

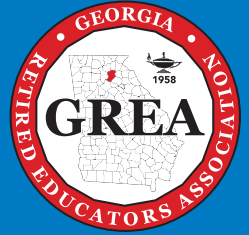
THE GRE A BULLETIN

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A Message from the President

by Dr. Sallie Mills, President



Greetings, Georgia Retired Educators Association family. Our 2025–2026 Convention was a wonderful event, and the spirit of “Fellowship, Service, and Support” was evident throughout. Thank you to President Geraldine Reid, convention planner Liz Bouis, and your team for a job well done. I also want to thank the nominating and

election committee for selecting me to serve as your GRE A President for 2026–2027.

As I step into the role of your GRE A President, my heart overflows with gratitude. Standing before a community of individuals who have collectively shaped the future of Georgia is both humbling and exhilarating. We have dedicated our careers to lighting the way for others, and our journey is far from over. This year, our rallying call is simple yet powerful: **Sound the Trumpet for the Georgia Retired Educators Association**. A trumpet call is not a quiet whisper; it is a bold, resonant sound meant to gather people, capture attention, and inspire action. Together, we will make our voices heard for the vital work retired educators continue to do every single day.

Sounding the Trumpet for Fellowship: This year, let us gather intentionally, share our stories, and laugh together. Our local units are the perfect places to build community, strengthen friendships, and ensure that no retired educator walks alone.

Sounding the Trumpet for Service: Educators never truly stop teaching or caring. Our communities still need our wisdom, our mentorship, and our helping hands. Through local volunteer initiatives, scholarship support for future teachers, and community outreach, we will show Georgia that retired educators remain a driving force for good.

Sounding the Trumpet for Support: We must protect and uplift one another. GRE A will remain a strong advocate for your well-being, your health benefits, and your retirement security. Beyond advocacy, support means checking in on a colleague, lifting up a peer in

a time of need, and being a reliable resource for those newly transitioning into retirement.

My goals for GRE A this year are:

1. Increase GRE A membership.
2. Encourage members to become active at both the local and state levels.
3. Encourage all units to participate in the T-shirt design contest.
4. Encourage all units to sound the trumpet for fellowship, service, and support.
5. Invite a school jazz ensemble or trumpet player to your local meeting.
6. Encourage all units to donate to the American Diabetes Association.

In keeping with our mission of charity and service, let us **“Sound the Trumpet”** as we support the American Diabetes Association. Together, our collective efforts can help advance education, research, advocacy, and support for those affected by diabetes.



A Message from the President-Elect

by Liz Bouis



Liz Bouis

Since the beginning of time, people have watched the night sky to explain events in their daily lives. In July and August, you will have a great view of the Milky Way, of which two of the brightest stars are in the constellations of *Aquila* (the Eagle) and *Lyra* (the Harp). The *Aquila* is named for the eagle that carried Zeus' thunderbolts, while the *Lyra* is named for the lyre of Orpheus. Also, the Perseid Meteor Shower will be visible in mid-August. You, like John Denver, can see "it raining fire in the sky." These meteor showers come from the direction of the Perseus constellation and are named for the sons of the Greek hero Perseus, who traveled across the ancient world and founded dynasties throughout.

In our GREA world, GREA members, new and experienced, will cover the state like the Milky Way as planning and meetings begin. The Executive Board members will scatter across Georgia for the Area Meetings just like the meteor showers will cross the sky. Area Directors will carry information and guidance rather than thunderbolts, and we will all play the trumpet rather than the lyre. I think these are all great signs for an amazing year to come!

Thank you very much for allowing me to serve as president-elect. I look forward to spending the upcoming year learning from President, Dr. Sallie Mills, as well as planning the 2027 Convention. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions, concerns, or ideas.

A Message from the Past-President

by Geraldine Reid



Geraldine Reid

What a superb year I've had! I've been having so much fun that time has flown by! I shall always cherish these memories. I would like to thank EVERYONE who had a part in planning and participating throughout the year.

I was so happy and grateful for your acceptance and support of my theme; "Keeping the Vision." I was so proud to see all the different ways the room was decorated at the area meetings, local unit meetings, and the convention. Thank you for going the extra mile.

Thanks to all the units who helped to recruit new members for GREA 2025-2026. Membership is the backbone of our organization.

I am so excited and appreciative for generous contribution to my project to Wellstar Children's Hospital of Georgia. Together we helped create life-changing medical services needed for children with critical illnesses.

I look forward to the next chapter of GREA history under Dr. Sallie Mills. I can assure you that it will be one of

the best written.

I want to thank you for your encouragement for "Keeping the Vision" because without the vision the organization will perish!

TRS News

by Dr. Jason Branch, Executive Director



Dr. Jason Branch

The familiar sights and sounds of spring have come and gone in Georgia. A recent morning glance found the yellow southern snow, known as pollen, coating our cars; An April look upward into the sky revealed the white golf balls of The Masters flying freely in Augusta; A ride through South Georgia in May revealed the sweet smell of Vidalia Onions; And the laughter, excitement, and enthusiasm of students as the school year came to a close signaled that summer has arrived.

As educators, not unlike professional athletes, our lives revolve around a season. The season of the school year takes time, focus, preparation, and stamina. Late nights and early mornings come and go as the calling of impacting young people is lived daily through the service of our 300,000 active TRS members, known simply by the time-honored title of Teacher.

As a fellow TRS retiree, please join me in thanking our active teachers, administrators, and education professionals for their current efforts in the ever-changing and complex world of education. Thank them for imparting wisdom and knowledge to roughly 1.7 million students in Georgia and helping them transfer that knowledge into daily application. Thank them for embracing a lifestyle of service to make our world a better place. Thank them for leading through 180 days of challenges and triumphs to create generational impact on students, families, and communities. Now, turn the mirror inward, and pat yourself on the back for doing the same for so many days, weeks, years, and decades prior to retirement. You have made a significant difference as well, and your service is appreciated and valued.

The torch may have been passed, but the impact of the flame remains!

Now, it is time to do something for yourself! That is right, I said it, it is time to focus on you. The reward for your service is intact, but it needs maintenance. Created in 1943 and delivering the first monthly benefit in March of 1945, the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia stands prepared to allow educators to "retire with dignity." Nearly 7000 educators will do just that this year, joining 157,000 of us that have already achieved that milestone.

I would ask you and them to consider three questions.

1. Do you have an online TRS account?
2. Do you have beneficiaries designated and updated on your TRS account?
3. Have you set up Multifactor Authentication (MFA) to

greater protect your TRS account?

Forty-five percent or 130,000 of our members do not have an active online account. This step takes minutes to set up and allows for easy access to your yearly TRS statements and other pertinent information. It should be step one in your TRS journey.

Unfortunately, the lack of individuals updating and designating beneficiaries is an even larger number. Fifty percent or approximately 151,000 members do not have beneficiaries designated should tragedy strike. This simple step can be easily done within your online account. Please do it today to ensure that your loved ones receive the benefit you worked so hard to provide.

Finally, seventy percent of those TRS members with online accounts have yet to set up MFA. This number totals 116,000 individuals. The process takes two minutes to complete and will add an unmatched layer of security to your account.

Educators give so much of their time and attention to others. Take these important steps to do something significant for you and your family. It will have a lasting impact.

From the Executive Director's Desk

by Johnny Smith



Johnny Smith

May is finally over and our convention has come and gone. There are so many people who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make our convention a success. I want to thank now Past President Geraldine Reid and Convention Chair Liz Bouis for all they did to make the convention a hit. Work started following last year's convention to plan for this year's convention. There are so many tiny details that must be planned for and executed. These two ladies did an incredible amount of work.

I would like to take this opportunity to explain to all of you what goes in to choosing a convention site. There are several factors that limit our choices for where we hold our convention. First, and foremost, our members have made it clear they want a convention site that has an attached hotel. You want to come to convention, park your car, and never move it again until the convention is over (unless you have planned a side trip to Hamrick's!). That factor alone severely limits our choices. Secondly, you do not want to stay in the Atlanta Metro area. Being aware of costs, we want to stay in a hotel with a room rate less than \$200 per night. Lastly, we need a hotel that can provide GREA with a total of 200 room nights for the two nights of the convention.

In the past, GREA used to use the convention hotel at Stone Mountain, but when that hotel went private and lost its affiliation with Marriott, it went downhill dramatically and is no longer an option for our use. Currently, the only hotel that meets all our requirements is the Augusta

Marriott. Macon is currently studying building such a facility, but it is at least two years or more in the future. Savannah is in the process of building a state-owned hotel adjacent to their convention center and we will certainly visit it when it is completed. We tried to use Athens last year, but our members were spread among three hotels. We visited Columbus but the main hotel is across the street from the convention center, and we would again be spread among three hotels with members at outlying hotels having to drive to the convention center.

Considering all these factors, the Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center checks off all the boxes. The facilities are exceptional, the staff is warm and friendly, and the services provided are outstanding. We will continue to look for more facilities as they become available.

I hope each one of you has an outstanding summer. I know many units do not meet during the summer but the work at the GREA office never stops. Give us a call or come visit us when you can.

A Word from the Foundation

by Barbara T. Wilcher, GRE Foundation Chair



Barbara Wilcher

Wow, GREA! You did it again!!! Thanks to the generosity of the local units and those individuals who opened their hearts and pockets to help others, the GRE Foundation collected enough money (\$5,643) for five and a half scholarships again this year. Two thousand five hundred was from the Silent Auction. What an Awesome God we serve!!! Our goal next year is to award 30 scholarships. With your help, I know we can accomplish our goal. So, I am asking each GREA member to save \$3 or more each month to donate to the GRE Foundation.

If you have not read about the GRE Foundation, please go to the GREA home page and click on Foundation. This should give you a better understanding of who we are and what we do. Also, there are different types of scholarships that can be awarded. You can give an annual scholarship of \$1000, a one-time scholarship of \$1000, or a Legacy Scholarship. A Legacy Scholarship is a contribution of \$30,000 or more to the Foundation. A Legacy Scholarship will be given in your or your designee's honor or memory every year. We make every effort to award this scholarship to someone in your Area. Again, I can't thank you enough for your support. When we work together, there is nothing GREA can't do.

Enjoy your summer and continue to *Keep the Vision as you Sound the Trumpet* in 2026-2027.

The GRE Foundation Board publicly acknowledges and thanks Mrs. Vivian Teasley for the one-thousand-dollar scholarship given in her son's honor. We extend our sincere condolences to her and her family.

News From GREA Local Units

Atlanta REA continuously provides information on opportunities and benefits for the welfare of retired educators. This year representatives from TRS and local politicians were invited to share important information and to address concerns. Additionally, representatives from AMBA presented helpful information and resources related to insurance, benefits and enrollment. During another unit meeting, safety and fire prevention tips were provided by the Atlanta Fire Department. Through several service projects we stay connected to the community. For the third consecutive year AREA has donated to Beecher Hill Elementary School for teacher appreciation. Also, we are committed to donating to Lady T's Homeless Ministry. We also award a \$1000.00 scholarship annually to a college student who is working towards becoming a future educator.

Ben Hill-Irwin REA President Sheila Jefferson, President Elect-Maude Russell, and the REA members presented in the month of March and April, three scholarships to the Fitzgerald High School and Irwin County High School star students and Wiregrass Technical College Goal student. Each recipient received a \$500 scholarship. We also recognize one of the members who also set up the area for us to have our meetings. Thank you to everyone who worked hard to make this year a success.

Bibb County REA had an exciting March. The members enjoyed an excursion on Amelia Island. It was an educational, relaxing, and fun-filled trip. The river cruise was most exciting. The April meeting was dubbed *Awards and Recognition Day*. Members were honored for dedicated service. The following awards/certificates were granted: *BREA Shining Starts Award*, *BREA Extra Mile Awards*, *BREA Outstanding Retired Educator Award*, *BREA Perfect Attendance Certificates*, *BREA Officers Certificates*, and *BREA committee Chairs and Members Certificates*. A memorial service celebrating the life and educational service of deceased BREA members was the initial focus of the May meeting. A slide show portraying pictures of deceased members, length of service, and membership affiliation was shown. Afterwards, five awards were granted: *The Bibb Retired Educator of the Year Award*, *Georgia Retired Educator of the Year Award*, *Macedonia Church Awards*, *Scholarship Awards* to seniors from Central, Howard, and Westside High School, and *Community Impact Awards*: Midsouth Community Credit Union, Middle Georgia Regional Commission, *Extra Mile Award*—Superintendent Dan Sims, and *You Make a Difference Award*—Belvin D. Ware, Pastor, Macedonia Baptist Church. Other BREA awards were presented by President Sharon Homer.

Bulloch County REA membership committee held a membership drive for retirees at the Bulloch County Schools Retirement Banquet on May 4, 2026. BREA members shared pertinent information about the Bulloch Retired Educators Association (BREA) and the Georgia Retired Educators Association (GREA). President Wilhemina Walker, President-Elect Gail Dismuke and several other BREA members attended the GREA 66th Annual Convention in Augusta on May 5-7, 2026. On May 13, 2026, at the local BREA meeting, members welcomed the new scholarship recipients. A Memorial Service was held to honor the memory of four members, and BREA Treasurer, Johnny Tremble installed the 2026-2027 officers: President Gail Dismuke, President-Elect Carolyn Lota, Treasurer Johnny Tremble, Secretary Glennara Martin, and Parliamentarian Wilhemina Walker.

Burke County REA had Dr. Jeffery Heggs, BCREA's Outstanding Educator of the Year, 1st Black Media Specialist in Burke County and recipient of the prestigious Milken Award as our guest in March. He shared his values - faith, family and purpose. He thanked his former teachers for their guidance and showed gratitude for his Mentor, Dr. Walter Seabrooks who stated that he enjoyed witnessing Heggs' dedication and leadership skills. The guest for April's meeting was Angela Barefield, Instructor at YMCA. She shared "chair exercises and relaxation techniques" to use at home. She urged us to take care of our mind, body and soul to remain healthy. Dr. Thaddeus Schubert used the Theme: "Sound the Trumpet Fellowship, Service and Support," as he presented BCREA scholarship candidates for introduction and mini-interviews. Following a group photo, students were given yard signs to display at their homes. Several of our members attended GREA Convention May 5-7th in Augusta, Ga. It was not only enjoyable but also informative. We were elated to have Dr. Roger Williams, Area Director in our midst in May. He always has words of wisdom to share prior to installing officers. Certificates were presented to members. We ended on a high note as we still maintain the "Unit of Excellence" and "Unit of Distinction" Status.

Butts County REA members traveled to Williamson, Ga. In April to the Barnstormer's Grill. Barnstormers are early pilots who flew around the country doing air shows, performing stunts, and giving airplane rides sometimes using old barns as hangars. Members and guests enjoyed a good day of being together. May was a busy month with members attending the GREA State Convention in Augusta, Ga. BREA hosted a retirement reception for Butts County School Employees where seven joined GREA. Our BREA Scholarship was awarded to Anslie Atkinson at Jackson High School's Senior Honors Night. The June meeting was held at the Blind Pig Restaurant near Jackson Lake for our annual picnic. We wrapped up the year and look forward to a new year of "Sounding the Trumpet."

Chatham REA convened its final business meeting of the 2025-2026 program year on Monday, April 13, 2026, at the Southwest Chatham Library. During the meeting, Dr. Connie Cooper recognized the outgoing officers for their dedicated service and leadership throughout the year. She then conducted the installation ceremony for the incoming officers who will lead the organization during the 2026-2027 program year. Following the installation, outgoing President Dr. Kathy B. Grant officially passed the gavel to incoming President Dr. Pamela D. West. Chatham REA extends its sincere appreciation to all members and supporters for their commitment throughout the year. Members are encouraged to enjoy a fun, safe, and restful summer. The association looks forward to welcoming everyone back on Monday, September 14, 2026, for the first meeting of the 2026-2027 program year.

Cherokee REA Spring 2026 can be marked as the season of change as we enjoyed celebrating the transition of winter to spring with our honored GREA guests and speakers for the March meeting: Johnny Smith, Frank Hutchison, Jesse Hunter, Liz Bouis, Dr. Bill Sloan, and member Mike McGowan, a lobbyist representing public education during legislative sessions. Another change was a contingency of CREA members attending the Area 15 spring cluster meeting and enjoying a wonderful program, music, door prizes, and meal. Change also happened in the installation of new officers for the 2026-2028

term: Leslie Shelley, President, Connie Garrison, President-elect, Richie Carnes, Treasurer, Marie Warbington, Secretary, and Dixie Harper and Esther Brenneman sharing membership duties. Other changes included a tour of the new state of the art Cherokee High School opening in the fall of 2026 as well as the assignment of a new principal and assistant principal for Ralph Bunche Center (RBC), our major community project recipients. CREA was well represented at this year's GREA convention and had Leslie Shelley serve as a session presenter and Letitia Cline as the technology specialist for the breakfast awards presentation. Activities included CREA members assisting with RBC's students' field day and an ice cream social for the staff. Many members attended the Cherokee County Education Foundation GALA to raise money for teacher grants for classroom projects as well as a musical presentation of Cherokee School District's Academy Street Theater's *The Fiddler on the Roof*. This also marked the curtain call for Director Christian Powell Reed who is retiring. So, here's to enjoying a summer of rest before gearing up for the continued success of CREA under the leadership of the new officers and all they will accomplish!

Coweta REA emphasized SERVICE during the Spring as CARE retirees were busy reviewing applications for the scholarships to be presented to a future educator from each of Coweta County School System's high schools (East Coweta, Newnan, Northgate). A \$1000 scholarship was awarded at each high school's Honors Night ceremony. CARE members said it felt good to present these scholarships, but they found even more gratification in meeting and talking personally with the three recipients and their parents at the ice cream social hosted by CARE. Emphasizing SUPPORT, CARE members continued "Keeping The Vision" by showing appreciation for current educators: The local unit prepared "Enjoy-mint" baskets for each CCSS middle school. A sign on each basket of assorted mints thanked active educators for their "commit-mint," "invest-mint," "encourage-mint," and "involve-mint." It was CARE's hope that these baskets would also promote future growth within the local organization. Finally, emphasizing FELLOWSHIP, President Marie Estep concluded the year by expressing gratitude to members who had stepped up to offer extra service to CARE and GREA this year. President Estep presented individual tokens of appreciation to several members at a luncheon hosted by member Susan Smith at her family's Vintage home.

Crawford County REA had a very busy and successful year. We volunteered for school and community events, presented gift certificates to all new CC teachers, honored the CC Teacher of the Year, awarded scholarships to the 2026 Valedictorian and Salutatorian, and supported the Baskets of Joy ministry. We held two silent auctions, had fundraisers for our scholarship fund, and gave generously to the Wellstar Children's Hospital of Georgia. We celebrated Retired Educators Week, Veterans' Day, Christmas, and CCREA group and individual accomplishments, and honored CCREA members who had passed away. Inspiring programs included AMBA's Debbie Scarborough, Randy Fabricius from Middle GA Honor Flight, talented musician Zach Allen, Area 8 Director LF Tompkins, author and educator Ed Grisamore, and Sheriff David Newberry (Human Trafficking). Throughout the year, we entertained guests and potential members, encouraged each other, and enjoyed fun and fellowship. Each of our 9 meetings ended with lunch and a drawing for Retired Educator of the Month. We kept in touch through emails, texts, newsletters, and Facebook posts. At the GREA Convention, our unit received

all certificates and was proud to be recognized as a Unit of Excellence and a Unit of Distinction. Over the Summer, President Wendy Tidwell and members of the Executive Committee will be hard at work planning and preparing for the 2026-2027 year.

Decatur/DeKalb REA has been busy in their revitalization process. During our second Tuesday monthly meetings, at Tucker's Piccadilly Restaurant, members have received a plethora of information thus far this year. We have been encouraged to reevaluate not only personal insurance coverage but to engage in intentional workout/exercise routines, practice dedicated menu planning, understand additional supplement support, and individual sharing with the group the many scientific contributions of women to our world. The highlight of this year's "Keeping the Vision 2025-2026: Fellowship, Service, Support" challenge has been our focus on a selected local community project. The chapter selected a section of Pruitt Health Center Nursing Home as our project. Not limited to individual visitations, members bagged and delivered to each person and staff in the unit, both comfort and personal care items!! Well received by residents and pleasing for the membership.

Dougherty County REA concluded another successful year distinguished by fellowship, dedicated service, and unwavering support. The months of March and April were particularly eventful, offering meaningful opportunities for engagement, outreach, and celebration among members and supporters alike. Throughout March, the unit welcomed special guests and continued its emphasis on service to the community. Among the month's noteworthy activities were the following: Providing members with wellness information and encouragement, donating more than 100 coats to children in need within the community, extending a warm and gracious welcome to newly retired educators. April provided a fitting occasion to recognize and celebrate members whose outstanding contributions have strengthened the work, purpose, and mission of the unit. To conclude the year, approximately 42 retired educators and supporters attended the live performance of *"Ain't Misbehaving"* in Tyrone, Georgia. Members were further encouraged by the decision of all current officers to continue serving during the 2026-2027 year, ensuring continuity in leadership and support for the organization's ongoing work. In addition, several teachers attended the 66th Annual Convention in Augusta, Georgia. The convention was a rewarding experience, and attendees returned inspired, encouraged, and eager to contribute to another successful year of service and fellowship.

Effingham REA held their March meeting on 3-9-26 and enjoyed hearing about the Butterfly Jail Ministry. Martha Jenkins enlightened the group about this important ministry where provisions are given to the women once they are released from their jail service. Also, we elected our new Secretary, Sylvia Arnsdorff, and Treasurer, Brenda Barrow. They will be installed at the May meeting. Jeff Lariscy, retired educator who operates a Technology business, spoke to the group about tech spam, anti-virus protection, password usage, etc. Sandra Moore, Pam Anderegg, Debbie Snooks, Kim Johnson, and Katy Fleming represented our unit at the GREA Convention in May. They attended break-out sessions, enjoyed the banquet foods and fellowship, and the entertainment. Our scholarship recipients, new officers, committee chairs, will be introduced at our annual banquet on September 21. The Planning Committee met on June 1 to decide on banquet plans, speakers for the next year, EREA

projects, and bake sales. We are looking forward to hosting our 2026 retirees during upcoming year!

Fayette County REA has had a very productive year! Our membership increased, we had high attendance at our meetings, we supported our active teachers often and not only awarded our high school scholarship but added a paraprofessional scholarship as well. At our March meeting we recognized members who have passed away. Andrea Donila and Adrine Green presented a moving memorial. Judge Jason Thompson of the Georgia State Court discussed Juvenile Law in Fayette County and reviewed the programs he designed to help our community, including a very successful DUI Court program. In April Christy Todd, Chief of Staff at the Georgia Department of Education spoke. She mentioned the many education bills that were passed this legislative session and the programs designed to support prospective and new teachers. Christy was educated in Fayette County, and we are very proud of her many accomplishments and support for Georgia's students. In May FCREA presented academic awards to top middle school students for academic achievement, participation in school activities, and leadership qualities. We also celebrated future educators in Fayette County high schools with gift cards and notes of encouragement. This was our fourth year to participate in Educators Signing Day. At this year's scholarship luncheon the 2026 High School recipient, Lincoln Riche, from Whitewater High School, was awarded a \$1500 scholarship. FCREA celebrates the next generation of teachers who will continue shaping minds, empowering communities, and making a lasting difference in the lives of students. Retired educators' legacy lives on through the passion, dedication, and purpose of those preparing to lead tomorrow's classrooms.

Floyd-Rome REA had a very busy and successful year with President Jill Shepherd working on new membership and planning each meeting to be interesting and helpful for members. Our members were very generous in making donations for community service projects with each meeting having a special project. We gave \$1,000 scholarships to two Berry College students and two Shorter College students. We also gave a student attending Rome High School and one attending a Floyd County high school each a \$500 scholarship. We had four members to attend the Area 15 Cluster meeting in Cedartown. President Jill Shepherd attended the GREA State Convention in August and received the "Unit of Distinction" for FRREA. Area Director, Frank Hutcheson installed the 2026-2027 officers at our May meeting. We also had a presentation of the memorial service by our Neurology Chair, Merita Humphrey, of eight members who had passed away this year. President Jill Shepherd and several of our members packed "goodie bags" to be delivered to retiring teachers before the end of the school year. Each bag contained information about our unit and a ticket for a free lunch at one of our meetings. Our president and new officers are already planning for an exciting new year.

Gilmer REA hosted a reception for staff retiring from the Gilmer County School System. Superintendent Dr. Ridley welcomed the Retirees and thanked them for their years of service, for a combined total of 298 years! Local businesses donated gift certificates: Mountain Remedies (massage), Haylee Jade Esthetics (facial), Grit & Mane (haircut and styling), Vanity Salon (2 haircuts and styling). United Community Bank donated notepads and pens. Any Retired educators from Gilmer County, Georgia and out of state are welcomed to join Gilmer REA and

Georgia Retired Educators Association (GREA). The next meeting is June 10th at noon. Check out the Community Calendar in June in the Times Courier.

Grady REA members have been busy in Cairo. We delivered a basket of goodies to each school for faculty and staff for Teacher Appreciation Week. Some members volunteered at the Belk Charity event to raise money to give 2nd year teachers a scholarship in the Fall. This summer, some of our members are volunteering at a Summer Reading Camp that's sponsored by a non, T & S Foundation/Kids Against Hunger. Teachers help students through Reading games, reading books, Journaling, and more. We're looking forward to upcoming events.

Griffin-Spalding REA welcomed Executive Director Johnny Smith and Area 10 Director Sherry Taylor to our March meeting. Mr. Smith was both entertaining and informative and we always enjoy Sherry. President Leola Hill reported that she enjoyed the camaraderie, fellowship, and valuable information shared at the Annual Convention, and we look forward to "sounding the trumpet" with Dr. Mills in the coming year. We concluded our 2025-2026 meeting cycle by awarding a scholarship to an aspiring teacher. While we were pleased to present the scholarship, we were especially delighted that the recipient's mother, who accompanied her to the meeting, was a former student of several of our members. Upon entering the room, she thanked us for the role we played in her education and for awarding a scholarship to her daughter. It was a truly gratifying and heartwarming moment for all of us!

Hall/Gainesville REA had a very busy Spring. We had programs from Matt Dubnik, State Legislator, and from Peach State Bank. Matt spoke about the focus the legislature has placed on early learning, specifically third grade reading. Legislation was passed this year to fund a literacy coach in every elementary school in the state. Peach State Bank sent three of its experts along with members of the Hall County Sheriff's Department to present various aspects of fraud and cybersecurity. In addition, members were provided with packets from the bank that included publications from various entities that dealt with fraud. Jane Hollingsworth, president, attended the convention in Augusta. The banquets and breakfasts provided wonderful food, and break-out sessions presented a lot of relevant information. The Hall/Gainesville chapter of GREA was awarded a unit of excellence. In the upcoming year, Joyce Tharpe will be the new president of HGREA.

Harris County REA held its March meeting with guest speaker Johnny Smith, Executive Director of GREA. Mr. Smith shared information on how GREA helps protect retiree benefits. We concluded our year May 20, with Representative Vance Smith sharing information on the legislative process and his role in assisting constituents. New Officers were installed, a meal was shared and door prizes were awarded.

Laurens/Dublin REA. Are there any future educators in the Laurens Dublin REA Unit? Yes, there are 2 future educators receiving scholarships donated by membership and 1 scholarship expedited by LDREA which was awarded in memory of Rachel G. Branch by her family. As 2026-2028 LDREA President Robyn Thomas states, "The same drive that got you through high school is the same drive that will build your future. College isn't about the degree you'll earn; it's about the person you're becoming. We

are so proud of the journey you have chosen and to be a part of your journey." Support always for our future educators!

Lee County REA members enjoyed informative meetings with Penny Knight, from the Exchange Club of Lee County, State Representative Bill Yerda, and an end-of-life and estate planning presentation by Joseph and Lee Jones, who are local funeral directors. Several members brought nonperishable food donations for the local Food Pantry, as well as books for the free Little Book House that we sponsor. Each meeting, members are asked to share concerns, illnesses, and praises for members and families. Birthdays are remembered with cards being mailed. Literacy remains a major focus of our community service. Reading in schools, Family Literacy Night at the library, Books for Kids, and other opportunities to volunteer, keep members in touch with the schools. The end of the year covered dish luncheon was a celebration honoring STAR teacher and STAR student, as well as presentations to our scholarship recipients. Members attending the GREA Convention spoke about the wonderful meetings. Next year, socialization will begin at 10:40, and meetings at 11:00. Members were reminded that we have a Facebook page. AMBA sponsored a luncheon for retired teachers, giving them an opportunity to learn about insurance coverage, and what our local branch does. Thank you Debbie Scarborough! Our fellowship time prior to meetings encourages old friends and new to connect and share what they are doing as retired educators who are Keeping the Vision!

Madison County REA was very busy during the last half of our 2025-26 year. Unit members had a fun time socializing as we signed Valentine Cards which were delivered to residents of the three local nursing homes in Madison County. Honoring four outstanding educators serving in our local schools was the highlight of our March meeting. Unit member awards were presented in April. Our year ended with the recipients of our Education Scholarships being recognized. Our unit also enjoyed two informational programs presented by a local banker and a representative from a local funeral home. Socks, pajamas, underwear were collected for the Madison County DFCS and food items were donated to the Madison County Food Bank and the "In the Middle Meals" program. It brings great joy supporting these service projects! Madison County Retired Educators Association was represented by seven members at the GREA State Convention. Madison County Retired Educators Association was recognized as a Unit of Distinction!

Mitchell/Baker REA enjoyed an active and meaningful spring season filled with educational opportunities, community service, and fellowship. In March, members welcomed Debbie Scarborough of AMBA as the guest speaker. Ms. Scarborough provided valuable information and resources designed to help retirees navigate the retirement journey with confidence. Members appreciated the practical guidance and insights shared during her presentation. In April, the association hosted Laura Cox-Hartsfield, Mitchell County Election Superintendent, who provided an informative overview of the voting process and the many offices appearing on upcoming ballots. Her presentation helped members better understand election procedures and emphasized the importance of staying informed and engaged citizens. Also in April, the Mitchell-Baker Retired Educators continued their commitment to supporting local educators through the annual Treats for Teachers project. Treat bags containing crackers, granola bars, fruit cups, and bottled water

were delivered to every staff member in the local school system as a token of appreciation for their dedication to students and education. In May, members participated in a community service project at the local Flint River Arts Council, where they painted decorative vases. These handcrafted gifts were later shared with residents of Savannah Court Assisted Living Facility, bringing smiles and encouragement to members of the community. The association concluded the season on a high note in June with a picnic at the Mitchell-Baker Retired Educators Park. The event featured delicious food, games, laughter, and fellowship among members. A special thank-you is extended to Ms. Emma Keaton, who generously sponsored the luncheon in honor and memory of her husband, James Keaton, a former Board of Education member whose service and dedication to education continue to be remembered and appreciated. The Mitchell-Baker Retired Educators Association remains committed to service, advocacy, and fellowship while continuing to make a positive impact throughout the community.

Muscogee REA meeting April 10th was cheerfully to order, and everyone was welcomed everyone by Patricia Davis. She gave an update on all the volunteer opportunities that our members have helped with so far this year and reminded members of upcoming volunteer opportunities. Josie Johnson led the pledge and gave the inspirational "When it rains it pours", reminding us how the Lord pours his love and blessings on us even when we undergo challenges and hardships. Carole Mashburn, Membership Chair, recognized George Corradino as an Emeritus Member. George delighted us all by playing "Fly Me to the Moon" on his saxophone! Carole interviewed George with several questions about his life and career. His advice to us, which was given to him by his father, is "to surround yourself with good people". We were blessed to have Sandra Hawthorne, Local Chapter President of AARP, Inc. with us who gave us information on the local chapter, how to join, and benefits and resources that are available. Dr. Ralph Huling, 2026 Chair of the Nominating Committee presented the 2026-27 slate of officers which was approved by the membership. Dr. Marietta Webb, GREA Area 9 Director, informed us that the Area 9 and 10 meeting will be held at the St. Luke Ministry Center on August 20, 2026, from 9:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Our last meeting of the year, June 12, 2026, was very special in that a memorial video was presented which recognized the Muscogee REA members who had passed away in the last year. The 2026-2027 officers were installed, and scholarships were presented to five very deserving applicants. The meeting ended with current President Patricia Davis presenting the gavel to incoming President Dr. Ralph Huling.

Newton County REA March 5 meeting was on new ways to stay active. Our speaker provided information about one of the local community organizations that offers ways to keep our minds and bodies healthy. March 20 had us delivering snacks to 9 schools to show our appreciation. This was an early release day, so they had snacks for their afternoon meetings. At our April 2 meeting, we hosted Laurie Riley from Keep Newton Beautiful. She explained county litter pick-up, landfills, and the county recycling issues. She provided information about volunteering if we were interested. Co-Presidents Holly Novajovsky and Beth Moore attended the GREA Convention in Augusta from May 5-7. NCREA had members at the Newton County Schools Retirement Dinner to greet the new retirees and provide information about GREA and NCREA. May 14 was our final meeting for 2025-26. We held a catered meal and reviewed our awards, including Unit of

Distinction. We also held our memorial for those members we lost during the year. We have our trumpets ready to Sound the Trumpets for 2026-2027!

Oglethorpe County REA welcomed Dink NeSmith to our April meeting. He talked about how he purchased (really saved) our local newspaper and created an internship program with UGA in which the interns are responsible for creating The Oglethorpe Echo each week. We also celebrated former GREA and OCREA president, Kate Finch's 90th birthday and GREA Emeritus standing. May was a very busy month for OCREA! Kate and her daughter Kathy attended the GREA convention. Kate relayed the news about our new president and mission at our May meeting. We also heard from our local business owner, Kendall Strickland about his journey to opening his business, Strickland Pride Produce, and presented our Blessings & Brags Bag donations to the Lena Wise Community Center. We celebrated our Oglethorpe teachers with baskets full of goodies during Teacher Appreciation Week. Christi Fordyce and Leslie Jones presented OCREA awards and scholarships to our middle school students, high school students, and Teachers of the Year. Our president, Leslie, attended the Area 17 Presidents meeting led by Suellen Jones. OCREA held their 2026-2027 planning meeting on June 10th and are ready for a new fun year!

Peach County REA members were very active during the second half of the year. Throughout those months, several speakers shared motivational messages as well as health and fitness information. Presenters also provided information about adult day health care, AMBA, and Concerned Citizens voter education. Scholarships were awarded to high school graduates who will attend Fort Valley State University in the coming academic year. Gift cards were given to students with perfect attendance and to staff members. In addition, Fort Valley State University students received monetary assistance to help cover the cost of the GACE test. PCREA has been recognized as a Unit of Distinction.

Pickens County REA was proud to receive a Unit of Distinction at the May 2026 GREA State Convention and looks forward to attending the August Area meeting in Cedartown. Nine articles were published in our local newspaper, *Pickens County Progress*. Our Summer Planning Meeting Brunch will be hosted by Incoming President Traci Buckingham at her home with the new Board and Committee members attending (Traci Buckingham, President; Dr. Eve Sauer, Past President; President Elect, Leslie Miller; Treasurer, Debra Peal; Secretary, Kathy Wallace; and Mary Ellen Johnson, Member-at-Large). Our Community support and Activities this past year include Ferst Readers of Pickens County, Weekend Snack Program, North Georgia Partners, Distribution of snacks to Pickens County Educators and Staff, Festival of Trees at Pickens County Library, Appalachian Children Emergency Shelter (ACES), Cares for Pickens County (foodbank), Georgia Retired Educators Museum, Children's Hospital of Augusta, Georgia Retired Educators Day, Scholarship to High School Senior pursuing an Education degree and Awards to other high achievers, First Annual Award for Outstanding Service Youth Service Leader, Teacher of the Year, PCREA Volunteer Service Award, and CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates). Chair Yoga was a big hit in March, and we heard about the Georgia REACH Scholarship Program from Mike Nayman. April was an Awards Meeting to celebrate and honor our high school valedictorian and salutatorian; the award for Outstanding Youth Service Leader with a proclamation

presented by Kris Stancil, Board of Commissioners Chair; the winner of the Educational College Scholarship; and a check presented to a CASA representative – an awesome meeting! At our last meeting of the year in May, Chief Marshal Jody Weaver talked about Elder Fraud Scams, new PCREA officers were installed by Jesse Hunter, and recognition certificates were presented to members.

Polk REA hosted Area 15 units at a cluster meeting at Cherokee Golf and Country Club in Cedartown on April 2nd. Members from every unit in Area 15 attended this meeting. The group was entertained by the Cedartown Middle School Jazz Ensemble led by Dr. Tim Warren, band director. Dr. Warren was the recipient of the Polk REA new teacher grant in 2018. The group's outstanding performance was enjoyed by everyone attending. Our executive director, Johnny Smith, provided an update on the value of becoming a GREA member. Dr Bill Sloan also informed the group of important legislation addressed at the recent Georgia legislative session. Everyone enjoyed a delicious meal prepared by the Cherokee Club.

Rockdale REA has had a very active Spring. Our March meeting featured representatives of the Heritage High School Chorus who sang a selection of songs that had performed at their regional competition. The ladies are part of a group from Heritage who perform in Carnegie Hall in New York on Easter Sunday. Johnny Smith, GREA Executive Director, was our speaker in April. AS always, his talk was quite entertaining. At our May meeting Scott McCord spoke about EMT calls to homes. It was a very informative talk, particularly when he discussed fires in the home and safety measures that were critical to a safe escape from a fire. At our June meeting the 2026-27 slate of RREA officers will be installed. In August, Rockdale will host the Area 13-14 meeting. Plans are already underway for that meeting.

South Fulton REA closed out our year in true cowboy style with our final meeting, "The Last Round-Up," held at the Bay Breeze Restaurant in Lovejoy, Georgia. Members showed up and showed out in their finest rodeo attire—hats, boots, jeans, and scarves! Our Hospitality Chair, Brenda Nero, shared some fascinating rodeo trivia, which led into a lively game with several lucky winners. Plenty of exciting door prizes were also handed out. We extended a massive thank you to our outgoing co-presidents, Jacquelyn Johnson and Vickie Menefee, presenting them with plaques to honor their incredible years of dedicated service. Following the presentations, Former President Helen Kelly officially installed our newly elected officers. In a moment of reflection, the SFREA recognized and honored the beautiful lives of our members who passed away this year. They will always be missed: Frankie Arnold, Carolyn Smith and Irene Walton-Norman. Eight of our members traveled to Augusta for the annual GREA Conference, and they brought home some serious bragging rights! Because our local unit met every single criterion on the Unit of Excellence checklist, SFREA was officially awarded the prestigious Unit of Distinction. Way to go, team! For the very first time, we are hosting a "Summer Fun Day" on July 17. This special event is designed to encourage and celebrate male participation in our unit, so mark calendars!

Sumter County REA Executive Board held its annual planning meeting on Wednesday, June 3, 2026, at Lake Blackshear Regional Library in Americus. The meeting focused on reviewing the goals set by President Cheryl Fletcher and establishing our service projects for the year. The 2026-2027 handbook revisions

and the adjusted meeting dates were approved. The programs for the new year were discussed. It was announced that we have reached half of our 7% membership goal for the year. Kathy Messner, Scholarship Chairperson, discussed changes to the bylaws, which were approved. We need to encourage members to contribute to the scholarship fund by donating in honor of or in memory of friends and family members. Sue Hite collected local dues from all members in attendance at the Executive Board meeting and will deliver them to our Treasurer, Donna Franklin, who was unable to attend. Our first meeting of the year will be held on Friday, September 11, at 11:00 a.m. at Lee Street Methodist Church. We encourage all SCREA members to join us as we commemorate the 25th anniversary of September 11, 2001, with a special program of remembrance and reflection. We also invite all retired Sumter County educators who are interested in learning more about our association to attend. We would be delighted to have you join us.

Tri-County REA members ended their very successful year by visiting the Georgia Governor's Mansion where we had the opportunity to walk back in time as we immersed ourselves in the history each room held. Following the tour, we stopped for an amazing lunch at Pappadeaux's Seafood Kitchen before journeying to the Georgia Retired Educators Museum in Flowery Branch, GA. The Museum brought back memories from days gone by. We were informed of how Georgia went from segregation to integration to the present. The Museum is a must see for all educators. Several members searched for their brick which was sold to help finance the museum. On the way home, we had our last monthly meeting. What a wonderful way to end the year.

White County REA wrapped up the 2025-2026 year with its final meeting on April 21, 2026. May was a busy month for WCREA. During Teacher Appreciation Week, May 4-8, members celebrated educators by delivering a "sweet treat" to each school in White County. President Debbie Truelove-Petty and her husband, Gary, also enjoyed attending the GREA Convention in Augusta, Georgia. On May 14, 2026, WCREA awarded a \$1,000 scholarship to Cierra Bailey of White County High School during the Senior Honors Recognition and Scholarship Night program. On May 19, 2026, a \$500 scholarship was awarded to Rylee Dorsey of Mountain Education High School-White County. WCREA members also enjoyed a field trip to Hardman Farm State Historic Site in Sautee-Nacoochee, Georgia. Although many members live nearby, the visit provided an opportunity to learn more about the rich history of White County and the surrounding area. On June 5, 2026, the WCREA leadership team met to plan and organize meetings and events for the upcoming year. For 2026-2027, Debbie Truelove-Petty will continue serving as President, and Valerie Mateen will continue serving as President-Elect of WCREA.

Valdosta Lowndes REA held their last monthly meeting for 2025-26 at Austin's Steakhouse Restaurant. President Bivins and Vice President Richardson-Blake discussed the highlights of our 66th Annual Convention Georgia Retired Educators Association. During the Memorial Service, a candle was lit to honor educators who died from May 2025-May 2026. The conference was held in Augusta, GA. The General Session was held on May 5-7, 2026, at Augusta Marriott at the Convention Center. They received 2nd place for achieving the distinction of showing the highest percentage increase in total membership. During the Area Breakfast Awards on May 6, VLREA received

Unit of Excellence award and Unit of Distinction award and GREA Membership Award 7% Growth. Certificate of Awards were presented for Local Unit Service Project, Handbook Participation, History Participation, Newsletter Participation, Public Relations, Scholarship Participation, Scrapbook Participation, and Participation for entering the T-Shirt Design Contest. I commend the GREA President Reid and the Executive Board for a well-planned conference. The Welcome Banquet on the last night was filled with great entertainment and food. Mrs. Sherry Waldrop, Area 3 Director was present and as she installed our new officers for the 2026-2028: Beverley Richardson-Blake (president) and Alvin Hudson (treasurer). In June, the VLREA Executive Board will be planning the unit's year-long activities and begin outlining our new organizational 2026-2027 year. In 2026, we completed a successful and effective year of "Keeping the Vision" with fellowship, service, and support.

Membership Award Winners 2026

Class A 1-70 Members

1st Place: Tie: Decatur County, Jenkins County, Terrell/Lee, Treutlen County

Class AA 71-149 Members

1st Place: Tie: Jefferson County & Washington County
2nd Place: Dawson County

Class AAA 150-299 Members

1st Place: Tie: Columbia County & Coweta County
2nd Place: Tie: Peach County & Toombs County

Class AAAA 300-499 Members

1st Place: Golden Isles
2nd Place: Valdosta/Lowndes
3rd Place: Tie: Paulding County, Rockdale County, Sumter County & Wayne County

Class AAAAA 500+ Members

1st Place: Cobb/Marietta
2nd Place: Bibb County
3rd Place: Gwinnett County

Membership Winners 2025

Class A	Decatur County, Jenkins County, Terrell/Lee, Treutlen
Class AA	Jefferson County & Washington County
Class AAA	Columbia County, Golden Isles
Class AAAA	Wayne County
Class AAAAA	Cobb/Marietta

Units of Distinction 2025-2026

AREA 1

Dougherty County
Early/Clay/Calhoun
Mitchell-Baker

AREA 2

Dooly County
Randolph County
Sumter County
Terrell County

AREA 3

Berrien County
Brooks County
Cook County
Tift County
Valdosta/Lowndes

AREA 4

Brantley County
Clinch County
Coffee/Atkinson

AREA 5

Appling County
Golden Isles
Jeff Davis County
Tattnall County
Toombs County
Wayne County

AREA 6

Bulloch County
Effingham County
Emanuel County

AREA 7

Telfair/Wheeler

AREA 8

Bibb County
Crawford County
Lamar County
Peach County
Pike County

AREA 9

Harris County

AREA 10

Coweta County

AREA 11

Hancock County
Johnson County
Laurens/Dublin
Washington County

AREA 12

Burke County
Columbia County
Jefferson County
Jenkins County
Lincoln/Wilkes
McDuffie/Glascock/
Warren

AREA 13

Newton County
Rockdale County
South Fulton

AREA 14

Greene County
Gwinnett County
Morgan County
Walton County

AREA 15

Cherokee County
Haralson/Bremen
Paulding County
Pickens County
Polk County

AREA 16

Calhoun/Gordon
Gilmer County

AREA 17

Forsyth County
Franklin County
Jackson County Area
Madison County
Oglethorpe County

AREA 18

Dawson County
Habersham County
Lumpkin County
Union County

GREA Convention Photo Gallery

*Photos courtesy of GREA photographers
Janet Graham and Joe Moore*



A touching memorial service



AMBA is in the house and they have cookies!



Area Directors hard at work



Convention Chair Liz Bouis looks rested



Bulloch County Representing



Area 12 Award Winners



Chatham REA Award Winners!



Cherokee County's Finest!



Corey Buice from TRS addressed the convention



Decorations Galore



Cobb County is Here!



First General Session was well attended



Elvis is still in the building



Silent Auction for the Foundation



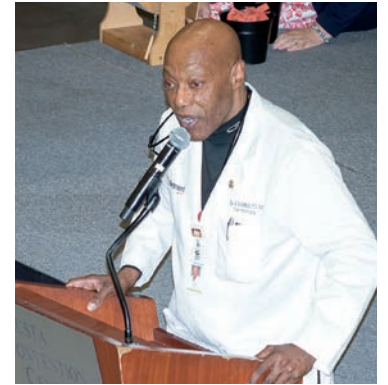
Get your GREA merchandise here



GREA would not function without these two



I am here to help



Guest Speaker Dr. Mac Bowman



Harold Thomas entertains with his saxophone



The Playback Collective rocked the house



Mike Zarem is a wealth of information



Lamar County's Finest



Louis Amis from SHBP addresses the convention



Happy for our vendors



Keeping the vision



New area directors awaiting installation



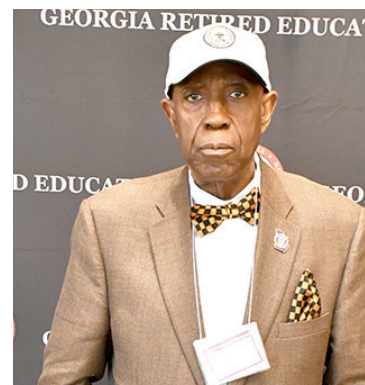
Newly installed President
Dr. Sallie Mills



Past State President Dr.
Henrietta Gray has arrived!



Our photo booth proved to be very popular



Photographer Joe Moore hard
at work!



Let's Eat!



Step right up for information and raffle tickets



Our newly installed officers



That was a REALLY big check!



Registration, please



Troup County Royalty



I won a door prize!



Friendships



That's a lot of people!



Yoga is good for the heart and soul

Why Georgia Retired Educators Are Taking a Closer Look

- Protection from Market Losses
- Tax-Deferred Growth Potential
- Lifetime Income Options
- Complements TRS, Social Security & Savings

For Georgia retirees who value stability, preservation, and predictable income.

After a career serving Georgia's students, you deserve retirement income you can count on. Many retired educators already have TRS pension income and Social Security, but still want a safe way to protect additional savings from market losses while creating more dependable income for the future.

A Fixed Indexed Annuity may help by offering:

Protection from Market Losses

Your principal is protected from negative market performance, helping preserve the savings you worked hard to build.

Tax-Deferred Growth Potential

Interest grows tax-deferred until withdrawn, which may give you more flexibility in managing retirement income and taxes.

Lifetime Income Options

Optional income riders can create guaranteed income you cannot outlive—helping supplement TRS, Social Security, and other retirement savings.

A More Balanced Retirement Strategy

An FIA can complement your pension, IRA, 403(b), savings, CDs, and investments by protecting a portion of your assets while still offering growth potential.

For Georgia retired educators who value stability, preservation, and predictable income, an FIA may be worth a conversation. Get started by contacting your local AMBA representative today at 1-866-619-6463.



GREA Loses a Great Leader

Zimma Chivers Jones, an emeritus member of the Georgia Retired Educators Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the Georgia Retired Educators Association, died June 7, 2026. She was 91 years old.

A lifelong resident of Georgia, Ms. Jones was born and reared in Tallapoosa where she was an active member of Mt. Newley Baptist Church. After graduating from Carroll County's George W. Carver High School, Ms. Jones attended Fort Valley State College where, in 1956, she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Zoology.

Ms. Jones then moved to South Georgia and joined Springfield Baptist Church in Reidsville. She began her teaching career in 1958 in Metter. Beginning in 1959, Ms. Jones taught chemistry, physical science, and biology in the Tattnall County School System. She also coached several girls' basketball teams.

After completely leaving the classroom, Ms. Jones served as the GREA's Area Director of Area 5 before becoming the organization's president in 2004. During her one-year term as GREA president, she traveled throughout the state addressing the rights, needs, and concerns of retired educators. Any day of the year, she could be found advocating for retired educators with then-Governor Sonny Perdue.

Ms. Jones' legacy of teaching and learning will continue to thrive through her children, grandchildren, and the hundreds of students she influenced to pursue post-secondary education and subsequent successful careers.

GREA

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Postal rates are rising, so if you do not wish to receive the *Bulletin* or would like to receive it via email, please let us know by emailing us at gre3@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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