 6
at the Augusta Marriott

Details soon!

Energized By The Base

By Dr. Henrietta Gray, 2019-2020 President-elect



Henrietta Gray

GREA, your Leadership Team has been and is being invigorated, encouraged and supercharged by your continuous demonstrated commitment to the support of and service to our beloved GREA. Even in the face of our present challenges, darkness and dangers, GREA is alive and well. Ours is a great organization. We are building a strong educational entity that embodies and clearly executes our mission for fellowship, service and support. Our educational/community service is improving benefits for all retired educators through cooperation with local, state and national organizations.

Thank you GREA for working together and doing more than one would think possible in times like these. GREA is a special group of people whose faithfulness will leave a lasting impact and legacy. The GREA Executive Committee and Board are encouraged by your participation to elevate our leading so that we safeguard our foundational gains. We are inspired to extend our advocacy for Retired Educators. Given the formidable changes facing our schools, it is also incumbent upon us to be of assistance for positive changes in our schools. They need our help.

Our multifaceted training is a backdrop from which we can unpack and share our experiences that will help our schools gain the perspective needed to navigate through these perilous issues that confronts our schools. Our schools are severely stretched as they try to operate somewhat normal in unprecedented abnormal times.

Finally, GREA, your Leadership Team is ecstatic about your vigilance and continued efforts in recruiting members. We greatly appreciate your support of the decisions we made in the interest of the well-being of our membership.

Following the leadership of President JoAnn, we can have Great Expectations for what she has in store. Our vision cast is still Cheering for GREA. We are depending on your continued involvement in our initiatives.

Be safe, wise and stay healthy! Until we see each other,

- Stay focused and encouraged.
- Stay anchored on the Solid Rock.
- Meditate on what is true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report and virtuous.
- Maintain a strong commitment to "Cheering for GREA!"

May God bless, keep, prosper and protect us ALL during these difficult times.



#GREAIstheBEST #FellowshipServiceSupport #CheeringForGREA
#JoAnnTomlinson, GREAPresident

Building Manager Report

By Jesse Hunter



Jesse Hunter

2020 has been and continues to be a different kind of year captivated by the coronavirus pandemic. Even with the pandemic much activity is occurring in the museum, Honor Roll Plaza, and the grounds.

The GREM Curator's Committee, chaired by Marcia Wendel, continues to add elements to the interior of the museum in the quest to tell the story of public education in Georgia. The wall displaying the four periods of Georgia education history is an esthetically pleasing pictorial that achieves this goal. Signage will be added in the vestibule directing visitors into the museum. Additionally, signage will be added in the parking areas directing visitors to the entrance of the museum located on the south side of the building. GREA offices are accessed through the front of the building (north side).

Although visitations to the museum/offices has been almost nil, the Honor Roll Plaza is a source of pride to visitors. The addition of the Bermuda sod to the grounds has enhanced the visual appeal of the Plaza. Even though brick sales have been sluggish, I do expect a resurgence of interest in the remaining 250 spaces. These bricks memorialize or honor individuals as well as emphasize local units from across the state.

The visual appeal of the grounds continues to improve with the beautiful Bermuda grass in the front and the Love grass on the southern end of the property. Each week the landscape company manicures the lawn, the plant and shrub areas resulting in a beautiful campus. Their care includes periodic chemical treatment and fertilization.

This summer screens were added to the gutters due to clogging from leaves and debris. This will alleviate the need for annual cleaning. The maintenance of the building is on-going as we regularly inspect the building for items needing attention. We are blessed to have a beautiful facility and campus.

Thanks for the opportunity to participate in this important endeavor. I hope to see you in Augusta next May at the convention.



State Health Benefit Plan (SHBP) Open Enrollment/Retiree Option Change Period 2020

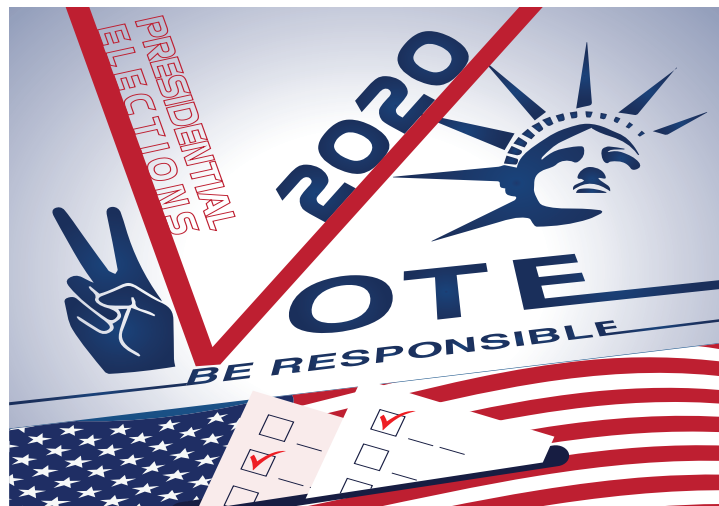
The State Health Benefit Plan (SHBP) 2020 Open Enrollment (OE)/Retiree Option Change Period (ROCP) period for the 2021 Plan Year will be here in a few short weeks! From Monday, October 19, 2020 through Friday, November 6, 2020, SHBP active and retiree members will be able to select the health care plan that best suits their needs from available options.

In August, SHBP Executive Director Jeff Rickman presented 2021 Plan Year rates and designs to the DCH Board of Directors and received unanimous approval. Pre-65 Retirees will have access to the same high-quality plan designs that were offered in Plan Year 2020, which include the Gold, Silver, and Bronze Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) Plan Options offered by Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield (Anthem), the High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP) Plan Option offered by UnitedHealthcare, the statewide Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) Plan Options offered by Anthem and UnitedHealthcare, and the regional HMO Plan Option offered by Kaiser Permanente.

For our Medicare Eligible Retirees Age 65 or Older, the Medicare Advantage Standard and Premium Plan Options will continue to be offered by Anthem and UnitedHealthcare.

Additionally, CVS Caremark will continue to administer pharmacy benefits and Sharecare will continue to administer the Be Well SHBP® well-being program. Both programs are for our Pre-65 Retired Members and their covered dependents. In addition to previous benefits under the Be Well program, Sharecare is adding the RealAge Program and an Unwinding Anxiety program this year. The RealAge Program is a comprehensive healthy behavior program targeting the four highest lifestyle risks so many face—stress, sleep, nutrition, and activity. Unwinding Anxiety is an evidence-based digital program that combines neuroscience, mindfulness, and proprietary tools to help members identify anxiety triggers and improve your relationship with stress.

SHBP has worked extremely hard preparing to keep members informed of their Plan options even with the COVID-19 public health emergency forcing a more virtual learning environment. Instead of our traditional in-person education sessions, SHBP and UnitedHealthcare are partnering to offer online and teleconference informational sessions for both retirees and active members. Continue to check out the SHBP website for the latest information in the days and weeks to come.



Be sure to vote November 3!

A Message from AMBA

Cancer patients use crowdfunding for medical bills, expenses

Sep 12, 2019 | Reuters By Carolyn Crist

(Reuters Health)—Even cancer patients who seemingly have health insurance are seeking donations online to help with medical bills, travel, drug costs and sometimes living expenses while they undergo treatment, a U.S. study suggests.

Based on a sample of more than 1,000 GoFundMe campaigns seeking money for a U.S. cancer patient, the researchers found that patients only received, on average, one quarter of the funding goal they set. Half the goals were \$10,000 or higher.

They found that the average fundraising goal was \$21,000, and the average raised was about \$5,000. More than 85% of patients were adults. About 40% of campaigns asked for funds to pay medical bills, followed by 25% for medical travel and 23% for non-medical bills.

"The use of GoFundMe shows us a lot of what we already know: that for many, the present safety net is inadequate and can create financial ruin," Dr. Benjamin Breyer of the University of California, San Francisco, the study's senior author said. "Getting sick shouldn't create financial devastation, and patients should have access to affordable, high value care."

"Research shows the widespread sacrifices that patients and families have to make following a diagnosis, which is important because we often focus strictly on medical costs," said Matthew Banegas of the Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research. "So many areas of day-to-day life need attention, and patients don't have the financial resources to keep up."

Still, if cancer does happen, you want to be as prepared as possible. Through GREA, AMBA offers members a Cancer Policy that pays a benefit directly to you to help cover out-of-pocket expenses related to cancer diagnosis and treatment. You owe it to yourself and your loved ones to look into a cancer policy. Call AMBA at 866-979-0497 to find out more.

Congratulations!

Join us in congratulating GREA Executive Director Bill Sloan on his recent reappointment to the Board of Trustees of the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia. Who better to represent retired educators than Bill Sloan? We thank Governor Kemp for making this reappointment. Congratulations!



THE STATE OF GEORGIA

EXECUTIVE ORDER

BY THE GOVERNOR:

ORDERED: That the Honorable William G. Sloan, Jr. of Hall County, Georgia, is reappointed as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia, for a term of office ending June 30, 2023.

The Honorable William G. Sloan, Jr.
Hall County, Georgia

This 7th day of August, 2020.

B. Sloan
GOVERNOR

News From GREA Local Units

Chatham REA says it is September, and time to kick off the 2020-2021 year! Because of COVID-19, we will not be meeting at the Carey Hilliard's Banquet Hall. Instead, we will be using Zoom and telephone conferences. The first CREA meeting will be held Monday, September 14, 2020, beginning at 11:00 am, on Zoom. The Guest Speaker is Dr. Vallerie Cave, from the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System. CREA will continue to support local organizations, such as the Ronald McDonald House, Greenbriar, The Austin House, and the Savannah-Chatham County School System.

Cherokee REA, like many other units, made history by holding their first meeting of the year via Zoom. Thirty members signed in to learn not only updates from GREa and CREA but also to hear a presentation by Dan Phillips from the Alzheimer's Association. Our local unit has formed a Walk to END Alzheimer's team for the Cherokee County walk to be held on October 24, establishing a goal to raise \$250. In addition to supporting the Alzheimer's Walk and a scholarship to Reinhardt University's Price School of Education, the association will partner with Ralph Bunch Pre-K Center in the Cherokee County School District to provide virtual readers, donate playground toys and show appreciation to the Pre-K staff. Although different than the fellowship at past meetings, the members enjoyed "seeing" each other along with sharing news from their lives with one another before and after the official meeting. CREA is dedicated to continuing its rich tradition to Fellowship, Serve and Support" despite the need for social distancing.

Dalton Whitfield Murray REA Leadership met during the summer to discuss ideas for the upcoming 2020-2021 year for the unit. The group discussed monthly meeting events, scholarships, membership and the annual auction to benefit the scholarship fund. Masks were worn and social distancing practiced during the meeting. The unit has plans to hold the first meeting of the year on September 10, 2020 at a local restaurant, which will feature a business session.

The unit has awarded 10 local scholarships—6 area high school students—and 4 Dalton State College students were awarded with DWMREA scholarships. Each student received \$1,000 to be used for tuition and books at their college of choice. Each student met the criteria required by majoring in education with plans of becoming an educator. The DWMREA Scholarship committee, led by Loretta Coker, spend many months to develop the process used in awarding the scholarships.

Effingham REA is excited to begin our new year! We will begin by hosting a banquet on Monday, September 14. We plan to have our election and installation of new officers at this meeting. We welcome Kim Johnson, who will be installed as our new president. We are welcoming all of our new retirees to join us and they will be recognized with a gift bag stuffed with items from local businesses. At the October meeting, we will be welcoming our new State Senator, Mr. Billy Hickman, to be our speaker. We are off to great start!

Gwinnett County REA continues to focus on Fellowship, Support, and Service by staying engaged and connected through virtual meetings, small group social distance meetings and events, and bi-weekly communication from our President, Penny Clavijo, and other Board Members to keep our members updated with current trends and issues shared from our State Office, Benefits Updates, TRS, as well as the Gwinnett Retirement System. Members are continuing to serve the community in various service projects such as sewing masks, assisting with food drives, tutoring students, and our local unit will be sponsoring the GCPS Book Mobile at a local school, participating in the November Alzheimer's

Association Walk in Duluth, and raising funds to support scholarships for current and future educators. We look forward to meeting in our new meeting location, Sugarloaf Country Club. We look forward to an exciting year of fellowship, success, and continuing to grow our membership.

Houston County REA salutes two individuals for their accomplishments. Brev Hunt went above and beyond in his volunteer activities and service hours for the year. He is credited with over 200 activities totaling over 900 hours. Besides serving as HCREA's Scholarship Chair, he is a Sunday School teacher, does the administration and set up of his church's Food Pantry, and volunteers his time in Master Gardener activities.

Lindsey Wright Scott, a three-year recipient of the HCREA Scholarship, graduated from Georgia Southern University with her Master of Arts in Teaching. Lindsey graduated from GSU in 2009 with a non-teaching degree and is now a Special Education teacher at Mossy Creek Middle School in Houston County where she began as a paraprofessional. Referencing receiving the HCREA Scholarship for three years, she commented, "It wasn't just about the financial assistance; it was about me feeling special. They gave me that extra motivation."

Jefferson County REA says the COVID-19 lockdown, which has felt like such a negative, has actually had at least one positive outcome. For our first two meetings this year, utilizing a combination of in-person and conference call options, we have seen on average an approximate 50% increase in attendance. We concede that for all of us the COVID-19 Pandemic has seriously impacted our organizations' activities as we have striven to protect the health and safety of our members in accordance with CDC guidelines and Governor Brian Kemp's executive orders, but it also challenges us to be even more creative and resourceful in carrying out our mission to unite our retired educators for fellowship, support, and service. JCREA is rising to the challenge, finding new ways to meet our goals of supporting each other and serving our community. COVID-19 is a fierce opponent, but WE WILL WIN as we're cheering for GREa and JCREA!!!

Lumpkin County REA: due to COVID-19, our chapter has been unable to gather in person since March, but we have, nevertheless, been busy. Our "Little Library" in a Dahlonega park had, over the years, become weatherworn. Thus, we have had a beautiful new one built and erected, and it is now full, and filling, with lovely books for trade and take. Our officers have met and planned our '20-'21 meetings, and we are looking forward to gathering again in October. Further, we have planned, and will soon execute, our gifts of recognition to all faculty and staff of the Lumpkin County School system.

Newton County REA Executive Board Members met August 27 via conference call to plan for the upcoming year. A calendar of meeting dates was set, and it was decided that we will meet by free conference call to begin the year. Alice Moore will install our 2020-2021 officers at our first meeting. A letter will be sent out by our local president, Dr. Sallie Mills, to all members of NCREA including the meeting dates, information about local dues, and instructions on using the free conference call system to access the local meetings. We look forward to an exciting year!

Paulding REA is "Zooming" along, probably like many local units, to begin the 2020-21 year! Our ZOOM Planning Meeting was a great success, as we planned our activities for the year. We learned that we don't actually need snacks to have a productive meeting! For our September Zoom meeting on the 15th, we will

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host the candidates for our Georgia Senate race, and our GREA Area 15 Director, Liz Bouis. We look forward to a successful year even during this difficult time and pray for safety and blessings for everyone.

Richmond County REA held their first meeting of the new year in September. We had a good turnout for the ZOOM meeting, which included two of our 90+ year old emeritus members. Not only was seeing each other a fun reunion, but we are looking forward to our November meeting. Attendance and participation were exciting and allowed the Association to close out the past year with the presentation of three community awards of \$300.00 each. The members vote in order to select non-profit agencies who receive the grant each year. The money used for this project comes from member donations throughout the year. The annual memorial service was conducted for the members lost during the past year and officers for the current year were installed by our area representative. Our creative membership decided to continue with one of their favorites "Bragging Rights." Members can mail in their dollars, and their announcements will be printed in the RCREA newsletter.

Rockdale REA will be honored by Rockdale County Board of Commissioners in the November 2020 meeting. In addition, community churches will recognize the value of all connected to education—teachers, teacher assistants, administration, custodians, office personnel, cafeteria workers, and others—on Sunday, November 1st.

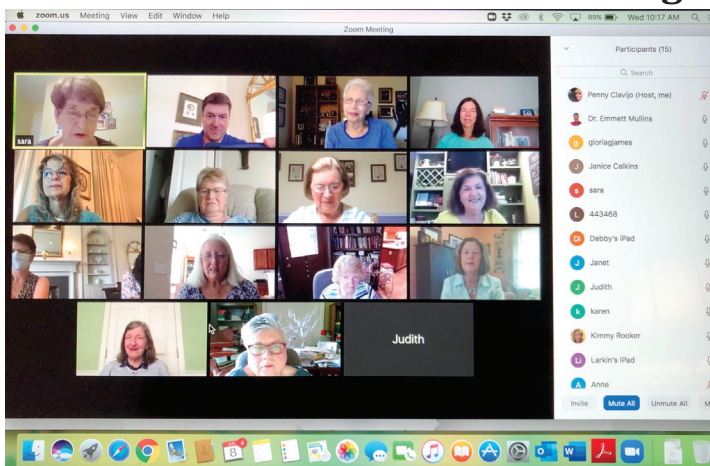
The impact of retired educators in the local community is significant. Each year, RREA provides multiple \$1,000. Scholarships for student teachers as well as books to children birth-five through Ferst Readers. Volunteers in RREA provide school supplies, food bank items, and numerous hours at both schools and community organizations.

South Fulton REA, like most, are going virtual with ZOOM. We have been practicing for six weeks for our first meeting September 17. We hope to engage all members with information, virtual games, physical fitness, a tea party, contacting new retirees for both unit and state memberships now that we have more information and nominating a slate of officers for 2021-2023. There are also plans for the community to be finalized. It will be a good year despite it all.

Tift County REA, after ending last year with three virtual meetings due to COVID, we will have our first meeting for 2020 in person, at a new location, 41 & Main Restaurant on Main Street, at 11:00 on September 14. Debbie Scarborough, with AMBA, will be our guest speaker. Looking forward to a great year!

Valdosta Lowndes REA, like nearly every other association, is on hold for the month of September and October, as voted on by the executive board. However, President Susan Roberson is attempting to keep members and associates informed by sending an email about every other week. In this note, she informs members of the organization of those who are ill or have good news to share. She shares news from Flowery Branch that needs to be passed on to members. The board is hoping that things will be improved enough to be able to meet, socially distanced, in November. Members are asked to mail in their local membership, state membership, scholarship donations, and donations to the state charity, Alzheimer's Association. Susan reminds members that we are all about "Fellowship, Service and Support" in any way we can handle it. The scholarship winner, Ashley Marshall, from Lowndes High School received her certificate for \$2,000, and she has begun Valdosta State College, where she hopes to pursue a degree to become a teacher in middle school education.

Welcome to 2020 local unit meetings!



(Photo courtesy of Gwinnett County REA)

Brick Sale! \$75 each. Less than 250 remain!

Honor educators, friends,
family and others with an
engraved brick on our
HONOR ROLL PLAZA!



Price Reduced
Only \$75
(Tax Deductible)

Purchaser Name _____ Local Unit _____

Address _____

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Area 4: Camden County, Clinch County, Coffee/Atkinson

Area 5: Appling County, Golden Isles, Jeff Davis County,
Tattnall County, Wayne County

Area 6: Bulloch, Chatham, Effingham

Area 7: Ben Hill/Irwin

Area 8: Bibb, Crawford, Houston, Lamar, Monroe, Peach

Area 9: Troup County

Area 10: Coweta, Butts, Henry

Area 11: Washington, Johnson, Dublin/Laurens

Area 12: Jefferson County, Lincoln/Wilkes

Area 13: Decatur/DeKalb, Newton County, South Fulton

Area 14: Athens Area, Gwinnett

Area 15: Cherokee, Cobb-Marietta, Pickens

Area 16: Catoosa

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