

# THE GRE A BULLETIN

JOURNAL OF NEWS AND REFLECTIONS FOR RETIRED EDUCATORS OF GEORGIA

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GAINESVILLE, GEORGIA

WINTER 2023



*Welcome to Augusta, Georgia*



## GRE A 63<sup>rd</sup> Annual Convention

Augusta is the 2nd largest and 2nd oldest city in Georgia. It is the home to the Medical College of Georgia, the legendary James Brown, the world-famous Masters' Golf Tournament and for the three days in May it will be the home of the 63rd annual Georgia Retired Educators Association Convention. As a GRE A member you are invited to enjoy all the activities that have been plan by President Dr. Henrietta Gray and the convention chair Becky Upchurch. It will be an exciting convention!

The convention will convene on May 2nd at 3 p.m. and adjourn on May 4th at 12 p.m. The host hotel this year is the Marriott Augusta at the convention Center. You can find a registration form on our website.

# Message From the President

## *I Am Grateful*

By Dr. Henrietta Gray, President



*Henrietta Gray* The GREA Executive Team is still working and watching for the well-being of retired educators in Georgia. I am grateful for the bond of fellowship and friendship that is well grounded among our Executive Team. We attended the AMBA National Conference in Austin, Texas November 1-4. Their theme of "Reconnected" was clearly appropriate as AMBA had not hosted the conference since 2019. The longevity in no way diminished the fervor, profundity, and value of what AMBA provided for those of us who were fortunate enough to be invited. It was electrifying, informative and the attention to details was experienced in the cord of excellence that was woven in every aspect of the conference. GREA, I am grateful for who AMBA is and what a valuable and prolific resource they are for GREA. Space will not be taken for me to enumerate and elucidate the full range and superb intricacies of ALL they do—may it suffice that you know that they are indeed a lavish and lucrative asset for all of us.

I am grateful for the increasing number of Locals who are inviting me to your face-to-face meetings as COVID abates. I am grateful for your kindness to me and powerful service to GREA. I pray always for our safety, health, and well-being when we gather. You continue to structure great meetings and go way out of the way to provide delicious food served with the standards of fine dining. I am grateful for your diligence and commitment to excellence.

In my next article I will address the logistical points of purpose and our goal-oriented agenda and activities as we move forward to the crescendo of our State Convention. I urge all of you to prepare to attend our State Convention, May 2, 3, and 4 in Augusta. We are diligently making plans for a convention that will be Inspirational, Informative, and enjoyable.

As I am writing this article in November, I am compelled to reiterate some of what I have shared previously about Thanksgiving. For those of us who are aware of the goodness, grace, and provision of God in our lives, every day is a day of Thanksgiving. I titled this article I am Grateful because I now have fully embraced the revelation of the power and benefits of gratitude, appreciation and being thankful. I admonish us to be grateful and be recipients of the benefits of the Attitude of Gratitude. Christian Research Firms report that gratitude, living thankful and appreciative is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness, peace, and good health. Gratitude helps us feel more positive, relish good experiences, deal with adversity, build strong relationships, improve our sleep quality, reduces stress, burnout and increase our resilience. Therefore, I admonish all of us to be grateful, appreciative, and thankful.

At the time of your reading this article we will be in a New Year. I pray that your holidays were enjoyable and safe. It is my prayer that you entered the New Year with a renewed hope, strengthened vitality and Empowered to Serve! I am Grateful for each of you and all you do for GREA and your service in your local units.

I speak Peace, Protection, and Provision to all of us as we Serve. I am humbled and honored to serve you as the GREA President. Please feel free to contact me with any questions, concerns, ideas, or observations. Finally, I am grateful that we all are EMPOWERED TO SERVE!

# A Word from the President-elect

By Joe Boland, President-elect



*Joe Boland*

Thanks to AMBA for hosting us for several days near Austin, Texas. It was a great opportunity to learn and to mingle with other associations who have similar interests. It's a small world. One of the top executives of AMBA is Bo Carr. He and his wife are Walton HS graduates (Cobb County). His mother is a retired teacher from Walton.

Haralson/Bremen REA has enjoyed the leadership of two sisters for many years. Elaine Garner and Martha Laminack have served as President multiple times and volunteer for many other jobs in HBREA. Elaine does the newsletters, Martha does decorations and raffles off her pieces of art. Elaine taught Language Arts and retired in 2009. Martha taught Math and Art and retired in 2012. Elaine lives on the property of the former Lithia Springs Hotel built in 1882. It was the largest in the southeast with 175 rooms. What happened? Prohibition and the Depression.

My wife and I have been lucky enough to go to some of the spots in Haralson County. We have seen the trains go through Bremen. We visited the old Buchanan courtroom. We had a personal tour of the Little Creek One Room Schoolhouse. We visited the Budapest Cemetery. We've seen the very nice West Georgia Museum, and I had my picture taken with the bear at Bud Jones Taxidermy. I read a book on the Draketown Murder and visited the monument. There is a lot to see in Georgia, and I'd like to see more of it.

Elaine and Martha work with a great group of people in Haralson County. The same people who are involved in H/B REA are the same people who are involved in their community. Several years ago, a former outstanding student/athlete and graduate was killed in a car accident near her home in Cobb. I had been her principal. Her dad had grown up in Haralson County. Many good, loyal folks from Haralson came to the funeral to support the family.

To all my loyal readers, Happy New Year to both of you.

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## Thank You from Past President Tomlinson

By Jo Ann Tomlinson, Past President



*Jo Ann  
Tomlinson*

Words cannot express how humbled I am with the outpouring of Get-Well Cards, Prayers, Texts, Emails and Expressions of Love from each one of you All over our State!! Your prayers were needed and felt, and God answered!! I was very close to being on a ventilator. All your prayers were my miracle!! My recovery is slow as I continue to have procedures, so please keep me in your prayers. Wow!! You made me feel so loved and special!! You are truly the B E S T BEST people ever!!! GOOO GREAAA!!!

Wow!! You made me feel so loved and special!



# Ramblin' Around With the Executive Director

By Bill Sloan, Executive Director



**William Sloan** Happy New Year! It is a wonderful time to be a retired educator in Georgia. We are so blessed that on January 1 and July 1 each year our TRS provides us with a COLA as many states do not provide such a benefit for its retirees. In addition, our SHBP is a wonderful asset for all of us. The state pays for well over half of your health insurance premiums and if you are on Medicare, it provides a supplemental Medicare Advantage health insurance with a zero premium. We all take this for granted but we are blessed to have it. Retirees in some other states pay for the full cost of their health insurance.

November 6th was a wonderful Retired Educator Day in Georgia. Our GREA Facebook page has many pictures of this event as churches, banks, and other businesses helped celebrate our day with signs and announcements. Please check us out on Facebook. If you do not know how to get on Facebook, ask us or a grandkid and they can fix you up immediately would be my guess.

The Georgia Legislature will begin meeting again in January. We hope they will continue to leave our TRS and retirees alone. Our TRS is doing well even in this inflation economy and we as retirees are not asking for any additional benefits from either them or our TRS. We are happy people, and we hope they will just leave us alone again this year. If you are not on our GREA email list, please send us your email address and we will include you in any information that might affect you as a retiree. We might need for you to help us by contacting your legislators if bills come up that affect us. We monitor the legislature daily while it is in session.

Our membership is continuing to grow as we passed 33,000+ a few weeks ago and we are so pleased with what the local units are doing to recruit members. In addition, AMBA does a wonderful job in recruiting new members. In fact, they enroll more new members some week than our 140 local units. Thank you, AMBA! In addition, AMBA will help your unit grow, so do not hesitate to call upon them for help in recruitment.

Do you attend local unit meetings? Most of our local units have at least 6 meetings a year with most cases a lunch and a program. I know some people do not want to go to any more meetings than necessary but you should at least get on the mailing list of your local unit so you can keep up with what is happening with retired educators. Fellowship with other retirees is very important and worthwhile. If you do not know how to contact your local unit then email us and we will give you that information for you to become involved with them.

The GREA staff wishes you a healthy and prosperous New Year.

## Bulletins by Email

Would you like to get your *GREA Bulletin* by email? Approximately 12,000 of our members are now getting their *GREA Bulletin* by email each quarter. The people who get it by email receive it approximately 2-3 weeks before the print edition is mailed to our members. In addition, the email copy is totally in color where the print edition is only partially in color due to the high cost of printing in color.

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

# TRS News

## Remember "Why" Educators Have Teachers Retirement

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



**Buster Evans**

Greetings to our GREA friends all across Georgia and beyond! Over the past couple of months, I have had the opportunity to travel across Georgia, to Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona as a part of my work with TRS representing our retirement system. I always enjoy meeting with both active and retired educators, and sometimes you get to experience some meetings that are especially memorable. Getting reacquainted with educator friends in all of these places is just wonderful. Recently, in Toombs County, I even got the opportunity to reacquaint with my 6th grade math teacher from Union Elementary School in Bibb County from 1968! Dr. Cuba McKenzie, who went on to become a dean at Valdosta State University, like every teacher that I had during school, impacted my life. In that today we deal with budgets and investments that are dependent on knowing math to some extent, you too might be thankful for Dr. McKenzie's influence in my life!

In this writing, I want to remind each of us as to "why" teachers have a defined benefit retirement plan in Georgia and in most every state in the country. The defined benefit plan for teachers exists as a significant component of educator compensation and educational policy in our state. Governor Ellis Arnall spearheaded the effort to begin the retirement system. He stated in his support of the retirement plan that "he wanted retired educators to be able to live out their retirement years with dignity."

That statement, while we agree with it, is not the only reason that the retirement system exists. From an educational policy perspective, the plan exists largely for the purposes of 1) recruiting quality educators into the profession, and 2) retaining educators into the profession who could otherwise find jobs elsewhere earning higher salaries.

Research on student achievement consistently reflects that the variable most influencing student learning is teacher quality. That clearly supports the need and desire to recruit quality teachers into a profession that has traditionally paid less than many other competing professions. Then, when it comes to retaining teachers, I clearly remember my freshman year in college when my algebra teacher resigned during the quarter to take a job outside of academia. We basically were left in a bad situation for the remainder of the quarter. Such an occurrence would likely be more common if we did not have a retirement plan that encouraged teachers to remain in the profession. With significant turnover and leadership changes taking place in our own Georgia legislature in the coming year, we all can have a role in helping to explain why the defined benefit plan works to positively influence education in Georgia.

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

# News From GREA Local Units

**Athens Area REA** November meeting was all about personal wellness. The goal was to amplify the importance of mental and physical health, and fitness. The guest presenter was Joseph Jones, a fitness coach and personal trainer. He is and educator and served as a graduation coach in Clarke County before establishing his fitness business. He emphasized that fitness and health are different. You may be “fit” but not “healthy”. Key points emphasized were centered on developing a mindset about health. This mindset encompasses four dynamics: Earth—staying grounded; Fire—being willing to make mistakes; Water—understanding that things will change. Special emphasis was given to food and our personal relationship with it. Since food is ingrained in our lifestyle, we must understand how we use food daily. Our habits with food can affect our health. We must systematically analyze our eating habits and adjust accordingly to be healthy. A final message to the seventeen members in attendance was, “Live a long life on your feet and not on your seat.” The enthusiasm in the room was very robust. This meeting was a wonderful way to get our members focused on self-care.

**Brantley County REA** met in November and was honored to welcome our new state legislators, Representative John Corbett and Senator Mike Hodges, who introduced themselves (with a little background), spoke to us regarding plans in the upcoming legislative session, and fielded questions and concerns from our members and guests. After an enjoyable time getting to know each other, we were all treated to an adorable Thanksgiving-based song and dance by a group of Pre-K students, followed by a fabulous “Thanksgiving Dinner” at Hoboken Elementary School. A good time was had by all!

**Burke County REA** met on October 6th. The speaker was William Tinley, Mayor of Waynesboro. He shared his ideas for the “State of the City.” They included his ideas as well as concerns and how the city could be improved. Ideas from the community are welcomed. He signed the Proclamation for Retired Educators Day. Churches and businesses gave recognition and tokens of appreciation to retired educators. Also, an article was in the True Citizen for our special day. Our speaker for November was Monica Payton, School Social Worker for Burke County School System. We participated in an icebreaker activity. Then she enlightened us about the duties and responsibilities of a Social Worker. An overview, vision and mission were shared. We discussed upcoming events for BCREA Unit.

**Calhoun-Gordon County REA** decided to show appreciation to the lunchroom personnel in the Calhoun City and Gordon County Schools. 128 folks prepare breakfasts and lunches for the students daily. Treat bags (bottled water, sweets, crackers, candy) were delivered to each one, just in time for Thanksgiving!

**Chatham REA** met on Monday, November 14, 2022 and extended thanks to the following Veterans for their Service: Deborah Adams, Clifford King, Brenda L Roberts, and Isaiah Williams. We received Retired Educators Day Proclamations from: Savannah-Chatham Board of Education, Chatham County Commission, and all the Municipalities in Chatham County: City of Savannah, Thunderbolt, Pooler, Bloomingdale, Garden City Tybee Island, and Port Wentworth. Members worshipped at the Temple of Glory Community Church and were recognized in churches throughout the city. The National Education Association celebrated American Education Week November 13-19, 2022. Chatham Retired Educators Association presented gift fruit baskets to the faculty and staff of five local schools on Thursday, November 17, 2022 in recognition of American Education Week. Chatham REA will be very busy as we end 2022!! We will be distributing food items for Thanksgiving meals sponsored by *Savannah Feed the Hungry* on Wednesday, November 23, 2022. Christmas dinners will be served on December 23, 2022 at the new Enmarket Arena. They anticipate feeding more than 5000 people. Members will donate gift cards to Greenbriar Children’s Center and the Tom Austin House for the holidays. A holiday celebration will be held at the December 12, 2022 meeting. The meeting will be held in person at

the Southwest Chatham Library, aired on Zoom, and on the Chatham REA Facebook page. Chatham REA members will kick off 2023 with a tour of Jenkins High School and presentation of school supplies at several schools.

**Clayton County REA** welcomed Jeffrey E. Turner, Chairman of the Clayton County Board of Commissioners, and Nancy Hall, GREA Area 10 Director, to their October meeting. Mr. Turner presented the Proclamation for Retired Educators Day, and Ms. Hall brought news from GREA. In addition, the members had a silent auction and bake sale to raise money for the charities which they sponsor each year.

**Crawford County REA** is off to a great start this year. We had meetings in September, October, and November - all with jam-packed agendas, and we are already preparing for our upcoming meeting in December. GREA Week was celebrated November 1-6, 2022 by CCREA. John Thomas, Chairman of the Crawford County Board of Commissioners signed a Proclamation declaring November 6 as GA Retired Educators Day in Crawford County. The CC Board of Education also announced GA RE Day on the marquee out front. On Sunday, November 6, several members attended the 11:00 worship together at President Brenda Carter’s home church, Bellevue Baptist in Macon. Additional activities included presenting goody bags and letters to a number of Crawford County educators who have completed their 25th year of service (or more, if not recognized previously), thanking them for their commit-“mint” to education and introducing them to GREA and CCREA.

**Dalton/Whitfield/Murray REA** held its October meeting at Western Sizzlin in Dalton. Bill Weaver—DWMREA member—gave the unit reminders of SHBP changes and deadlines. Mike Zarem, TRS representative, shared the latest news with members. Sally Cochran presented consumer education tips. The unit conducted a tour of the Junior Achievement Discovery Center of Great Dalton in October. The members saw students in action while working on projects. A boxed lunch from a local restaurant was featured for lunch after the tour at the center. The November unit meeting was also held at Western Sizzlin and featured State Senator—Chuck Payne—R—District 54 speaking to the members on the latest news from the state Capitol. Beverly Sissom shared consumer education tips with the unit. Plans are ongoing in preparation for the December 1st auction at the Dalton Golf and Country Club. Funds will benefit the DWMREA scholarship fund.

**Effingham REA** began the new year with our annual Banquet. New retirees, scholarship winners were all recognized followed by our installation of officers for the new year. They are Pam Anderegg, President, Beth Kight, Pres-Elect, Sylvia Arnsdorff, Secretary, Wallace Blackstock, Treasurer who were installed by Area Director, Dr. Connie Cooper. In October, we met at the Mary K. Warnell Forestry Center. We were enlightened with the presentation given by the caretaker. She spoke of the uses of their forestry program and the involvement with students learning about their purposes through field trips. At the November meeting, we had 35 in attendance, and welcomed our AMBA representative, Lisa McKenzie. We were well informed about the various medical benefits that are available to us through our GREA membership. One of our local projects is setting up a new library at our EMCOMPASS campus in the county. We hosted a bake sale on November 18 to help fund a few furniture items for this library. Our other projects were discussed, and plans are already underway for those to be accomplished.

**Emanuel REA** has had a busy fall! In September, our kick-off meeting was held at Swainsboro High School where we were treated to a very special lunch prepared by the school’s CTAE student organizations. Scotty Hattaway, Emanuel County School Superintendent, provided a most informative school district update. Dr. David Schecter, new East Georgia State College President, shared his goals for the local postsecondary institution at our October meeting which

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# RETIREMENT IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD



“You can’t predict, but you can prepare”. This old saying is especially relevant to the world we now live in. Over the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped many things. One of the most significant is how people think about and plan for their retirement.

With all the upheaval of the year, many people are confused about how they can be prepared for retirement. One of the biggest lessons of the pandemic is that the future is far from predictable. Your retirement goals should include room for flexibility and to pivot as needed. For those nearing or in retirement, keep the following in mind.

## Protect Your Savings in Retirement

Unexpected market downturns at the beginning of retirement can harm your savings permanently. Protect yourself with cash savings so you can maintain your principal and prevent yourself from running out of money.

## Plan for the Long Haul

The average life expectancy in the United States continues to rise. That means we could spend decades in retirement. Think carefully about how you would like to spend these years and what activities and options you’d like to prioritize.

With a potential retirement of 30 years or more, you may even decide to keep working for pay or as a volunteer so you can stay engaged and social as you age.

## Make Your Physical and Mental Health a Priority

The activities and behaviors you take now will influence how active and fulfilled you can remain later. Find nutritious eating options and physical activity that you enjoy so you can remain fit and healthy later in life. Plan to carry the habits throughout your golden years.

It’s true that the future is never certain. But by thinking ahead and making smart choices now, you can stay on track for a happy, healthy retirement. **For example, GREA and AMBA provide solutions to “Protect Your Nest Egg” and give you locked-in income with a guaranteed competitive interest rate, multiple payout options, and even a nursing home waiver. If you want the assurance that your retirement plans never get jolted by sudden changes in the market or economy, AMBA can help find the right solution for you. Call AMBA at 1-866-684-5267 or request a free Benefits Review at [amba-review.com](https://www.amba-review.com).**

was held at Emanuel County Institute. The Family and Consumer Science students prepared and served a delicious lunch for members. Our local State legislators, Senator Max Burns and Representative Butch Parrish, were guest speakers at our November meeting held at Swainsboro Middle School, and both provided a most informative legislative update. They also expressed their appreciation for the many years of service provided by EREA members. Throughout the fall, members collected and donated stuffed animals and school supplies for the local Sunshine House Children's Advocacy Center to be used with their young clients who are victims for abuse. Emanuel REA members are excited about the new year and look forward to 2023 with keen anticipation!

**Fayette County REA** held its Annual Fundraiser, *The Little Red Craft House Market & Silent Auction* on Saturday, November 12, 2022. Proceeds raised support our Scholarship Fund. Every year, we award a scholarship to a senior in one of our local high schools who will pursue a major in Education, and we honor one eighth grade student from each of our middle schools for exemplary academic performance, leadership, and community service. Several vendors were on hand to support our fundraising efforts and we hope this is the beginning of a great tradition for FCREA.

**Grady County REA** recently awarded their yearly scholarships to three early career educators. These scholarships are chosen from educators who are in their second year of teaching in Grady County. Out of 12 elementary, 4 middle school, and 8 high school early career educators, the following were chosen: Myisha Palmer at Eastside Elementary School, Deena Gainous at Shiver School, and Jennifer Lodge at Cairo High School.

**Greene County REA** members were presented with a proclamation from Greensboro Mayor, Corey Williams, declaring Sunday, November 6, 2022, Retired Educators' Day in the city of Greensboro. The proclamation was presented at Oconee Valley Clinic where the retired educators stocked the Little Pantry located outside of the clinic with canned goods as an act of SERVICE on their day. To further celebrate Retired Educators' Day, several members of Greene County Retired Educators' Association visited with retired educator, Eleanora Chester. A lively and enjoyable time of reminiscing and catching up permeated our time of fellowship with our fellow retiree.

**Gwinnett County REA** had a successful membership drive in October of 2022. We are honored and encouraged to add 20 plus new members to our local unit. In January, we have a meeting with Gwinnett Co. Public Schools Police Captain, Mary Williford, discussing school safety initiatives and personal safety tips. In February, we will celebrate a visit from our President Henrietta Gray and her March of Dimes Campaign. Also, our member Mike Weinroth will give a presentation on "The History of African American Schools in Georgia". In March, we will give our yearly scholarships that support local education. Then in April we will have our Memorial Meeting and our installation of officers for 23-24. By the merry month of May, we are on track to attend the GREA Convention in Augusta, GA to be with our GREA-t friends!

**Houston County REA** had an interesting program on October 13, when Dr. Linda A. Smyth, Vice President for University Advancement at Fort Valley State University (Retired), spoke on the *Antics of a Retired Educator: What do you do in retirement after being an Educator?* An entomologist (one who studies insects), she and her husband both became race car drivers upon retirement. Insects were painted or applied to every aspect of her race car. She began in a very conservative suit with her hair in a bun and, while speaking, began to remove her clothing, pulled her hair out of the bun and put on a baseball cap. The accompanying slides were very impressive as she informed us of what it takes to enter the race car arena. On October 13, members attended the City Council meeting where the mayor read a proclamation about Retired Educators Day in Georgia. Members also placed lime green signs in their yards from one end of the county to the other proclaiming Retired Educators Day. On November 10, a Silent Auction was held

prior to the meeting to raise money for the March of Dimes where the goal of \$350 was met. State Farm Insurance agent, Henry Hopson, was the speaker who advised members on scams to watch out for. He said the hurricane season is a perfect time for scammers to be calling people or knocking on their doors stating they noticed damage to the homes which probably was caused by the weather. He guided them on questions to ask to determine if these people are legit. In December, the Perry High School choral ensemble will entertain the organization by performing Christmas music.

**Jefferson County REA** celebrated both Retired Educators Day and Veterans Day with a program held on November 9, 2022, at the Herman Baker Municipal Complex. The guest speaker was GA House District 127 Representative Brian Prince, who has served in the House of Representatives since 2013 and who recently won his bid for re-election to serve the newly created House District 132 for the upcoming term. Representative Prince, a U.S. Army veteran and graduate of Fort Valley and Central Michigan Universities, shared a message of appreciation for retired educators for their service to the boys and girls in our schools and for veterans for their commitment to protect and defend their country and countrymen. Special guests included Wadley Mayor Harold Moore, our host, who brought greetings from the City of Wadley and members of the Jefferson County Vets in Action who shared with the group the years they served and their branch of the armed services.

**Lamar REA** at its November meeting hosted Dr. L. C. Buster Evans, Executive Director of the Teacher Retirement System of Georgia, who challenged Lamar REA members to increase their membership. He reported that there are 312 retirees in Lamar County, 504 active and contributing members of TRS with 11.5 million dollars coming into our county monthly by way of benefits. Everyone in attendance, agreed to accept his challenge and bring additional prospective members to our next meeting. He also reported that the Georgia Teacher Retirement System is sound/sustainable, but there is a need to contact newly elected government officials to thank them ahead of time for their support of retired educators. Our members bragged on grandchildren, children, family members and each other. Brag bucks gathered will be used to help fund our scholarship and other projects during the year. Yes, Lamar REA is off to a great start. Thank you, Leadership Team, for a great slate of programs and activities planned for the year!

**Mitchell-Baker REA** continues to make great strides. On October 27, 2022, Mayor Kevin Owens, of Camilla, Ga., held a short program while signing and presenting the Georgia Retired Teacher Proclamation. Educators were very excited as we celebrated this momentous day. Mayor Owens was very grateful to have had the privilege to recognize those who have spent countless days, months, and years educating students across the state. A proclamation was also signed and presented by Mayor Gary Coker in Baker County. Retired educators were recognized in local churches and on the local public library's marquee. On November 9, 2022, we celebrated Thanksgiving Lunch with the staff and students at the Mitchell County Primary School in Camilla, Ga. The feast and fellowship were enjoyed by all in attendance. Handbooks were complete and distributed at that time. During the month of December, the association will celebrate Christmas with the Baker County crew, in Newton, Ga. We are having an awesome time enjoying each other's presence during this pandemic season. Although we are thankful, we do continue to practice safety protocols.




**Paulding REA** met on November 10th at the First Baptist Church in Dallas. We all enjoyed a delicious covered-dish brunch. Sargent Ashley Henson of the Paulding County Sheriff's Department was our keynote speaker. He informed us of the importance of scam awareness, either phone or online. Safety in the home and navigating parking lots was also discussed. Our new directories were distributed, a big thanks to Gloria King and Barbara Cohran. Donations were made for needy children, Helping Hands for Paulding and March of Dimes. Our next meeting will be on January 10, 2023, at 10:30 AM at the First

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# STATE HEALTH BENEFIT PLAN (SHBP) RECAP

## RETIREE OPTION CHANGE PERIOD FOR THE 2023 PLAN YEAR

The 2022 Retiree Option Change Period (ROCP) marked the first ROCP with in-person meetings since the pandemic started. SHBP was thrilled to offer retirees a mix of in-person and virtual meetings to help members understand their plan options for Plan Year 2023. SHBP and their vendors interacted with a total of **2,861 retirees** via the in-person meetings and virtual sessions:

 <b>Teleconferences</b>	
3 Teleconference Sessions	723 attendees
 <b>Webinars</b>	
2 Webinar Sessions	368 attendees
 <b>In-Person Meetings</b>	
13 In Person Sessions	1,770 attendees

The plan options, benefits and vendors for the 2023 Plan Year remained the same as in 2022.

- **For Medicare-Eligible Retirees**, UnitedHealthcare and Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield continued to each offer Medicare Advantage plan options:
  - **Anthem:** Standard and Premium Medicare Advantage Plan Options
  - **UnitedHealthcare:** Standard and Premium Medicare Advantage Plan Options
    - **Enhancement for 2023:** \$0 co-pay for annual routine eye exam and \$125 eyewear benefit (*glasses/frames or contact lenses*) allowance every 12 months.
- **For Pre-65 Retirees**, Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield, UnitedHealthcare and Kaiser (metro-Atlanta only), continued to each offer the same plan options:
  - **Anthem\*:** HMO and Gold, Silver and Bronze HRA
  - **UnitedHealthcare\*:** HMO and HDHP
    - **Enhancement for 2023:** In addition to the 480 points you can earn with Sharecare, UnitedHealthcare will give you and your covered spouse a \$250 American Express Reward Card once you complete all the wellness activities.
  - **Kaiser Permanente:** Regional HMO

\*Sharecare and CVS will remain the Wellness and Pharmacy vendors for the Anthem and UnitedHealthcare Commercial (non-Medicare Advantage) Plans.



Baptist Church in Dallas. We welcome all those who served in any capacity in education.

**Pickens County REA** recently delivered snacks to the staffs at all the schools and the Transportation Department of the Pickens County School District. The snacks were much appreciated by everyone, especially the staff in Transportation, as it was Bus Driver Appreciation week.

**Sumter County REA** held its November meeting at the Canterbury Kitchen in Americus. The speaker was a fellow retired educator and the current Americus Mayor Lee Kinnamon, who gave an informative Veteran's Day program about the origin of Armistice Day and about one of the statues that stands in Rees Park, "The Spirit of the American Doughboy." During the business meeting, veterans were recognized, the special projects committee presented ideas for collecting cleaning supplies for the Special Education classrooms in Sumter County and members were reminded about participating in a panel to discuss the teaching profession with students in the Teaching As a Profession (TAP) class at Sumter County High School. Members also brought canned foods to be donated to the local Food Pantry.

**Tri-County REA** provides service to McDuffie and Warren Counties communities as they support each other. On Thursday, November 3rd, Tri-County REA collected and donated approximately one hundred pairs of new socks to the Socktober Sock Drive sponsored by Compass One Health Care. These socks were collected for the homeless shelter. We also collected and donated can goods and non-perishable items for MANNA, a local food bank in McDuffie County. To celebrate Georgia Retired Educators Day, several members of Tri-County attended a dinner play at the Gordon Theater, Fort Gordon, GA. We enjoyed a delicious meal and laughed as we watched The Play That Went Wrong. We enjoyed fellowshiping with each other. During American Education Week, November 13-19, Tri-County REA showed our appreciation to all school employees for all they do to educate our students. Snacks were delivered to all schools, bus barns, cafeterias, and central offices. Our educators were treated to chips, cookies, fruit, candy, and water, sodas, etc.

**Valdosta Lowndes REA** has resumed our regularly scheduled meetings under the leadership of Mrs. Sharon D. Walker. At the September meeting we welcomed back all the former members & new members. We recognized our Emeritus & oldest member, Mrs. Agnes O'Kelley, who will soon celebrate 98 years young. We honored her with a signed birthday card from all the members. At the September meeting Area Director Nancy Taylor visited our unit and brought good advice to help our leaders and members that will help us stay on track throughout the year. Our October meeting featured Lowndes County Commissioner, Dr. DeMarcus Marshall from Lowndes County District 4. He shared a poem by Langston Hughes, "I'd Rather see a Sermon, than Hear one any day..." He gave a tribute to all retired educators in Georgia, and especially right here in Valdosta & Lowndes County. During this meeting we handed out our GREA ribbons & celebrated Retired Educators Day early with a proclamation read & presented by Dr. Marshall to President Sharon D. Walker. Our November speaker,

## GREA

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Ms. Crystal Royals, a financial advisor from Edward Jones, who sponsored our luncheon that day. Ms. Royals shared important financial advice to our retirees'. Captain Judy Chung of the Valdosta Salvation Army stopped by and introduced herself to the members. She shared information on the Bell Ringing project & we should bring unwrapped children's gifts from birth to 12 years of age for the Toys for Tots project to our December meeting. We have several projects that lead off our new year. We will collect food for our Valdosta Second Harvest community food bank, take treats to our bus drivers and to our teachers to let them know how much we appreciate them. The members will collect school supplies throughout the year to donate supplies for distribution to our school systems. President Walker has encouraged the members—that we must have "All Hands on Deck" and to "Step up and Serve" this upcoming year.

**Peach County REA** members met with Mayor Jeffrey Lundy November 2nd at City Hall. Mayor Lundy signed a proclamation proclaiming November 6, 2022, as Retired Educators Day. Peach County Retired Educators Association members celebrated Georgia Retired Educators Day at St. John A.M.E. church in Marshallville, GA. PCREA member Minister Denise Williams gave the message for the occasion.

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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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