

# THE GRE A BULLETIN

JOURNAL OF NEWS AND REFLECTIONS FOR RETIRED EDUCATORS OF GEORGIA

VOL. 40, NO. 1

GAINESVILLE, GEORGIA

SUMMER 2023



## A Message from the President

By Joe Boland, President

Congratulations to Dr. Henrietta Gray on her two years of service as President of GRE A. I also appreciate her kindness and support of me.

Most all the information about my term is on the GRE A website.

One of the things I really enjoyed about working was the rhythm of the school year. I like it that GRE A has a rhythm of its own. Summer is the time for resting and planning for the next year. The Area Meetings in August are a big deal for GRE A. It's the second largest gathering of our year. If you add all nine meetings together, it's more than our convention. I hope you and some of the members from your unit can attend. It will be fun.

The order form for t-shirts, etc. is on the website under forms. I can deliver these items at the Area Meetings. There is also information on the website about Totes to Tots and logos that I am using.

I appreciate the work that the Area Directors do. They are a critical link in this organization. I appreciate their willingness to lead and to look after the interest of our members.

It is hard to get to know individual board members, but I did get to know Jewell Howard because his seat was next to mine during meetings. His term of service ended in May, but I wanted to tell you a few things about him. He is one of eight kids. He went to D. F. Douglas High School in Montezuma where he ran track with his brother. His green and gold hornets were the State Champions in 1975. His high school science teacher, Matthew Knolton, had faith in Jewell and told him he had to go to college. He was the first in his family to attend college. He earned his BS and master's from Albany State. He then taught SPED in Mitchell County. He served as a teacher, assistant principal, and principal in Mitchell County and in Moultrie. With the support of Supt. Leonard McCoy, he became Superintendent of Calhoun County. Jewell retired in 2010, after 32 years of service, to help care for his ill wife. His wife passed on November 25, 2019. Jewell said that GRE A has given



Joe Boland

him the opportunity to meet many wonderful people who have been very supportive and nice to him. He mentioned Evelyn Fillingame and Marsha Bond. His life has been enriched by GRE A.

Fellowship/Service/Support. That about covers it for GRE A. Thanks for your service to your community. Thanks for your friendship and support of fellow retirees. Hope you have a great year. Get on the bus, meet at a state park, take a trip as a group. Just remember, stay in your lane.

**GET ON THE BUS!**  
2023-2024

Fellowship • Service • Support

**Colors:** blue and yellow  
**Theme:** Get on the Bus!  
**Charity:** Totes to Tots  
**Convention:** Athens  
**Goals:** get on the bus—go somewhere, take a trip, go to the museum  
**Membership:** 35,500  
**Totes to Tots:** \$35,500  
**Communication:** to Area Directors and use of website  
**Leave the bus clean:** leave GRE A as good as I found it

## A Word from the Past President

### *God Blessed Us—We Did It*

By Dr. Henrietta Gray, Past President



Henrietta Gray

God filled us with Power and Purpose to serve GREA significantly during the 2021-2023 Administration Year. I am and will forever be grateful to all of you for your kindness, encouragement, and support to me as President of our beloved GREA.

We had a great term of office. Let's enumerate a brief recapitulation of the goals and outcomes.

- Membership Goal-3000 (exceeded with 6711) new members.
- Members participation with MOD Events (154 from 14 areas)
- Training and Development for Local Presidents-Done
- 12 Local Units visited our Museum in Flowery Branch.
- March of Dimes Goal-\$35,000 (exceeded with \$57,384)

#### GOD BLESSED US—WE DID IT

Thank you also to those of you who took time and completed the Evaluation Form. Many of you said it was the Best GREA Convention you have ever attended. We thank you. Spearheaded by Becky Upchurch, a lot of members worked diligently to execute a wonderful convention that would be Inspirational, informative, entertaining, and enjoyable. I believe God helped us to do it in an auspicious manner with excellence.

I also appreciate those who shared input as to how we can improve specific areas and items. We receive your comments with gratitude and a commitment to go higher. Finally, remember the message of my farewell address: Embrace the Nine characteristics of an Unstoppable Person and Don't Let the Stone Stop You!

Now, let us GET ON THE BUS and give President Joe Boland the ride of his life as we support him all the way to Athens.

May God Himself bless, protect, and provide for all of us.

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## A Word from the President-elect

By Shirley Grant, President-elect



Shirley Grant

She has been very active in the Lions Club. She Today I would like to extend warm greetings from out of the hills of Habersham down the valleys of Hall and across the state of Georgia to all GREA members. I am excited and humbled to serve as your President-elect for 2023-2024. I look forward to meeting many of you in person as I "Get On The Bus" with President

Joe Boland and travel with his Mafia. The wheels on the bus will be going round and round as we travel from one location to another from north to south and east to west of this great state. Just remember what makes us a strong GREA family is that we have dedicated members like you who are always willing to offer Fellowship, Service, and Support.

## Ramblin' Around With the Executive Director

By Bill Sloan, Executive Director



William Sloan

Thank you to over 400 people who attended our state convention in May at the Augusta Marriott. It was a wonderful event and a special thanks goes out to Becky Upchurch, convention chair, who did an amazing job in planning and implementing it.

Each year at our convention we say goodbye to a few GREA leaders, and we welcome a new group of very special people who are willing to give their time, energy, and ability to lead GREA.

GREA thanks Dr. Henrietta Gray, Chatham County REA, for outstanding leadership during a trying time with the recent pandemic. She served a two-year term rather than the normal one year as President. She will now be serving as our Past President.

Joe Boland, Cobb/Marietta REA, was installed as the 58th President. We all look forward to his leadership this year. He announced that his convention will be held in Athens, Georgia in May of 2024.

A very special person for GREA and myself was Jo Ann Tomlinson, Clinch Co. REA. She served as President/Elect, 2 years as President and two years as Past President. No other GREA officer has ever had to serve for such an extended time, and she did it in a fabulous way. During the Covid years and her own illness, she never let up on working extremely hard for GREA. I cannot say thank you enough to this marvelous lady. Jo Ann is a special person.

We all regret having to say goodbye to these Area Directors whose terms have expired on our Board, they have served GREA well for the past few years. Area 1 Jewell Howard, Area 5 Marcia Wendel, Area 7 Coleen McIver, Area 9 Donna Kemp, Area 10 Nancy Hall, Area 15 Liz Bouis, and Area 17 Suellen Jones.

This year we have a great group who have stepped up and volunteered to serve as an Area Director. Area 1 Evelyn Fillingame, Area 5 Edna Shurley, Area 7 Mimi Dennis, Area 9 Marietta Webb, Area 10 Sherry Taylor, Area 15 Frank Hutcheson, and Area 17 Wallace Vassar. GREA is full of outstanding leaders, and we look forward to these people sharing their time and talents with us.

As we begin this new year for GREA we are so blessed to have over 33,500 members and \$1.2 million dollars in the bank. In addition, our \$1.4 million dollar building and grounds are fully paid for and GREA is totally debt free. We are blessed so much.

Thanks to each and every one of you who are members and especially to those of you who assume leadership positions in our local units. GREA is only as strong because of you.

One last group who needs a very big "THANK YOU" is AMBA. They recruited over 1400 new members for us this year and in addition, give us a lot of support in other ways. GREA loves AMBA.

I challenge each of you to help your GREA leaders, both state and local, make this the best year ever for GREA. Please don't ever forget that we are blessed to be retired educators in Georgia.

# TRS News

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



Buster Evans

Hello to our GREA friends all across Georgia! It was wonderful for our TRS team, including myself, to be with you at your recent annual conference in Augusta. It is always such a pleasure to visit with old friends as well as to make new friends who share the past of a career in education. It further provides me with evidence that “retired educators are some of the happiest people I know!”

I want to heartily congratulate the new 2023 retirees. Some 6,900 new retirees have joined the ranks of being a “retired educator.” This is a special, and hopefully, rewarding happy time of life. For the rest of your lives, you can cherish the knowledge that you have influenced the lives of literally thousands of young people in your educational careers while also receiving a monthly benefit if you are a TRS retiree. You’ve educated professionals in all walks of the work life who have transitioned into being successful adults. I can think of no life work that is of greater importance. Thank you for your service as an educator!

Secondly, I want to share with you a few takeaways that I got from a recent meeting with fellow state retirement system directors. Each year, I attend a meeting of the directors of other state teacher retirement systems from all across the nation. As a part of our meeting, we spend time sharing information that is going on in our states in regards to our retirement systems. I just returned from my annual meeting which was held in Madison, Wisconsin. I thought you would be interested in a few of the items that were “hot topics” at this year’s meeting.

**Cost of Living Adjustments.** This is a favorite topic among our retirees. You look forward to the 1.5% COLA that is received each July 1 and January 1. You should be aware, though, this is not the case in many states across the nation. While we are not

the only state that provides a COLA, there are some states that have not given a COLA in over 20 years. Some have done 13th checks. With the recent high inflation times, we should be most pleased Georgia continues to honor the service of our retired educators and continues to provide a benefit adjustment!

**Return to Work.** As a retired educator, you should be aware that in both Georgia and across the nation, there is an ongoing teacher shortage. One of the ways this teacher shortage is partially alleviated is through allowing retirees to return to work and continue to draw their retirement benefit. Seemingly seeing more states, including Georgia, have relaxed return to work rules to help with the teacher shortage.

**ESG.** This is an abbreviation of the term “Environmental, Social, and Governance.” In the investment world, there has been much conversation regarding this sticky topic. Some states are all in on ESG. Some states appear to be all against. Those against basically say they are seeking to be fiduciary driven and make investment decisions that are believed to be in the best interest of the beneficiaries. Clearly, in Georgia, that is our position. While we certainly are not against such things as protecting the environment and other issues that may be focuses of some ESG positions, the investments of the funds used to pay retirees, and those future COLAs, are made with the goal of returning investment gains that are in the best interest of our retirees.

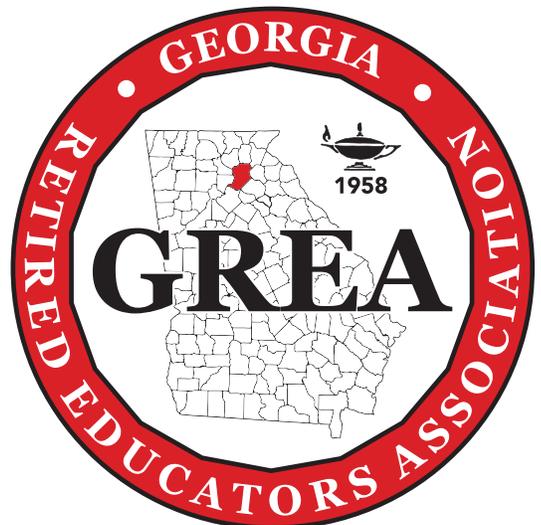
There are many other issues that I could go on about, but for the sake of time, these were three I thought you might be most interested in. As I have the opportunity to spend time with you in the coming year, perhaps we can talk more regarding these matters. Meanwhile, have a great summer, and I hope to see you at one of the many GREA events across Georgia during the coming “school year!”

## GREA has a new logo!

Houston County REA President Judy Moore put her marketing degree to work to create a new logo to represent GREA. We thank her for her outstanding efforts!

The significance of the elements of the new logo:

- 1) The area shaded in red on the map is Hall County where the GREA headquarters are located.
- 2) The inside polygon has 18 sides representing the 18 Areas.
- 3) The lamp and the date GREA was established were carried over from the previous logo.
- 4) Retired Educators Association is at the bottom to explain what organization this is. Georgia is at the top to identify which REA this is.
- 5) The name of the font used for lettering is Georgia.
- 6) Every county in Georgia is shown to emphasize that GREA works for every teacher in every county for both those retired and those not yet retired but will be one day.





**Area 1 Units of Distinction**

Dougherty  
Early/Calhoun/Clay  
Grady  
Mitchell/Baker

**Area 2 Units of Distinction**

Dooly  
Randolph  
Lee  
Sumter

**Area 3 Units of Distinction**

Berrien  
Colquitt  
Cook  
Tift  
Valdosta/Lowndes

**Area 4 Units of Distinction**

Brantley  
Camden  
Clinch  
Coffee/Atkinson  
Waycross/Ware

**Area 5 Units of Distinction**

Golden Isles  
Jeff Davis  
Toombs  
Wayne

**Area 6 Units of Distinction**

Bulloch  
Effingham

**Area 7 Units of Distinction**

Dodge

**Area 8 Unit of Distinction**

Bibb  
Crawford  
Houston  
Lamar  
Monroe  
Peach  
Pike  
Thomaston/Upson

**Area 9 Units of Distinction**

None

**Area 10 Units of Distinction**

Butts  
Clayton  
Coweta  
Fayette

**Area 11 Units of Distinction**

Johnson County  
Laurens/Dublin  
Washington

**Area 12 Units of Distinction**

Burke  
Jefferson County  
Lincoln-Wilkes  
Richmond  
Tri-County

**Area 13 Units of Distinction**

Atlanta  
Newton  
South Fulton

**Area 14 Units of Distinction**

Athens  
Barrow  
Greene  
Gwinnett  
Morgan  
Walton

**Area 15 Units of Distinction**

Cherokee  
Cobb-Marietta  
Haralson-Bremen  
Paulding  
Pickens  
Polk

**Area 16 Units of Distinction**

Calhoun/Gordon  
Catoosa  
Fannin  
Gilmer

**17 Units of Distinction**

Forsyth  
Franklin  
Jackson County Area  
Madison  
Oglethorpe

**18 Units of Distinction**

Dawson  
Habersham  
Lumpkin  
Rabun  
Stephens  
Towns  
Union  
White

**Membership Award Winners 2023**

**Class A—1-70 Members**

1st Place	Hancock	4th Place	Macon
2nd Place	Marion	5th Place	Greene
3rd Place	Brantley		

**Class AA—71-149 Members**

1st Place	Tie: Haralson/Bremen & Washington
2nd Place	McDuffie/Warren/Glascock
4th Place	Dawson, Mitchell/Baker, & Lincoln/Wilkes

**Class AAA—150-299 Members**

1st Place	Tie: Waycross/Ware & Wayne
3rd Place	Habersham
4th Place	Tift
5th Place	Columbia

**Class AAAAA—300-450 Members**

1st Place	Tie: Forsyth & Sumter
3rd Place	North Fulton
4th Place	Golden Isles
5th Place	Valdosta/Lowndes

**Class AAAAAA—450 And Up Members**

1st Place	Cobb/Marietta
2nd Place	Dougherty
3rd Place	Cherokee
4th Place	Tie: Atlanta, Bibb, & Gwinnett

**Membership Winners 2023**

Class A	Hancock
Class AA	Tie: Haralson/Bremen and Washington
Class AAA	Tie: Waycross/Ware and Wayne
Class AAAAA	Tie: Forsyth and Sumter
Class AAAAAA	Cobb/Marietta

**New Area Directors**



**Area 1**  
*Evelyn Fillingame Terrell*



**Area 5**  
*Edna Shurley Toombs*



**Area 7**  
*Mimi Dennis Dodge*



**Area 9**  
*Dr. Marietta Webb Muscogee*



**Area 10**  
*Sherry Taylor Coweta*



**Area 15**  
*Frank Hutcheson Haralson/Bremen*



**Area 17**  
*Dr. Wallace Vassar Hart*



# GRE Foundation, Inc. Profiles Scholarship Winners

*The GRE Foundation is a non-profit organization under the auspices of the Georgia Retired Educator's Association. The purpose of the GRE Foundation is to provide scholarships to needed teachers and paraprofessionals that are either pursuing a degree or an advanced degree in public education. For over twenty years, the Foundation has been awarding scholarships in varying numbers and amounts to educators throughout the state of Georgia. This year, 2023, we will award \$1000 scholarships to 12 recipients. With individual and unit donations, our goal for 2024 is to give at least twenty scholarships. If you desire to give to the Foundation, please mail your gifts to Dr. William Gardner, 11 Springer Way, Rocky Face, GA 30740.*

*Thank you for your continued support to the GRE Foundation*  
—Barbara T. Wilcher – Chair of the Foundation

**Maria T. Studebaker-Coppage** is from Cook County and teaches Literature in the tenth and eleventh grades. She has 18 years of experience, and is now working on an advanced degree –M.A.T. The Key Club advisor at her school wrote that Maria is skilled at maintaining positive and productive working relationships with her students and colleagues. She continues by stating that Maria is an insightful and astute educator, and that Maria is very deserving of the GREF scholarship. Maria stresses that she is active in school and community activities and that the scholarship will help since she is already paying off educational loans.



**Beth Ann Webb** from Fayette County has 12.5 years of experience; has a T-4 middle school grades certificate; works with 6-8 grades in Career Development. The Creativity Program Facilitator noted that Beth Ann is dedicated, passionate, honest and does what is best in the interest of students. She went on to say that Beth Ann started as a paraprofessional but soon had her teaching degree and has been actively involved in school and community needs. This is Beth Ann's second year as a Georgia educator. She started her career in Georgia as a para-pro even though she had a degree, but after the first year she got a teaching position. She plans to use her GREF scholarship as she works on her master's degree.



**Kelly Adkins** from Lumpkin County is a 6-8 grade Special Education paraprofessional. She has requested the GREF scholarship so she can use it to help her earn her initial education degree. Her classroom educator said that she has in her 20+ years worked with many fine service providers and paraprofessionals. She says "Kelly is one individual I've worked with who uniquely stands out." She continued by saying she is confident Kelly will make a wonderful Special Education teacher and will be an asset to the school and the students. Kelly states that she is a mother of a special needs child and the scholarship will relieve some pressure when paying for her degree.



**Anna Sitzman** is a second-grade teacher from Toombs County with seven years-experience. She presently has her T-4 but is planning to go to Valdosta State and pursue an advanced degree. Anna's principal said that she demonstrates excellent leadership potential. He continued by saying Anna always conducts herself in a professional and respectful manner. The school's instructional coach emphasized that Anna cares about investing in her student's learning and



development. Anna states that she is involved in several different school and community activities.

**Ragan Hudson** is from Dekalb County. She has ten years-experience; has a degree in school counseling -P-12; is presently working with sixth graders; plans to work on her Ed.S. Ragan states this about herself. "I am a person-centered school counselor and advocate that works collaboratively and inclusively to support the healthiest school culture possible. I can be relied on to help create a learning environment that fosters positive order in order that our students can experience success." She lists many school and community activities in which she is involved.



**Morgan Kinley Redmond** from Whitfield County will graduate in June 2023 with her master's degree. She wants to continue her educational pursuit by working on her T-6. She has two years-experience and is teaching seventh grade mathematics. The school's assistant principal said that she believed Morgan is a great candidate for the GREF scholarship. One reason for this is "she advocates for her personal classroom students and initiates innovative teaching in her classroom." She went to say that Morgan engages and continues to enhance every year. Morgan stated that as a full-time teacher, mother of two, and a caregiver for a parent who lives with her, the scholarship will allow her to spend less time worrying about finances.



**Wylie Hill Martin** is a teacher from Flowery Branch in Hall County with seven years-experience. She is a paraprofessional and presently assists in elementary K-5 in the school technology lab. Her education desire is to earn her initial education degree. The school principal recommends Wylie in part because her classroom management is positive and engaging while being student-centered. She transitions seamlessly from one grade level to the next. Wylie volunteers to teach a fitness class for the staff members after school each week. Wylie said that she was fifty years-old when she decided to continue her education. She is recently divorced, has a son in college, works full-time as a paraprofessional, volunteers after school in the school and community, and is working on her degree. She wants her students to not give up on their dreams and goals – regardless of where they come from, what their finances might be, or their age.



**Brandon Turman**, from McDuffie County, has an Elementary T-4 certificate with five years-experience. Brandon is presently teaching fifth grade mathematics and science. The school's principal stated that she could see Brandon's passion for his job on a daily basis. She continued by saying that Brandon has the ability to connect with his students, had the talent to teach the simple concepts and more advanced topics as well. Both skills are superior. He is well organized, has good communication skills, and follows through. Brandon serves the school and the community by mentoring students academically, socially, and mentally. Brandon wrote that the GREF scholarship would help with the expenses as he prepares to graduate this summer with his master's degree.



# GREA 2023 Convention Photo Gallery



Let me in!



Registration Central



Attendance Award Winners



New Officers



Breakfast Awards



Gwinnett County Delegation



Opening Session



Need a snack?



Lamar County Royalty



Silent Auction



Wednesday Banquet



Back In Time



March of Dimes Check



GREA's got talent?



Tuesday Banquet



Get your presidential items



Photo Booth Fun



Friends from TRS



Friends from AMBA



GREA's got moves!



Fun Times



TRS Staff



GREA Brain Trust



AMBA Reps

# News From GREA Local Units

**Chatham REA** members attended the GREA Convention in Augusta, GA on May 2-4, 2023, in support of GREA State President Dr. Henrietta Gray. Dr. Gray is also a member of the Chatham REA. Chatham REA and members from around the state experienced a variety of exciting and fun-filled activities at the convention, from the "GREAs Got Talent" skit, the Local Units Award Breakfast, the outstanding and informative Breakout Sessions, to an enchanting evening at the Past Presidents' Banquet, with music and dancing. Chatham REA honored its deceased members and celebrated by receiving numerous awards. The culmination of the GREA convention was a moving message from outgoing President Dr. Henrietta Gray. The 63rd Annual GREA Convention was enjoyed by everyone and was a rousing success!

**Cobb-Marietta REA** has enjoyed a great year of growth and rededication in this post-Covid recovery year. Our local theme: "Empowered to Make a Difference!" has enjoyed success. We have gathered at monthly meetings for fellowship time around a wide array of delicious, boxed lunches. Our speakers have included the Superintendent of Marietta City Schools, Dr. Grant Rivera; Georgia's Teacher of the Year, Michael Kobito; Senior Safety Officer Michael Justice; Dr. Sloan & Johnny Smith; and others who represented our supported charities and service projects. We awarded four \$2,000 Scholarships to future teachers and additionally collected over \$2,000 to support our schools and local charities that help our school communities. In short, our goal this year was to provide our members enjoyable fellowship and service opportunities, and to provide a place to learn something valuable, hear something inspirational, do something worthwhile, and experience something that brightens their day! On all accounts, we have accomplished our mission!

**Crawford County REA** had a busy 2022-23 year with nine meetings, multiple service projects, and several activities. Each meeting included a delicious lunch provided by members and a drawing for Retired Educator of the Month. At the GREA Convention, our unit received all certificates and was proud to be recognized as a Unit of Distinction. In May, we welcomed Superintendent Anthony Aikens and Principal Chad Chafin. We presented framed certificates and scholarship checks to 2023 Valedictorian Haley Adams and Salutatorian Nathaniel Richards. We also enjoyed a Dessert/Cake Walk to raise money for our scholarship fund. At our June meeting, Gary Barrett was honored as our GREA Community Service Volunteer of the Year and Janice Hunt was honored as the recipient of the GREA Leadership Award. We finished out the year with several fun games of BINGO and a delicious cup of peach ice cream! Over the summer, teams will once again provide snacks on Thursdays to Camp Grace attendees and staff for eight weeks. President Brenda Carter and members of the Executive Committee will also be hard at work planning and preparing for the 2023-2024 year.

**Dalton/Whitfield/Murray REA** held its annual December auction, raising over \$17,000 for the scholarship fund. An AMBA representative attended a monthly meeting and discussed benefits available. Steve Loughridge, Superintendent Murray County Schools, gave members updates on the system. Three members attended the GREA convention in Augusta. The unit earned nine awards from GREA for the year: Seven local high school students, along with four Dalton State College Students, all majoring in education, were awarded \$1,100 each in scholarships. Palmer Griffin received the Volunteer Service Award, and Dorothy Gray and Twinkle Chitwood received the Leadership Award from the unit. A remembrance service was held for twenty members that passed during the year, one being Bill Weaver, past DWMREA president and past GREA Area Director. Officers for 2023-2025 were installed by Martha Wassum, past DWMREA president. Newly retired educators from local school systems were presented goody bags with information regarding DWMREA and GREA. A leadership planning session was conducted to prepare for the upcoming year.

**Effingham REA** held their last meeting of the year on May 15. Our program for the meeting was a PowerPoint slide show presented by those EREA members who assisted with the setup of a new library at the Encompass campus in our county. These members explained the process in gathering books, furniture, accessories, and other items for use in this library. This project satisfied our "school project" for the year. The students at the campus were thrilled to have easy access to these printed materials. Several of EREA members attended the GREA convention in Augusta and enjoyed the program very much. Members of our unit were present at the BOE retirement program and reception on May 2. They met the 2023 retirees and presented them with gift bags filled with items from local businesses. Our local unit info and GREA info was given to them at this reception. We will begin our new year in the fall beginning with a banquet.

**Emanuel REA** wrapped up the 2022-23 year with its the final meeting held on the campus of East Georgia State College. Members were excited

to have Dr. Connie Cooper, Area 6 Director, attend to install new officers for next year. New officers include Judy Hendrix, President; Verdell Brinson, President-elect; Toney Golden, Secretary; Lena Nwakudu, Treasurer; and Jean Schwabe, Immediate Past President. Another highlight of the meeting was the presentation of the \$1,000 EREA Scholarship. Syvetta Young and her committee members presented the check to Madison Grimm as her parents looked on with great pride. Madison will be attending Georgia Southern University in the fall majoring in elementary education.

**Floyd-Rome REA** hosted the April 6, 2023 Cluster meeting at the Cherokee Golf and Country Club in Cedartown. Dr. Bill Sloan Jr., Executive Director of GREA, gave an update of news from GREA, and President-elect of GREA. Joe Boland welcomed all to the meeting. Prior to the meeting, FRREA President Dianne Lanham, sadly passed away, however she had expertly made plans for the meeting, FRREA President-Elect Judy Angle and Nancy Ivester presided, and Bill King presented a program about the "Tomb of the Unknown Soldier." At the April meeting of FRREA four \$1,000.00 scholarships were presented by Scholarship Chair, Daphnee Morrison, to students who are rising seniors and planning a career in education. Service project for April was food donations for Community Kitchen. A memorial service by Necrology Committee Chair, Merita Humphrey was presented at our May FRREA meeting. Area 15 Director, Frank Hutcheson installed new officers: President: Judy Angle and Nancy Ivester, President-Elect: Scott Moody, Secretary: June Aycock, Treasurer: Sandra Ledbetter. Service project for May was personal care items for Hospitality House.

**Grady County REA** recently blessed all the local schools by donating needed items to them. Each school nurse was asked what items they needed for their students. The responses varied from school to school, but the list included wash cloths, deodorant, shorts, personal wipes, and underwear. The items were recently delivered to all seven Grady County schools by Jan Westberg, President of Grady County Retired Educators, and Fran McCaskill, Treasurer of the group.

**Gwinnett County REA** met at Sugarloaf Country Club on April 21st. It was a jam-packed meeting. Six scholarships were awarded, emeritus members were honored, a memorial service was conducted, and 2023/24 officers were installed. In May, twelve members attended the GREA convention in Augusta. Two highlights of the convention were bringing home Unit of Distinction and watching the fabulous Back in Time concert. (Encore in Athens 2024, please!) The executive board will meet in July to plan another year of informative programs, delicious lunches, and great fellowship.

**Habersham REA** had a busy spring. We made 7 and 10 percent growth in membership. Visiting the schools during post planning is very successful in recruitment. We gained 10 new members this year. Silent auctions have been successful in raising money as well as 50/50 raffles. Judge Terry Rice served as a judge focusing on LOVE in February. A local funeral home sponsor provided our meal at North GA Tech and provided treat bags to everyone. We have secured sponsors for all our meetings this year. Two \$1,000 scholarships were awarded at Habersham Central High School and the unit has secured all awards for the Unit of Distinction. Plans were made for providing info/goody bags to new retirees and plans to attend the state convention in Augusta. The band was the best ever this year. Hope they are a repeat performance for next May. 19 members have signed up to attend the Areas 17 and 18 meeting held at the Civic Center in Gainesville. Members visited the Museum in June and enjoyed lunch at Fish Tales on Lake Lanier. A shout out to all units in Area 18 for making Unit of Distinction.

**Haralson/Bremen REA** had celebration on the agenda for their April 13th meeting. Our meeting was jam packed with activities. The meeting place was decorated beautifully by Elaine Garner and Martha Laminack in a scholastic theme with black, gold, and white colors. We held our annual baked goods silent auction to raise money for next year's scholarships. The winners of this year's scholarships were Kaelin Peavey, Haralson County senior, and Libby Lambert, Bremen High School senior. Both students plan to pursue a career in early childhood education. Our winners along with their families and many faculty members were present to honor our recipients. Debbie Byrd and her choral group from Haralson County High School did a very entertaining program during our meeting. We all enjoyed a delicious lunch following the meeting. The last HBREA meeting of 2022-23 year was June 8th. As we learned in one of our breakout sessions at GREA convention, "why have a meeting when you can have a party!" All members were dressed in festive Hawaiian wears and the fellowship hall was decorated in a tropical, Hawaiian theme. The tables were adorned with pineapples wearing sunglasses and leis. We also had fun with our sunset photo booth. Sherry Whitton gave a motivational devotion encouraging us to be like a pineapple "stand tall, wear a crown, and be sweet on the inside." President, Kathy Hurston congratulated members for

exceeding their goals this year. We were excited to receive a Unit of Distinction Award due to the faithful work and generous contributions of our members. We were also so thankful and surprised to receive 1st Place in AA Class for showing the highest percentage increase in total membership. The 2023-24 officers were inducted by our new unit director, Frank Hutcheson. HBREA officers for 2023-24 are Kathy Hurston, returning president, Martha Johnson, president elect, Beleta Anderson, returning treasurer, Charlotte Ellis, returning secretary. We also enjoyed a fellowship lunch and adjourned saying Aloha until next time!

**Houston County REA** ended its 2022-2023 year in a very busy fashion. On April 25, the Houston County Retired Educators Association (HCREA) hosted the Valedictorian/Salutatorian Celebration at Central Baptist Church where ten students from the five high schools in the county were honored. On May 2, HCREA partnered with the Houston County Career Academy to recognize eleven seniors who completed the Teaching as a Profession Pathway. On May 4, HCREA recognized educators at the other end of the spectrum, those who were retiring, at the county's 2023 Retirement Banquet. Almost 100 retirees received gift boxes from HCREA which were put together with donations from community businesses and handed to the honorees after they walked across the stage when their name was called. On May 2-4, two HCREA members attended the GREA State Convention in Augusta and were honored to have been asked to decorate the main banquet hall on Wednesday night for then President, Dr. Henrietta Gray. Crawford County and Houston County members made the decorations before the pandemic and were finally able to use them. Finally, on May 11, thirteen members of HCREA traveled to the Georgia Retired Educators Museum in Flowery Branch, home of the GREA headquarters, to see the beautiful and informative display of the history of education in Georgia.

**Jefferson County REA** visited the elementary schools in Wadley, Louisville, and Wrens with its Adopt-A-Pre-K Class service project this year. Retired educators found themselves back at the front of the classroom reading to bright-eyed four-year-olds, and JCREA past-president Dr. Barbara Jordan was invited to speak at the End-of-Year Program for the class at Carver Elementary School in Wadley. Other projects included donations to the Louisville Food Pantry and the "Apple for the Teachers & Staff" event for American Education Week, all of which made for a rewarding year of service. Our final regular meeting held on May 8th included a memorial tribute to former teacher, high school principal, and county school superintendent Frank A. Gordy, Sr., who was president of our local unit from 1999-2005. Also memorialized was Mary Lois Gaston, former Louisville High School secretary, who was treasurer of JCREA from 2001-2005. In addition, JCREA President Julia Wells, along with several of the members who attended, reported on the exciting and informative happenings at the 63rd GREA Convention held in Augusta, Georgia, on May 2-4. Jefferson County REA earned the Unit of Distinction award for the 6th year in a row, which was presented along with other unit awards by Area 12 director, Dr. Roger Williams. JCREA held its "Spring Celebration Luncheon" on June 1, which opened with greetings from our new Jefferson County School Superintendent, Dr. Sam Dasher. Other program highlights included a salute to three honor students and a teacher, recognition of retiring educators, and JCREA member awards. This year's Pacesetter Award was presented to Terrance Davis, Jefferson County Middle School distinguished honor roll student who is active in sports, band, and community service. Daisy Beccera-Agustin, honor graduate at Jefferson County High School, was the recipient of the 2023 JCREA Scholarship in the amount of \$1000. In addition, STAR Student Jacob Holt and STAR Teacher James Borum were recognized with certificates and gift bags. Past-president Carolyn Huntley recognized the eight new retirees. JCREA President Wells and Marilyn Davis, membership chairperson, then presented appreciation, volunteer service, and leadership certificates to selected JCREA members for their hard work and dedication, which aided the unit to meet its goals, especially serving the community in which we live. AMBA representative Lisa McKenzie shared salient points with the group on the topic, "GREA, AMBA & YOU!"

**Lamar REA** presented gifts, including a GREA membership form, to each retiree at a Retirement Reception held by the Lamar County Schools. Lamar REA also reminded Retirees that, "Being a Teacher is a Choice...Being a Retired Teacher is an Honor!"

**Morgan County REA** held their final meeting of the year Thursday, May 18 with a reception at the Morgan County Board of Education. We had a great time recognizing Teachers and Support Persons of the Year for each school, as well as honoring the Valedictorian, Salutatorian, STAR Student and Teacher. We welcomed all upcoming retirees and encouraged them to sign up to be a part of this amazing organization. Morgan County School Superintendent, Dr. Virgil Cole, addressed members giving the "state of the schools" as we wrapped up the 2022-2023 school year. He reported all schools ending the year on a positive note and that work is already beginning to ensure a successful 2023-2024 year. Our meeting was adjourned, and refreshments were enjoyed by all.

**Muscogee County REA** met June 9, 2023 for a luncheon meeting with a full agenda. President Carole Mashburn opened the meeting and introduced Mrs. Janet Sussenbach from the Sara Spano Clothing Bank. Mrs. Sussenbach thanked the members for their generous support of the clothing bank. She recommended that members who would like to volunteer could assist by forming a Measuring Committee. Two or three members would go into schools to measure the children and get ideas from their about what type and color of clothing they would prefer. This would ensure that students received clothing that fits and that they like to wear. After lunch Carole Mashburn gave remarks reflecting on the last year. Scholarship Recipients for this year are Jamie Battles-Clubview Elementary, April Gallahair-Double Churches Elementary, Lakeshia Giles-Brewer Elementary, Sharenda West-Rigdon Road Elementary. Congratulations to all! Dr. Marietta Webb gave the GREA Area 9 update. She recognized and thanked Donna Kemp for her tenure as Area 9 Director. Margaret Ingersoll presented the Community Service Award. Edith Carter remembered our members who died during the past year in a Memorial Ceremony. Dr. Marietta Webb led the installation of officers for 2023.

**Newton County REA** had a fabulous year! We had a wonderful closing meeting for the 22-23 year! We had a catered brunch followed by recognitions and celebrations! We recorded our Emeritous Award member, Mrs. Sarah Syphoe! She was presented with a certificate and a lapel pin for her years of membership and service. Beth Moore was presented with the Volunteer of the Year Award. Thank you for all your hours of volunteer service in the community! We held a memorial moment for our members, Carolyn Cooksey and Cynthia Durden, who passed away this year! Their service and commitment to our community and its children will be remembered! We celebrated being named a Unit of Distinction in Area 13 at the Annual GREA Conference in Augusta! We have some wonderful summer social activities planned for June, July and August and look forward to another wonderful year as we Get on the Bus with GREA 23-24 President, Joe Boland!

**Paulding County REA** members supplied the homemade desserts served with a smile as Paulding County recommenced the grand retirement luncheon after almost four years of Covid restrictions. One of our past presidents, Barbara Cohran, put home the point of why EVERY retiree should join GREA. We also had a GREA sign-up table and fielded questions. On another note, last week at the BOE meeting we presented FOUR \$500 scholarships to teachers and para-pros to help them further their education. This is one more scholarship than we have traditionally awarded, so we're proud of increasing our impact in the schools and community, and we're looking forward to another great year!

**Peach County REA** President Quintin Green and Scholarship Chair Betty Rogers presented the 2023 Aundrea Green award to Nancy Cochran. Nancy Cochran is an honor graduate at Macon County High School in Montezuma, Georgia. Nancy will attend Fort Valley State University in the fall. Along with the High School scholarship the Peach County Retired Educators Association presented a \$2,500 check to the Alphonso Varner Scholarship fund at Fort Valley State University.

**Rockdale REA** has had an interesting Spring quarter. At our April meeting, we held our Quarterly Used Book Sale which supports our Scholarship fund. In May, we had to share our regular meeting location, a local church, with the Base Camp operation of a movie production company that was filming that day in Conyers. Filming in Olde Town Conyers is a regular occurrence. The program for our meeting that day featured several members of a local Bluegrass band playing various selections. Our June meeting included two important events. First, we installed our officers for the 2023-24 year. We then awarded three \$1500.00 scholarships to three former Rockdale County graduates who are all pursuing a college degree in education.

**South Fulton REA** met at the City Cafe in Fayetteville, GA. on May 18, 2023 for the End of the Year Celebration. The South Fulton REA enjoyed a wonderful time of fun, games, prizes, fellowship, and a scrumptious lunch. After the lunch members of the executive committee gave remarks reflecting on the past year's accomplishments. Certificates of appreciation were given to members for their support during the year. Our members who died during the year were remembered in a memorial ceremony. The new members were given gift bags. The meeting ended by wishing everyone a safe and happy summer.

**Sumter County REA** members recently attended the Sumter County Schools board meeting where individuals retiring from the system at the end of the 2022-23 school year were recognized. President Sue Hite, President-Elect Brenda Jennings, and members Cheryl Fletcher and Lily Taylor presented the honorees with goodie bags, which contained a membership card. President Hite stated that Georgia has over 31,000 retirees, and there is value and power in numbers. Jennings stated that GREA's sole purpose is to ensure your retirement benefits are safe, secure and protected. The retirees were

*Continued on page 7*

encouraged to join GREA and our local organization. A highlight at the end-of-the-year meeting of the Sumter County Retired Educator Association was the presentation of the GRE Volunteer Service Award to Linda Holloway.

**Tattnall County REA** held a special meeting June 7 followed by a luncheon. A memorial service conducted by Rev. Cynthia Joyce was held for two very special members: Ruth S. Anderson and Denna Ansley. Two eighth grade students Cecilia Davis and Gloria Velez-Tahan were honored for highest scholastic achievement at their middle schools. A Tattnall County High School student who excelled academically and who plans to pursue education as a future career was honored with a \$1,000 scholarship.

**Valdosta Lowndes REA** is thankful for a blessed and productive year. President Walker and President Elect Stephanie Bivins attended the GREA 63rd Annual Convention. Our unit received 5th place with GREA for Membership Award in Division 4-A. We also received certificates for: Membership 7+%, Volunteer Service, Handbook Participation, History, Newsletter, Public Relations, Scholarship, Unit of Excellence and Unit of Distinction. Our new GREA President will be Joe Boland. His theme is "Get on the Bus" for fellowship, service and support. He hopes to increase membership by 35,000 and his state humanitarian project will go to "Totes to Tots." Our donations will go toward the collection and distribution age-appropriate backpacks, suitcases and essential items for Georgia's children in foster care. VLREA members Linda Denton and Alice Williams presented our annual memorial service to remember our local members who have passed away since last May 2022. (JoAnna Jones, Billy Hayes, and John Rice). There was a commemoration prayer given by Virginia Thompson. Sam Allen commemorated JoAnna Jones by sharing words about her; Ron Irwin shared about Billy Hayes and Sharon Walker read Mark Gilpatrick's words about John Rice. Patricia McRae sang "Blessed Assurance." A Litany was read by leaders Alice Williams and Linda Denton, with the membership responding. The candles burned to remember these members of VLREA and GREA. On Monday, May 22, 2023, the Valdosta Lowndes REA carried gift bags of appreciation to the Valdosta City School Transportation Department. We wanted to appreciate all who keep education moving and who transport students safely to and from school every day. We had a very productive and successful year and look forward to another GREA membership year in 2023-2024!

**Walton County REA** members volunteered at the Walton County Special Olympics games. This two-day event included handing out ribbons and medals, refereeing soccer games, and cheering on the athletes. What a great event!

**Waycross/Ware County REA** had a very busy year in 2022-2023. We again met all the requirements for a Unit of Distinction and tied for 1st Place for the Membership AAA Award. For our service projects, our unit collected school supplies, provided ear buds and pencils to the Alternative school students, took treats to the Alternative School staff, provided snacks for the families of the Satilla Hospice House patients, provided paper products to Magnolia House, an agency for abused families, gave a \$1000 scholarship to a Ware County High School student, and gave \$700 to March of Dimes. Our members enjoyed many interesting programs. At our May meeting, we recognized three Emeritus members, Mary T. Carter, June Glisson, and Elyse Henderson and the president recognized the officers and committees for helping to make 2022-2023 a successful year. Now we are ready to "Get on the Bus" for 2023-2024!

**Wayne County REA** was busy in May! At our May meeting we awarded a \$500 scholarship to Amanda Wood, a paraprofessional at James E. Bacon Elementary School who is currently majoring in education, and \$1,000 to Riley Denison, a high school senior who plans to major in education. Three of our members attended the WC Retirement Reception to encourage new retirees to join GREA and WCREA; we had several who joined on the spot! Welcome to our new officers: Tina Moseley, President; Sharlene McIntyre, President-Elect; and Patti Holland, Treasurer. We are looking forward to a GREAT year!

**White County REA** members are completing another busy year with large turnouts for the local meetings. We're pleased to have gained 23 new members this year and congratulated several who have been moved up to Emeritus status. How proud we are of those who have reached their 90th birthday and continue to be active in the local unit. Our monthly meetings are held in community churches with members donating to that church. Each meeting is sponsored by an area business that provides lunch. Members also bring nonperishable items for the local food bank, support Back Pack Buddies, contribute to scholarship fund, and this year voted to sponsor 10 children for the Dolly Parton Imaginations Library. The year provided informative programs including new member recognition, memorial service for those members who have passed away during the last year, banking and financial security information, insurance update, funerals and planning, medications and safety, update from the area Drug Task Force, and legislative update.

## Effingham Retired Educators Complete Library Project At Encompass Academy

A group of members of the Effingham County Retired Educators unit recently completed their local school project for the 2022-23 year. During the fall of 2022, Stacy Boyett, Coordinator of the Encompass Academy, reached out to the EREA to ask if our unit would be interested in setting up a library for the students at this campus. EnCompass Academy is part of the continuum of special education support and services that Effingham County offers to its students. The volunteer members were Patsy Zeigler (chair), Sandra Moore (co-chair), Tania Kessler, Laura Harrelson, Amy Helmly, Mary Ann Calloway (and husband, Roy), Susan Hartzog, Sue Ellen Exley, and Vicky Webb.

The group began their project in September, 2022 by sorting through hundreds of fiction books according to the reading level. Non-fiction books, teacher reference books, classroom sets and other books were grouped in separate areas of the library. We appreciated all of the donations of books from the county schools and various individuals. A nice reading area was established with a new rug, and seating for a small group storytime and/or reading time. Bulletin board décor, banners, posters, and a window treatment were added to enhance the overall ambiance of the library.

It was no small task, but the group worked diligently to complete this project. These volunteers along with other EREA members sponsored a bake sale to help fund the various items for the library. A grand opening celebration was held on Friday, February 17, 2022 and attended by BOE members, Dr. Yancy Ford, retired educators, staff and others. Ms. Boyett and her staff chose to dedicate the library in memory of Dr. Greg Arnsdorff, longtime retired educator who was instrumental in establishing the idea and plans for the EnCompass campus to help educate the special education students and provide support services.

The members of the EREA unit wish to thank Ms. Boyette and staff for this wonderful opportunity to continue our efforts in helping meet the educational needs of the boys and girls of Effingham County.



Totes to Tots began as a project in Georgia when some folks saw a need to take better care of our foster children. Totes to Tots provides age-appropriate luggage for our youngsters. Our goal is to raise \$35,500 for this cause. More information, goals for units, and the donation form can be found on the GREA website. Feel free to write the CEO, Darrell Doby, at <http://www.totestotots.org> or call him at his office 678-751-2104 or cell 404-472-4956.

# HELP US PLAN THE 2024 GREA CONVENTION!

## ***GET ON THE BUS!***

2023-2024



Fellowship • Service • Support

The 2024 GREA Convention will be in Athens, Georgia at the Classic Center on the UGA Campus. The dates are May 7, 8 and 9.

Help us with ideas for Breakout Sessions that you would like to see. Have you had a speaker at your local unit that you enjoyed? Is there a topic you think would be exceptionally helpful for our group? Do you do a presentation that you might like to share?

We welcome all ideas!

Please email Liz Bouis, Convention Chair,  
at [lizbouis@gmail.com](mailto:lizbouis@gmail.com) with your ideas!

# New GREA Dental and Vision "Member Resource Center"

AMBA has offered GREA members high quality, affordable dental and vision coverage for nearly 20 years. GREA members have requested, and AMBA has responded, with a new **Member Resource Center** for existing policyholders! Member can access plan information and new ID cards, pay a bill or update payment or contact information, and find answers and additional information. Our call center is still available to handle all questions about new and existing policies and can be reached at 800-258-7041 M-F 9-6. To access the new membership portal, visit [myaccount.ambabenefits.com](http://myaccount.ambabenefits.com) to get started. Not a dental or vision participant? Explore your options at [ambadentalvision.com/grea](http://ambadentalvision.com/grea).



## Welcome to the Member Resource Center!

- **Step 1)** Visit [myaccount.ambabenefits.com](http://myaccount.ambabenefits.com)
- **Step 2)** Set up an account by clicking "Sign up now" (all first-time users must set up an account online, regardless of how long you have had coverage)
- **Step 3)** Explore the options on the menu, update your account.

For account set up support  
please call 877-845-AMBA (2622)

Thank you for your participation in AMBA benefits through our partnership with GREA. Remember to take advantage of your **free member benefits** like [myAMBAdiscounts.com](http://myAMBAdiscounts.com) and schedule your free annual benefits review. Other GREA plans include solutions for long term care, critical illness and hospitalization coverage, and emergency transportation from home, away or abroad. Get started with a local representative today by registering at [amba-review.com](http://amba-review.com).

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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

Published quarterly by GREA

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