

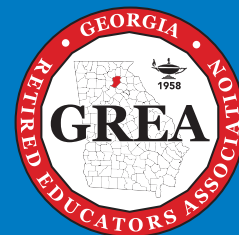
THE GREA BULLETIN

JOURNAL OF NEWS AND REFLECTIONS FOR RETIRED EDUCATORS OF GEORGIA

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GAINESVILLE, GEORGIA

SPRING 2026



Keeping the Vision



Fellowship • Service • Support



THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF GEORGIA - AUGUSTA

Join us for the 66th Annual GREA convention beginning May 5th at 3 p.m. and adjourn on May 7th at 12 p.m. The host hotel this year is the Marriott Augusta at the Convention Center. You will find a registration form along with hotel information in this bulletin. As a GREA member you are invited to enjoy all the activities that have been planned by President Geraldine Reid and the convention chair Liz Bouis. It will be an exciting convention with many activities and fun entertainment planned.

A Message from the President

Geraldine (Jerry) Reid, President



Geraldine Reid

Spring is just around the corner! How do I know? Soon we will have Daylight Saving Time where we will have longer days to exercise and work in the yard. The weather will be warmer to allow plants to grow, and leaves will also grow on the trees. Some activities in the spring are The Master's Golf Tournament, Ash Wednesday, Palm and Easter Sunday.

There are some exciting activities that will be happening with the GREA. We will attend our Governing Board Meeting and our GREA 66th Annual Convention Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center Augusta, GA May 5-7th, 2026.

I want to personally invite you to this convention. There will be people you will meet across the state, sessions to pick that will inform you, President's Award Breakfast, and delicious meals in the evening with entertainment. If you register before April 1, 2026, you get what's called "The Early Bird Registration."

On the third day, May the 7th there will be a short Business Meeting where you will meet the new President for 2026-2027.

A Word from the President-elect

Dr. Sallie R. Mills, President-elect



Dr. Sallie Mills

Greetings to all members of the **Georgia Retired Educators Association (GREA)**, and best wishes for a **Happy New Year 2026!** I can't help but wonder—where did 2025 go? It is Saturday, January 31, 2026, and as I write this spring article while watching the **snow fall** outside, I am reminded that spring is just around

the corner. In just a couple of days, we will anticipate the groundhog's prediction—a tradition that always adds a bit of excitement to the season. Since retiring, I have realized how swiftly time passes; days and years seem to fly by, underscoring the importance of enjoying both the significant and simple moments that bind us together as a community.

I am grateful to belong to an organization like GREA, where retired educators across Georgia can stay connected, continue to make a positive impact, and enjoy fellowship, support, and opportunities for service. **Retirement does not mark the end of our impact;** instead, it offers new opportunities to serve with wisdom, experience, and intention.

I often revisit our 2025-2026 GREA bulletins to appreciate the impressive work accomplished by our Local Units. Thanks to **Executive Director Johnny Smith**, all the bulletins are easily accessible in the forms section of our website. **President Geraldine Reid's theme, "Keeping the**

Vision," emphasizes honoring GREA's legacy while actively shaping its future through statewide service and growth. The bulletins encourage us to maintain our established vision rather than reinventing it, promoting consistency throughout Georgia.

I know everyone is eagerly anticipating the 2026 GREA Convention in Augusta, and I look forward to seeing you there—especially in the vibrant Red, White, and Blue *Keeping the Vision* t-shirts designed by your Local Units.

I am humbled and honored to serve as President-elect and look forward to sharing in the continued fellowship and accomplishments of GREA with all of you.

A Message from the Past-President

Shirley Grant, Past-President



Shirley Grant

As Past President of GREA, I must say that this is my last article for the bulletin. All good things must come to an end because nothing in this world is permanent; change is the rule of nature. As a matter of fact, according to an old proverb, "Isn't it nice to know that no matter how long the Winter, Spring is sure to follow." Change applies to

GREA as well.

My three-year commitment to GREA will be coming to an end in May and I can say that I have thoroughly enjoyed this time. The first year I served as President-Elect followed by the Presidency, and lastly the President of GREM. Each of these years presented challenges, but at the same time, my main focus was Fellowship, Service, and Support to GREA!

During this time of service, I was privileged to travel all over the state to meet with local units, attend conferences, plan a convention, serve on different committees, visit AMBA headquarters in Texas, witness change in both local and state officers, and finally help stage a retirement reception for former Executive Director, Dr. William Sloan.

As I stated earlier, change is inevitable, and my wish is that all of you would join me to ensure that we are taking the correct steps to an even brighter and greater future for GREA!

Welcome to 2026

Dr. Jason Branch Executive Director



Dr. Jason Branch

Welcome to Georgia in 2026! As I write this message, the state is preparing for another January winter weather storm. Generators, flashlights, and batteries that were easily accessible a few days ago are now flying off the shelves—as are bread, milk, and your favorite Little Debbie treats. Individual responses to the weather forecast are fast and furious and, in some cases, without much thought or prior preparation. Yet, as I talk to the TRS team, the work of the agency continues

to be measured, prepared, and well thought out—as it has been for the last eighty years.

As a recent TRS retiree, GREA lifetime member, and your new executive director of the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia, I am thankful; thankful that our state authorized this agency in 1943 and it became operational in 1945; thankful that preparation for our educators to “retire with dignity” was not a fleeting thought or a knee jerk response to an event, but rather a well thought out and mission driven approach that has withstood the test of time; thankful for the opportunity to be a part of our TRS family and to serve our over 500,000 members.

As an educator for three decades, I was honored to work with students as a teacher, coach, assistant principal, principal, and superintendent in five different school districts in our great state. For those who are wondering, my professional journey took me from Glynn County to Cobb to Douglas to Forsyth to Oconee. My last thirteen years I was privileged to lead Oconee County Schools as superintendent, and for the last eight years serve on the TRS Board of Trustees as well. Those professional experiences give me a unique perspective on our agency and will guide my decision making into the future.

Enough about me! Let’s talk about your agency—TRS. Today, the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia is the eighteenth largest pension system in the nation with assets of \$116.8 billion, a payroll of \$6.5 billion per year, and an economic impact of \$9.3 billion in our state. To discover the number of your local retirees and active members by county and the economic impact on your community, please visit the TRS website (trsga.com) to review our economic impact brochure.

With over 155,000 retirees and 242,000 active members, the best work of the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia’s staff is in front of us. Recent initiatives reflect efforts to increase members with designated beneficiaries and to encourage Multi Factor Authentication (MFA) for all member accounts. Sadly, only about 50% of our members have beneficiaries designated and even fewer members are protecting their electronic accounts with multi factor authentication. Please consider doing both of these important steps today.

Finally, I want to highlight my desire to meet as many of you, our members, as possible. Since joining the TRS Family in July and assuming the role of Executive Director in November, I have traveled our state to speak to retired teachers and active educators in a variety of settings. I have had the good fortune of visiting with your current executive director, Johnny Smith, and look forward to expanding my knowledge and network by meeting you at a GREA event in the near future. Until that time, if we can be of service, please do not hesitate to contact our office, locate information on our website, or learn from one of our social media channels.

From the Executive Director’s Desk

Johnny Smith, Executive Director



Johnny Smith

It continues to be a whirlwind here in Flowery Branch. 2025 came to an end and here we are in mid-February and it will be March when you receive this bulletin! It continues to be a pleasure visiting with so many local units across the state. We all are different and we all do things in different ways, but we are united in our love of Georgia teacher retirees.

As you are probably aware, I made the decision in consultation with our Executive Board to rehire Dr. Bill Sloan as our legislative liaison. This is a position for which he is particularly well-suited. You will find his first article in this bulletin. He has hit the ground running. I have given him the title of “Executive Director Emeritus” where he will continue as a goodwill ambassador for GREA.

As I have crisscrossed the state, I am impressed with the quality of leadership in our many units. As you are aware, the secret to a successful unit is strong leadership. Many units are reporting, however, they are having difficulty getting retirees to step up and be leaders. I would remind you of the words of Past President Shirley Grant. Retired educators are REAL – “retired educators are leaders.” You led while you were in the classroom and I encourage you to continue to be leaders in your retirement. Please answer the call when you are asked. Local units, think outside the box. Have two or three people, or even six, share the presidency. As we have all said, being President should be the easiest job in the unit because everyone else said they would help you if you would take the job. Take them up on it. In a word, DELEGATE! Let’s continue the tradition of strong leadership in our local units across the state.

I cannot believe I am saying this, but it is time for our annual convention in Augusta May 5-7. It seems like yesterday when we closed out last year’s convention with the installation of Geraldine Reid as our new state president. She will be presiding over our 66th annual convention which will close with the installation of Dr. Sallie Mills as our new state president. I encourage you to try to attend the convention. We have a fun time, and it is so great meeting so many of you from across the state. We had over 400 of you in attendance last year and we hope to see even more of you this year!



Walking the Halls

Dr. Bill Sloan, Legislative Liaison



Dr. Bill Sloan

Good day to all of you! I am very happy and pleased to return to working for the retired educators in Georgia. For those of you who do not know, I served as the Executive Director of GREA for 20 years, but it did come a time to retire. One of the parts of that job was monitoring legislation each year. I truly enjoyed that activity and was excited when

Mr. Smith and several of you encouraged me to return as the Legislative Liaison for GREA. Mr. Jesse Hunter had led that responsibility for several years and did an excellent job, but when he assured me, he would like to give it up, I was excited to return to part-time work. Mr. Hunter will continue as the State office building manager, which is a big responsibility.

The State Legislature has only been in session for 3 weeks when I began writing this article, so the amount of info is limited right now. There has been only one piece of legislation so far that may have a direct effect on retirees.

The Senate Retirement Committee, Chaired by Senator Rick Williams, passed **SB 150**, which seeks to continue Georgia's educator return-to-work program until 2034. The legislation would allow educators with 25 years of creditable service to return to full-time work, after a 12-month waiting period, and draw retirement benefits while teaching in a qualified position. The current law required educators to have at least 30 years of service to return to work. This new bill has no effect on the ability to return to work on a 49% basis.

The provision of each RESA selecting three content areas is eliminated and replaced by essentially every content area other than physical education. Expect some changes in the House.

SB 150 must still get approval by the Senate Rules Committee, the full Senate, the House Retirement Committee, the House Rules Committee, and the full House of Representatives. In addition, it will not become law until the Governor signs it. I feel very confident that it will pass all these hurdles and will become law in July 2026.

Currently 5,300 classrooms in Georgia do not have a certified teacher. This is a shame and maybe this law will encourage more retirees to return to the classroom full time. Georgia students need a certified teacher every day.

A few other bills of interest not related to retirees are working their way through the legislation presently and might be worth your noting:

HB 1009: Restrict the use of personal electronic devices at school and school sponsored events by students in grades nine through twelve. *Sponsored by:* Rep. Scott Hilton

HB 1023: Requires local school systems to utilize weapon detection systems in certain school buildings. *Sponsored by:* Rep. Chuck Efstrotation

The Governor's Budget proposal has a \$2,000 bonus for all education personnel. Locally paid personnel would be at the discretion of the local system to provide the funds as some systems employ personnel over and above the state allotment.

For those of you who might be interested, you can watch the Georgia General Assembly everyday they are in session by going to: www.legis.ga.gov. The final few weeks of this session should be interesting.

A Word from the Foundation

Barbara T. Wilcher, GRE Foundation Chair

The next meeting of the GRE Foundation, Inc. will be held at the South Bibb Recreation Center in Macon, GA on February 10th. All members are encouraged to attend. At this meeting we will vote to approve the revised handbook and the number of scholarships to be given, discuss future North Georgia Foundation investments, and the Silent Auction.

The GRE Foundation, Inc. will oversee the Silent Auction Room at the GREA Convention in May. Please bring lots of items to bid on. In addition to your unit and individual donated items, all GREA members are asked to donate \$20 or more to the silent auction. Our goal is to give 25 scholarships in 2027. Remember, all proceeds go toward scholarships for educators.

On behalf of the educators and paraprofessionals throughout the state of Georgia, thank you for your support.

News From GREA Local Units

Bibb County REA had a rewarding and exciting December. The Bibb County Board of Education was recognized at the December 10 meeting for being the recipient of the Georgia Exemplary School Board Award. Past GREA president and Bibb County Board of Education president, Myrtice Johnson, displayed the certificate on behalf of the Bibb County School Board. BREA president Sharon Homer was presented the Retired Educator of the Month award. The guest presenter was Bibb County School District Police Chief Curtis Adams who gave safety tips for seniors. The members were entertained with a Christmas musical by the Burdell Hunt Elementary School "Show Up" Choir, under the leadership of Teresa Little and a line-dance performance by the "true Steppers," under the direction of Tiffany Williams and Trena Raines. January was also an exciting month for the members of the association. The guest presenter at the January 14 meeting was Mrs. Geraldine Reid, GREA president. She shared a very inspirational message which was well received by all. Mr. Frank Thompkins, Chair of Partners in Education, led the school supplies drive. Members brought donated

items to the January 14 meeting. He announced they would be distributed to the partner schools. Audrey Chambers, membership chair, announced that the association had met its membership goal. The association also hosted *Sorority and Fraternity Day* at the January 14 meeting. The legacy of *The Divine 9* was highlighted. Alpha Kappa Alpha and Delta Sigma Theta Sororities tied with the highest attendance. Black History Month will be highlighted at the February 11 meeting. A trip to Ameila Island on March 11 and 12 is planned.

Bulloch REA met on December 10th at Pittman Park United Methodist Church. State Senator Billy Hickman gave an overview of the Literacy efforts in the General Assembly sessions for 2024. House Bill 538, which is also known as the Georgia Early Literacy Act promotes a phonics-based instruction for students in kindergarten to third grade. The bill focuses on instructional materials, interventions, professional learning and teacher preparation. Senator Hickman also spoke about House Bill 340, which addresses cell phone use for students in kindergarten through eighth grade. House Bill 268 addresses communications among school systems and emergency response procedures for school systems. Teacher shortage in our state was also a topic. State Representative, Lehman Franklin serves as the Vice Chairman of the House Retirement Committee. He spoke about school funding, retirement systems, and the cost of healthcare. Crystal Simpkins, Director of Early Learning and Literacy for Bulloch County Schools gave an update on literacy initiatives for children from birth to age five. BREA members donated over 100 books to support the system's "Book Bus" initiative. Our January meeting was held on January 14, 2026. We were honored to have CORE Credit Union's CEO and President Robert "Bob" Clampett along with several members of his staff. CORE is the main contributor to our yearly scholarship fund. We received a check to support our Education Scholarship Foundation. Monica Lanier, a retired local educator presented a power-point entitled "Read Georgia." This initiative is sponsored by a local church in our area that provides tutoring in two local elementary schools for second graders. Area 6 Director Gwendolyn Yarbrough also attended our meeting. She has been a member of BREA for many years and serves as our Scholarship Chairperson. Ms. Yarbrough discussed GREA's goals, purpose, and this year's Humanitarian Project. Our members selected the T-shirt design to

represent our unit at the Convention in Augusta in May.

Burke County REA met November 6, 2026. The Speakers were Darrel and Dianne Riley – Primerica RVP, valuable insight to support our well-being, even in retirement. Information such as, Annuities, Mutual Funds, ROTH and Traditional IRAs was shared. We fellowshiped at Red Lobster on Dec. 8th for our Christmas Luncheon. The Spirit of Christmas was in the air as we enjoyed fun games and food. Dr. Roger Williams, GREA Area 12 Director was our speaker in January. He praised us for maintaining the highest honor, "Unit of Distinction," due to teamwork, support and fellowship. He urged us to remain the safety net and reach out to others, He shared pointers about GREA's status, its finances, stability in growth and the convention to be held at the Marriott Convention Center this spring in Augusta, Ga. On February 17th, several members participated in the parade honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We dined at Fuji's, Waynesboro, Ga. for our American Heart Luncheon on February 5th. Members gave donations for American Heart Association in the amount of \$935.00.

Butts REA members met in October at the Fresh Air Bar-B-Que in Jackson, Ga. Shellie Huber from Lemongrass Spa informed members about the healthy benefit of pumpkins. In November BREA members met at the Butts County Public Library where Gary Dunagan from State Farm, Macon, discussed safe driving for seniors. For Retired Educators Day on November 2, 2025, members attended church of choice and were recognized for their service to education by the Butts County School System. In December members donate toys, money, and gift cards to the Sheriff's Cause with Santa Claus. Families who qualify receive toys, clothes, and a box of food for Christmas. In February BREA members met at Hunter's Cafe where Dr. Randall E. Tramell was the featured speaker about education in Georgia. A money jar is passed at each meeting to collect for the GREA President's Humanitarian Project, The Children's Hospital of Georgia--Augusta. Butts REA members are "Keeping the Vision."

Camden REA is having a great year rocking blue glasses, keeping the vision and exemplifying the GREA Motto of *Fellowship, Service and Support*. Retired Educator's Day was celebrated throughout the county with proclamations from the county commissioners and all three city councils. Pictures

from the council meetings and several churches were used to make a PowerPoint presentation. The members collaborated with other community groups to provide Christmas Bags with pajamas and books for the children at the Camden Head Start. The donations were a blessing. The children's smiles said it all. In addition to blessing the children, each of the 19 Head Start employees received a \$25 gift card. The article was in the local paper. A second holiday project involved purchasing wreaths and placing them on the graves of members' Veteran relatives. The members ended the year with a holiday social, complete with fellowship, games, gifts, good food and Christmas songs sung by a Camden High School Choral Student. 2026 kicked off with participation in the Unity March and program honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on January 19. Artificial Intelligence (AI), Economic Development, Law Enforcement, Teacher Appreciation and other opportunities to be a blessing await the Camden REA members. They are poised and ready!

Chatham REA kicked off 2026 with meaningful community outreach and engagement under the leadership of President Dr. Kathy B. Grant. Members visited Woodville-Tompkins High School as part of their continued commitment to supporting local schools. Members presented snacks to Principal Alfred McGuire as a token of appreciation for the dedication and hard work of the faculty and staff. Members also participated in Read United Day, an initiative of United Way of the Coastal Empire. They visited classrooms to read aloud and left a new book for the class. Upcoming community engagements include the Sharing Love in our Community, where Members will visit The Social by Thrive, a local specialty care facility to deliver sweet treats as a heartfelt token of appreciation for senior citizens; Read Across America Day – March 2, 2026. Members will participate in this special literacy-focused event to promote a love of reading in local schools. Members will also serve as proctors during the Georgia Milestones Assessments. Members are encouraged to attend, stay active, and continue supporting the important work of Chatham REA throughout the community. Together, we can keep the vision of Fellowship, Service, and Support while continuing to make a positive impact in 2026 and beyond.

Cherokee REA members were truly entertained by The Vintage Voices of Brickmont Woodstock at the December meeting with Jim Berry and Brad

Ellis providing keyboard and bass guitar back up for the singers. February's meeting showcased an informative presentation from John Cline, Associate Probate Judge/Court Clerk, and more importantly, is the son of Mrs. Marguerite Cline, former Cherokee County School District Superintendent. In addition to relaying information about Probate, John delighted the audience with his reflection of teachers he had growing up in the Cherokee County School District while sharing how each one prepared him for the duties and responsibilities he has in his professional life. Our March meeting is a celebration of our GREA area director, state officers, President, and President-elect visiting Cherokee REA. A check is presented to President Reid for The Children's Hospital of Augusta for her humanitarian project. Cherokee's representation of the T-shirt to be displayed at the state convention is presented to Executive Director Johnny Smith. Additionally, it is our privilege for Dr. Bill Sloan, GREA Legislative Liaison, to join us while sharing information from proposed legislation under the Gold Dome and its potential impacts on current and retired educators. And lastly, Happy Spring from Cherokee REA! May your season be bright and beautiful!

Coweta REA exited 2025 on a high note by raising almost \$2500 at the annual Christmas Bazaar. Adding this amount to our scholarship coffers will enable CARE to award three \$1000 scholarships to seniors aspiring to become future educators. One graduate at each public high school in the Coweta County School System will be honored. Our spirit of giving continued into the New Year as we focused on a local charity, Backpack Buddies, which, every Friday, sends snacks and meals home with students who would not otherwise have enough to eat on the weekends. In cooperation with Senoia United Methodist Church, CARE members prepared 64 backpacks containing snack, breakfast, lunch, and dinner items. Also, in January, we attained our goal of 7% growth in GREA enrollment. The monetary reward provided by GREA will allow this local unit to continue "CARE-ing" for our community through service projects such as Backpack Buddies and our Scholarship Program.

Effingham REA met on January 12 with about 30 members present. We were delighted to hear an update on Effingham Co. Schools, such issues as attendance, present facility expansions, as well as plans for growth in the future. Effingham continues to grow in population, with our school system

being a top attraction for that growth. We are still collecting food items for our Backpack Buddies community project. Response has been good. Our school project for this year is honoring our social workers and counselors in our school system. Our unit will be hosting a breakfast for them on Feb. 17 at the Honey Ridge Ag Center. We thank Kim Johnson and Katy Fleming for their efforts in creating a nice T-shirt design for our unit. Our nominating committee presented candidates for officers for next year. Sylvia Arnsdorff for secretary, and Brenda Barrow for treasurer. These will be voted on at the March meeting and installed at our May meeting. We were reminded of the upcoming convention May 5-7 at Marriott in Augusta. After we enjoyed a delicious lunch, we were dismissed and will convene again on March 9.

Fayette County REA has continued to be busy over the winter months. At our January 8th meeting Dr. Jason Branch, chief Operating Officer/ Deputy Executive Director of TRS was our speaker. He updated us on current legislation being considered that affects retirees. We were surprised to learn that 10% of retirees return to work. He also reminded us to check our beneficiaries, as 50% of TRS members have not designated a beneficiary. At our February 12th meeting, we met at Old Chicago Pizza for a Valentines' luncheon. After our business meeting, we held a drawing for a beautiful, donated Michael Kors purse. All proceeds will benefit The Children's Hospital of Georgia/ Augusta. Members took home a long-stemmed rose and a Valentine cupcake. Cathy Geis suggested we begin having a monthly book swap at our meetings. Many members exchanged books and are interested in continuing this practice in months to come. Our efforts to benefit the education community are continuing. FCREA provided judges for the Georgia Economics competition. We also continue to support the Blessing Box to benefit members of our community who are experiencing food insecurity. Work has started to encourage high school applicants to apply for our annual scholarship. We are excited to continue fellowship, learn about new topics, and support our education community.

Floyd-Rome REA met in December and was entertained by the Three Rivers Singers with some music appropriate for the Christmas season. Our community service projects were very successful in helping with the local Toys for Tots organization and our members also made contributions of \$845. We

contributed \$955 to the Northwest Georgia Hunger Ministries. Our December program was a very informative presentation on Penny Pinchers by Lee Ann Sturtz with AMBA. Our December service project was to bring boys and girls underwear for pre-k and kindergarten children to help local school clothes closets.

Forsyth County REA started off the second half of the year with a meeting at Cumming Elementary. The school shared their partnership with Georgia Highlands that provides a full-service clinic for students, and school and central office staff. The clinic staff can see patients, write prescriptions, and perform the required student physicals for students playing sports at the feeder middle and high school. We also heard about their Spanish dual language immersion program that has been in place for seven years. Cumming Elementary is Title 1 schools and has outstanding programs and supports in place for their students. Working for scholarship donations is in full swing as we raise money to provide scholarships to students pursuing a career in education. We are getting geared up for the spring season. It will include a middle school visit, teacher appreciation tea bags saying "FCREA thinks you're tea-rrific!", retirement planning sessions and a retirement celebration for all new retirees. We will continue our participation in community service projects by making monetary and food donations to Feed Forsyth Children and The Place. It's going to be a busy spring for FCREA!

Griffin-Spalding REA's first fall meeting of the year was a very informative one, as we welcomed AMBA Representative LeeAnn Sturtz, who presented new and familiar opportunities for members. Area 10 Director, Sherry Taylor also joined us as we welcomed a new member. Other fall meetings featured a memorial presentation for recently deceased members as well as a presentation by the director of the local (award-winning) Senior Center. In November, we were honored to receive a Retired Educators Day proclamation from the Griffin City Commission. Ringing the bell for the Salvation Army is always an enjoyable activity, even on a frigid early December day! Additionally, bicycles were donated to the Salvation Army's Angel Tree campaign. Unfortunately, the looming ice storm and State of Emergency caused us to cancel our January meeting, but we remain optimistic about making up for it in February.

Habersham REA met on Tuesday, December 9, at 11:30 at the Food Factory in Cornelia. Our sponsor was Hillside Funeral Home-Brent Tolbert. We had a record attendance of 65 members. Members wore their Christmas sweaters and enjoyed music provided by the Grant Reeves VFW chorus directed by Sharon Kuraff. Members donated \$10 for the Humanitarian project to Augusta Children's Hospital. Emeritus member Betty Dalton and her daughter joined us for the December meeting. Habersham met their goal of growing by 7 percent with 25 new members. Our February meeting will be sponsored by Habersham Electric Membership Corporation, and our speaker will discuss ways to conserve our electrical energy. Members bring door prizes twice a year which they enjoy receiving and participate in a 50/50 raffle each meeting.

Harris County REA held our January meeting at the Harris County Library. We were happy to welcome speakers Officers Chris Nance and Tony Lattimore from the Pine Mountain Police Department. Information on various types of scams and how to protect seniors was presented. In addition, material to explain what to do if scammed and where to report scams was distributed. We also collected and delivered items for our annual donations to FOCUS Ministries, a local thrift store. We enjoyed a great lunch and fellowship as we continue to work to support educators at the local and state levels.

Henry County REA members had a very busy December. We had a wonderful time at our annual holiday luncheon. Our December luncheon is a time we celebrate by supporting children in our community. Even with the economic difficulties affecting all of us, members really stepped up to support our community. HCREA members donated 257 lbs of food to Helping in His Name Food Pantry; over \$800 in gift cards and toys to DFACS; and about \$300 in donation of personal items to our Foster Parent organization. We also continue to support Totes for Tots because they continue to help foster children in our area. Children's Hospital of Georgia (Augusta) also benefited from donations. In January the director of Henry County Elections spoke to us about how to become an elections poll worker. Her session was very informative. She said HC loves for teachers to be poll worker - evidently, retired educators have the necessary skills for this job! At our next meeting, we will receive an update from TRS and brainstorm ideas to recruit members. We

will close out the year by going out to lunch in March and celebrating new retirees from Henry County Schools (and hopefully future HCREA members). Please feel to join our meetings in 2026 - we meet the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 10AM at the Mercer University Campus in McDonough (160 Henry Parkway, McDonough, GA). Clayton County retirees - please come. Come to a meeting and leave with valuable knowledge and a new friend or two!

Lee County REA has had interesting and informative meetings. Tables are decorated with sunglasses, because as retired educators "Our Future Is So Bright, We Have To Wear Shades!" Some members participated in the beautification of the ninth-grade academy by helping plant mums, pansies and azaleas, financed by Woodman Life Company. Mark's Greenhouse was instrumental in delivering the plants, mulch and soil needed. During the holidays, several members participated in the distribution of books, food, gifts, and clothing for those in our community who were in need. Each month, members read to students in the schools. In February, instructors from the local YMCA gave presentations on yoga, chair exercises, and massage therapy. We wore red for heart health month in February and had door prizes related to Valentine's Day. January donations of candy to all the schools, with notes about how much we appreciate all that educators are doing, was a fun way to celebrate during a chilly season when it is a long stretch between pay days. March continued our focus on health, with financial and end of life planning presented by Joseph Jones. St. Patrick's Day door prizes were given. Members wore green, and new t-shirts were distributed. Members are gathering information and updates on previous scholarship winners to help motivate giving to this year's scholarship fund. Social time prior to meeting has been an enjoyable time to reconnect and make new acquaintances. Shout out to our officers who do a fantastic job and our media chairwoman for keeping the community aware of our meetings. Each meeting birthdays are celebrated, prayers and praises are given for members and former educators. Birthday and sympathy cards are sent to members. We look forward to the remainder of the year as we continue to build on our foundation of Fellowship, Service, and Support.

Madison County REA ended 2025 with an inspiring Christmas meeting on December 9. We enjoyed a wonderful acapella performance of

Christmas songs sung by our local high school chorus. The Christmas tree was surrounded by many bags of toys donated by unit members. These toys will be taken to the Madison County Food Bank to support their Toy Drive for needy families. Our unit has raised \$1456 for our Scholarship Fund. What a great way to end 2025. January 13 brought the unit together in the new year. MCREA supports a program called "In the Middle Meals" that provides easy to eat foods for needy middle and high school students on a weekly basis. Unit members brought food items to the January meeting to be donated to this program. Suellen Jones, Area 17 Director, was our guest. What a delight it was to hear her share news from the GREA! We appreciated her time and enjoyed her visit. Madison County Retired Educators Association continues to focus on our membership and support our community.

Newton County REA was active this winter. First, we met our 7% Membership Growth requirement for this year! Our December 4 meeting was about service to our community. After adopting our two children from the Salvation Army Angel Tree, we accepted donations to complete the shopping for the children. We also completed Christmas cards that were delivered to several nursing homes in Covington. Our scholarship fundraiser in December was a Silent Auction where we raised \$200 from the baskets donated by unit members. An ornament exchange was available for those who wished to participate. Also, we took up donations of warm winter wear/blankets for the homeless in our area. This will be repeated through our March meetings. On January 18, NCREA member Leila Elkins was honored as the Newton County 2026 I Have A Dream Award for all that she does within the community. The Executive Board met on January 22 to prepare for the rest of the 2025-26 year. We have a lot ahead of us in the coming months to fulfill our VISION!

North Fulton REA had their holiday luncheon in December with Mike Zarem, the Communications Director for TRS. He reassured the group that their pensions were safe and sound. The members were presented with a Certificate honoring retired educators, signed by the Mayor of Alpharetta. At the luncheon, the group raised over \$200 for their scholarship fund via a "Scholarship Surprises" activity.

Peach County REA held their December meeting with featured speakers Investigator Lyndon Prater

and TRS representative Mike Zarem. Investigator Prater shared safety tips for the holiday season, while Mike Zarem shared data information and upcoming legislative information. The meeting concluded with a gift exchange activity, good food, and good fellowship. PCREA members took time from their busy schedules to travel to Marietta, Georgia, enjoying fun, food, fellowship, and Christmas lights. Their first stop was Pappadeaux Seafood Kitchen, where they experienced excellent food and service, complemented by games and socializing. Afterwards, they attended the Light of Life Christmas light display, which proved to be a delightful outing. In January, Peach County Retired Educators Association was back to business with its monthly meeting. A comprehensive overview of Alzheimer's disease was presented by Dr. Samuel Palmer, MD, Houston County, while Dr. Jonathan B. Robertson, Jr., Superintendent of Macon County Schools, provided an update on the school system's progress. The meeting also featured recognition of members from D9 organizations. PCREA February meeting featured Dr. Chester Fontenot, Jr. retired Professor of African American Studies at Mercer University, Patricia Yates – Yates Healthcare Consultant and Nicole Gaither – Area Agency on Aging Members wore African Attire to recognize Black History Month

Rockdale REA was recognized in November by both the City of Conyers and the Rockdale Board of Commissioners with proclamations. As has been our practice for several years, there was no RREA meeting in November since our meeting date would fall during the week of Thanksgiving. December's meeting for the last ten years has been dedicated to the annual RREA Silent Auction. The date of the December meeting is annually moved to the first week in December (another reason for no meeting in November since the two meetings would only be two weeks apart and meeting at our regular time of the month would be the same week as Christmas). This year's December meeting and Silent Auction were held on December 4th. There were many items donated for the Silent Auction. As usual Silent Auction Chair Sue Troff and her committee did an excellent job of organizing the auction. The final total raised by the auction in December was \$2006.00. All the money raised went to the RREA Scholarship Fund. Each year the RREA Scholarships are presented at our June meeting.

South Fulton REA closed out the year on a sweet note with our annual Cookie Exchange. Members enjoyed a variety of delicious treats, including cookies baked by Deidra Lambright, a contestant on Next Level Baker. Our January meeting featured Deanna Joe Vivian, Executive Director of the C.T. Vivian Foundation. She shared valuable information about the Foundation's Learn to Read initiative and highlighted volunteer opportunities for SFREA members to support efforts to improve reading proficiency among middle school students. In February, we will welcome Dr. Daniel Draper of First Step Physical Therapy, who will provide informative health insights. We will also celebrate Black History Month, with members invited to wear African attire. March will be dedicated to Women's History Month, as we recognize and honor women in education. In April, members will travel to Ellis Station Candle Company in Atlanta for a hands-on experience learning how to create a personalized candle. We will close out the year with the installation of officers, followed by our celebratory finale, "Boots on the Ground."

Sumter County REA members have been busy and active at the beginning of 2026, continuing our commitment to supporting local schools and educators. We delivered school supplies to the teachers at Sumter County Intermediate School, helping ensure classrooms are well-equipped for student success. In addition, we provided special treats for the teachers and staff at Sumter County Primary School and Southland Academy, expressing our appreciation for their hard work and dedication. It has been a joy to serve our community and encourage the educators who make such a difference in the lives of our students.

Tattnall County REA focused on health during the month of October. Chris Sills from the Regional Health Department in Waycross spoke to the members about preparedness for storms in Georgia and in Tattnall County. He gave each member a notebook of vital information with contact information in case of an emergency, as well as a bag of first aid supplies. He answered the many questions about concerns of the members. Members of TCREA celebrated Georgia Retired Educators Day on Sunday, November 2, 2025, in their various churches. They were recognized by their congregations and announcements in their church bulletins. Georgia Rep. Bill Workheiser

attended the December meeting of TCREA and shared with the members plans for the upcoming 2026 legislative session. He outlined several bills that would be introduced to improve life for Georgia residents and for increased safety of students. Most of the members of TCREA stayed home during the unusually cold weather of January 2026 and tried to stay warm and well. At the February meeting the members of TCREA packed 200+ bags of goodies to give to the residents of the two large nursing homes in Glennville and Reidsville. The residents look forward to the treats in their Valentine bags each year. This has been a service project for TCREA for several years. Many of the residents of the nursing homes are retired educators.

Terrell/Lee REA members enjoyed a delicious lunch at Doublegate Country Club in Albany on December 14, 2025, celebrating the Christmas Season. Superintendent Dr. Shereca Hughley Harvey and First Gentlemen Derrell Harvey attended as Special Guest. TLRE also attended the Terrell Middle High School/Randolph-Clay basketball game in Dawson on January 16, 2026 as special guest of Superintendent Harvey, Athletic Director Raphael Kirby, and TMHS Principal Travis Terry. Dr. Lokia M. Spencer served as the outstanding hostess for the evening. Several educators attended and enjoyed the game wearing their "Keep the Vision" t-shirts, theme for 2025-2026 year.

Tri-County REA is Keeping the Vision in 2026 through fellowship, service and support. 2025 climaxed with Tri-County REA and friends attending the musical, "Behold the Star", at Augusta State University's Maxwell Performing Arts Theater. Our February meeting was held at Thomson's Leisure Services Center where we were entertained by the Senior Center Choir. We enjoyed fellowship with the senior citizens. Our service project for February is the collection of towels, blankets, throws, and coats. These items will be donated to the Salvation Army who needs these items. Thanks to all who donated.

Valdosta Lowndes REA held its monthly meeting on Monday, January 12, 2026. President Stephanie H. Bivins called the meeting to order at 11:05a.m., at Austin's Steak House Restaurant. She wished retirees a happy new year and told them it was a blessing to see everyone. President Bivins introduced the speaker Chief Leslie Manahan from

the Valdosta Police Department-Her topic was crime prevention. She warned us to be watchful with telephone scams and strangers walking up to us offering to assist us when unloading groceries or other merchandise from our vehicles. Retirees were allowed to ask questions which covered traffic tickets, cameras that track our car tag, and speeding in school zones. Chief Manahan gave points on information we should and should not give out over the phone which could lead to identity theft. She encouraged us not to stop and give money to panhandlers as we might end up being robbery victims. **VLREA** will continue to work on increasing their membership and to be actively involved in their community. Next meeting will be Monday, February 9, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. The program is on health and safety education. The speaker will be Ms. Tracie Gosier, RN, Health Promotion Coordinator at South Health District (Valdosta/Lowndes). In March, our speaker will be Ms. Temetrece Brown, Senior Center Supervisor,

from the Valdosta Lowndes Parks & Recreation Association discussing the activities and benefits of becoming a member. Also, the members are 'Keeping the Vision' by collecting non-perishable canned good items for our community service project for the months of February & March. These items will be delivered to our Second Harvest of South Georgia/Valdosta food bank. During our April meeting we will honor our Teachers of the Year Recognition to our City and County school districts recipients from the 2025-2026 school year. Our high school scholarship essay winner will be recognized at this meeting, also. During our May meeting VLREA co-chairs Linda Denton and Alice Williams will present our annual memorial service to remember our GREA and local members who have passed away since last May 2025. The unit will also have new officers' installation ceremony. **VLREA** continues to make 2026 a successful and impactful year of "Keeping the Vision" with fellowship, service, and support.

Wall of Honor Awaiting Honorees

By Jesse Hunter

The Wall of Honor is the perfect place to display the names of people that you want to honor. It could be yourself, a fellow educator, a retiree, a relative, or a friend. The plaque already has 142 honorees, and we need to add others to the wall. Each plate is \$50.00, and the information and form are available on the GREA website. Acknowledgement cards are sent to each honoree apprising them of their plate. Thanks to everyone for your attention to this project.

Honor educators, friends,
family and others with an
engraved plate on our
**WALL OF HONOR
PLAQUE**



Personally Engraved Plates
are \$50.00 Each
and TAX DEDUCTIBLE!

Purchaser Name _____ Local Unit _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Information to be engraved on plate: (14 characters and/or spaces long, up to 3 lines tall)

If you wish to order more than one plate, please write the engraving information for the other plate(s) on a separate sheet of paper. Plates will not hold more letters or spaces than the boxes provided.

Send to: Georgia Retired Educators Museum, Inc. P.O. Box 2001, Flowery Branch, GA 30542

Check Enclosed for \$ _____ Acknowledgment Card to be sent to the following address:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Views from Across the State



Bibb County REA



Chatham REA



Camden REA



Habersham REA





Harris County REA



Terrell Lee REA



Madison County REA



Peach County REA



Tri-County REA



Sumter County REA



Sumter County REA



North Fulton REA



Sumter County REA



Burke County REA



REGISTRATION FORM

GRE 66th Annual Convention Augusta
Marriott at the Convention Center
Augusta, Georgia



May 5th – 7th, 2026

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 after April 1* \$55 Amt \$ _____

*Early Bird Registration Before April 1st \$50 Amt \$ _____

Tuesday Banquet (May 5th at 6:30 pm)** \$50 Amt \$ _____

Wednesday Awards Breakfast (May 6th at 8:30 am) \$45 Amt \$ _____

Wednesday Banquet (May 6th 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 GRE, 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 13th.

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 the convention and pay the registration fee.

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

Deadline to register for Convention: April 13, 2026

You will find the information for your online reservation link below. If you have questions or need help with the link, please do not hesitate to ask. We appreciate your business and look forward to a successful event. Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center for 175.00 USD per night - Last Day to Book : Monday, April 13, 2026

Hotel Reservations: The telephone numbers are 1-800-228-9290 and 1-706-722-8900 and ask for a reservation for GRE 2026 Convention. Additional details on back cover of this Bulletin.

ALL RESERVATIONS MUST BE MADE BY APRIL 13, 2026

Room Reservation Information:

Augusta Marriott at The Convention Center

Phone: 706-722-8900 or 800-228-9290

You should ask for a reservation for
the GREA 2026 Convention.

HOTEL ADDRESS

2 Tenth Street
Augusta, Georgia, USA, 30901

You will find the information for your online reservation link below. If you have questions or need help with the link, please do not hesitate to ask. The Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center appreciates our business and is looking forward to a successful event.

Event Summary:

GREA 2026 Convention

Start Date: Sunday, May 03, 2026

End Date: Thursday, May 07, 2026

Hotel(s) offering your special group rate:
Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center
for 175.00 USD per night

Last Day to Book: Monday, April 13, 2026

[Marriott Reservations](#)

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Would you like to get your *GREA Bulletin* by email? Approximately 18,000 of our members are now getting their *GREA Bulletin* by email each quarter. The people who get it by email receive it approximately 4 weeks before the print edition is mailed to our members.

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 grea3@grea3.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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